



NEWS RELEASE

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Add a Little Spice to Your Life! —Part I

According to the American Spice Trade Association (ASTA), spices and herbs have been used in foods for centuries. Archeologists estimate that by 50,000 B.C., primitive man had discovered that parts of certain aromatic plants help make food taste better. In ancient times, spices were used to make food taste palatable. With a lack of fresh foods during colder months and with stored foods deteriorating in quality, a dash of cinnamon or pepper could help make foods more edible.

Spices were once so costly only the wealthy could afford them. In 11th Century Europe, many towns paid their taxes and rent in pepper. The reason for Columbus' voyage in 1492 was to seek a more direct passage to the rich spices of the Orient.

Spices are dried plant products used primarily for seasoning. Included are tropical aromatics (pepper, cinnamon, cloves, etc.), leafy herbs (basil, oregano, marjoram, etc.), spice seeds (sesame, poppy, mustard, etc.) and dehydrated vegetables (onion, garlic, etc.). Blends such as curry, chili powders, and poultry seasoning are spices also.

Here's how to add a little SPICE to your life. For those people who are watching their sodium intake, spices can make a big difference. The following flavor and food combinations, adapted from information provided by the National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute, have the added benefit of making meat, poultry, fish and vegetables tasty without adding salt.

For MEAT, POULTRY AND FISH, try one or more of these combinations:

- BEEF: Bay leaf, marjoram, nutmeg, onion, pepper, sage, thyme
- LAMB: Curry powder, garlic, rosemary, mint
- PORK: Garlic, onion, sage, pepper, oregano
- VEAL: Bay leaf, curry powder, ginger marjoram, oregano
- CHICKEN: Ginger, marjoram, oregano, paprika, poultry seasoning, rosemary, sage, tarragon, thyme
- FISH: Curry powder, dill, dry mustard, marjoram, paprika, pepper

For VEGETABLES, experiment with one or more of these combinations:

- CARROTS: Cinnamon, cloves, dill, ginger, marjoram, nutmeg, rosemary, sage
- CORN: Cumin, curry powder, onion paprika, parsley
- GREEN BEANS: Dill, curry powