



# Spice Up Your Meals





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Not only does adding extra flavor to your meals make them delicious, it's also a way to boost their health benefits.

Herbs and spices are incredibly nutrient-dense, and their potential healing properties can be leveraged in a variety of ways.

Turmeric root, for example, is often ground into a bright yellow-orange powder. Its active ingredient, curcumin (responsible for the powder's hue) has anti-inflammatory, antioxidant, and cancer-fighting benefits.<sup>1</sup> Turmeric has a warm, peppery flavor and can be added to both sweet and savory dishes, such as homemade breads, oatmeal, curries, and eggs.

**Read on to learn about more health-supportive herbs, spices, and flavors.**



## HEALTH BENEFITS OF CULINARY HERBS AND SPICES



### BASIL (HERB)<sup>2</sup>

- **Nutritional Benefits**

Micronutrients, such as calcium and vitamin K; a range of antioxidants, including anthocyanins and beta-carotene

- **Health Benefits**

Treatment of colds and inflammation within nasal passages; aids liver, mental, and cardiovascular health; reduces oxidative stress, which is linked to certain cancers, heart disease, rheumatoid arthritis, and diabetes



#### **Fast Facts and Tips**

Basil is a versatile herb, and each variety has its own benefits! Sweet basil contains eugenol, a compound that's considered especially anti-inflammatory. Basil can be used in marinades, salads, soups, pizzas, pastas, stir-fries, and noodle dishes.



### CARDAMOM (SPICE)<sup>3</sup>

- **Nutritional Benefits**

High levels of antioxidants; potassium; calcium; magnesium

- **Health Benefits**

Antibacterial; aids in digestion, bad breath, and cavities; antioxidant and diuretic properties may lower blood pressure; anti-inflammatory effects may protect against chronic diseases; may lower blood sugar levels



#### **Fast Facts and Tips**

In some cultures, it's common to freshen your breath by eating cardamom pods after meals. It can be found in a variety of teas, gums, and sweet and savory dishes.





## CAYENNE (SPICE)<sup>4</sup>

- **Nutritional Benefits**

High levels of antioxidants; vitamins C and E; beta-carotene; choline; lutein; zeaxanthin; cryptoxanthin; capsaicin, which can reduce the number of pain signals sent to the brain

- **Health Benefits**

Moves blood and improves circulatory function; reduces inflammation; helps with pain relief and weight management; aids congestion relief



### Fast Facts and Tips

Cayenne peppers are closely related to jalapeño and bell peppers and are a staple in many cultures, including Cajun, Creole, Korean, Mexican, Southwestern American, and Szechuan cuisines.



## CILANTRO (HERB)<sup>5</sup>

- **Nutritional Benefits**

Lipids; linalool, an essential oil; beta-carotene and lutein; high concentrations of antioxidants

- **Health Benefits**

Raises energy levels; helps move heavy metals through digestive tract and out of the body (chelation); helps lower risk of heart disease, diabetes, and obesity; potentially reduces seizure severity; helps hair and skin; has antidepressant, antiepileptic, and anti-inflammatory effects



### Fast Facts and Tips

Because of a genetic variation that makes some people sensitive to the aldehyde component in cilantro, this herb tastes delicious to some and like soap to others. Cilantro pairs well with a variety of foods, including soups, sandwiches, sauces, salads, and casseroles. It can also be used as a garnish.





## CINNAMON (SPICE)<sup>6</sup>

- **Nutritional Benefits**

Potassium; calcium; beta-carotene; vitamin A; cinnamaldehyde

- **Health Benefits**

Helps regulate blood sugar and lower cholesterol; aids weight loss and digestive health



### Fast Facts and Tips

The bark, leaves, flowers, fruits, and roots of the cinnamon tree have been used in traditional medicine around the world for thousands of years. This warm spice is commonly used in cooking and baking.



## CLOVES (SPICE)<sup>7</sup>

- **Nutritional Benefits**

High levels of antioxidants; manganese; vitamin K; potassium; beta-carotene; eugenol

- **Health Benefits**

Has antiviral qualities; may help reduce ulcers and inflammation; may lower levels of free radicals and therefore reduce the risk of heart disease, diabetes, and certain cancers.



### Fast Facts and Tips

Cloves are dried flowers, so they can be found all year long in spice shops, grocery stores, markets, and health food stores around the world. This potent spice is used in curries, warm drinks, baking, pickling, and seasoning mixes.





## GINGER (SPICE)<sup>8</sup>

- **Nutritional Benefits**

Large source of antioxidants; gingerol, a phytochemical compound

- **Health Benefits**

Helps digestive tract and gut health; may have anti-inflammatory, antibacterial, and antiviral properties; helps with pain relief, inflammation, nausea, and cold symptoms; may help lower oxidative stress



### Fast Facts and Tips

Ginger can be used in smoothies, stir-fries, baked goods, and warm drinks. It's often paired with honey or garlic.



## MINT (HERB)<sup>9</sup>

- **Nutritional Benefits**

High in antioxidants; iron; manganese; folate; vitamin A

- **Health Benefits**

Calms the digestive system; may improve irritable bowel syndrome, brain function, and cold symptoms; may help with halitosis (bad breath)



### Fast Facts and Tips

Mint is the name for over a dozen plant species, including peppermint and spearmint, known for their cooling effects. The strong flavor is popular in sauces, salads, desserts, teas, smoothies, and oral care products.





## NUTMEG (SPICE)<sup>10</sup>

- **Nutritional Benefits**

Large amounts of antioxidants; cyanidins; essential oils, such as terpenes and phenylpropanoids; phenolic compounds, including protocatechuic, ferulic, and caffeic acids

- **Health Benefits**

May help with insomnia; possibly slows cognitive decline; boosts mood; helps relieve pain; relaxes blood vessels and may help lower blood pressure; helps promote brain recovery after stroke



### Fast Facts and Tips

Often found in baked goods, smoothies, soups, burgers, and egg dishes, this spice is commonly paired with ginger or cinnamon. Nutmeg grows on an evergreen tree native to Indonesia.



## OREGANO (HERB)<sup>11</sup>

- **Nutritional Benefits**

Antibacterial phytonutrients thymol and carvacrol; large amounts of antioxidants; fiber; vitamins K and E; manganese; iron; tryptophan; calcium

- **Health Benefits**

Has antibacterial qualities; helps digestion and congestion; helps lessen muscle and joint pain



### Fast Facts and Tips

There are over 40 varieties of oregano, but *Origanum vulgare* is the one most associated with health benefits. Fresh and dried oregano leaves have very different flavors, but both can be used in pastas, pizzas, salads, pestos, and teas.





## PARSLEY (HERB)<sup>12</sup>

- **Nutritional Benefits**

Flavonoid myricetin; apigenin; vitamins A, C, and K

- **Health Benefits**

Supports health of kidneys and helps break up kidney stones; supports a stable blood pressure; serves as natural diuretic; helps improves edema issues; supports heart and bone health; helps prevent cancer



### **Fast Facts and Tips**

Parsley is in the same family as celery, carrots, and cumin and can be chewed to freshen your breath. Freshly chopped parsley has a strong flavor and goes well with potatoes, tomato-based sauces, grains, egg dishes, and seafood.



## ROSEMARY (HERB)<sup>13</sup>

- **Nutritional Benefits**

Rosmarinic acid; rosmanol; carnosol; flavonoids hesperidin and genkwanin; gallic acid; large amounts of antioxidants

- **Health Benefits**

Helps improve memory, mood, and circulation function; has anti-inflammatory and antioxidant properties; helps with metabolic disorders, such as obesity and diabetes



### **Fast Facts and Tips**

Rosemary is popular around the world. It's used in tea in Mexico, meat seasoning in European and Middle Eastern cuisines, and soups and beverages in India. Finely minced leaves enhance stews, fish, potatoes, salads, poultry stuffing, pasta, and breads, such as focaccia.





## THYME (HERB)<sup>14</sup>

- **Nutritional Benefits**

Thymol; carvacrol; caffeic acid; rosmarinic acid; luteolin

- **Health Benefits**

Helps clear mucus from lungs; has antioxidant, anti-inflammatory, respiratory, and neurological benefits



### Fast Facts and Tips

Thyme can be found all over the world in areas with temperate climates. Because of its distinct scent, it's often added to stews, baked goods, meats, salads, poultry stuffing, seafood, vegetables, and chicken and fish marinades.



## TURMERIC (SPICE)<sup>15</sup>

- **Nutritional Benefits**

Curcumin; beta-carotene; calcium; vitamin C; flavonoids; fiber; niacin; zinc

- **Health Benefits**

Has anti-inflammatory properties, lowering the risk of Alzheimer's disease and depression; helps improve memory; helps reduce pain and swelling; has possible anticancer properties



### Fast Facts and Tips

This bright yellow spice is best known for its use in Indian curries but can also be found in stir-fries, roasted vegetables and meats, teas, smoothies, and spice blends. Turmeric has recently become a trendy superfood due to its anti-inflammatory qualities.



## FIVE FLAVORS TO EXPLORE AT MEALTIME

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In addition to herbs and spices, it's fun to experiment with new flavors. Check out the following ingredients for healthy ways to add salty, sweet, sour, spicy, and nutty flavors to your meals.

### Salty

Salt enhances sweetness, reduces bitterness, and brings out the flavors and aromas of other ingredients in a dish. It's best to add small amounts of salty ingredients to a dish and taste it throughout the cooking process so the flavor is balanced. There are also ways to add a salty flavor to a dish without adding salt itself. For example, sea vegetables, cheeses, and certain sauces have a naturally salty flavor.

- Celtic sea salt
- Dulse flakes
- Fish sauce
- Fleur de sel
- Gomasio
- Herbamare
- Himalayan salt
- Liquid aminos
- Miso
- Nori flakes
- Nutritional yeast
- Olive paste
- Parmesan cheese
- Pesto
- Sea salt
- Seaweed
- Tamari
- Tomato sauce



## Sweet

Sweet ingredients bring out the flavor and reduce the sourness and bitterness of certain dishes. Although these sweeteners are derived from natural sources, use them in small amounts as they can overpower a dish and dramatically increase the sugar content.

- Agave nectar
- Apple cider vinegar
- Barley malt
- Brown rice syrup
- Cashew butter
- Chutney
- Cinnamon
- Coconut sugar
- Date sugar
- Dates
- Honey
- Jaggery
- Maple syrup
- Stevia

## Sour

Sour ingredients brighten the taste, enhance the saltiness, and reduce the sweet and spicy elements of a dish. Sour flavors stimulate the appetite and may improve digestive processes in the body.<sup>16</sup>

- Balsamic vinegar
- Chutney
- Coconut vinegar
- Green mango
- Lime, lemon, orange, or grapefruit juice
- Pickles
- Red wine vinegar
- Rice vinegar
- Sauerkraut
- Tamarind
- Umeboshi vinegar



## Spicy

Spicy flavors add heat and personality to your food. In small amounts, spicy flavors can also aid in weight loss by curbing the appetite and speeding up metabolism.

- Chutney
- Curry powder
- Garam masala
- Ginger
- Harissa
- Horseradish
- Hot peppers
- Hot sauce
- Mustard
- Wasabi

## Nutty

Nuts and nut butters are great additions not only for their taste but also for their health benefits. Some of the top health benefits of nuts include improving heart health, helping with weight control, and maintaining blood sugar levels. People with nut allergies can use seeds or certain spices to add similar nutty flavors.

- Almonds/Almond butter
- Black cardamom
- Brazil nuts
- Cashews/Cashew butter
- Chia seeds
- Coriander seeds
- Fenugreek seeds
- Flaxseeds
- Macadamias/Macadamia nut butter
- Peanuts/Peanut butter
- Pecans/Pecan butter
- Pine nuts
- Pistachios/Pistachio butter
- Pumpkin seeds/Pumpkin seed butter
- Sesame seeds/Tahini
- Sunflower seeds/Sunflower seed butter
- Walnuts/walnut butter



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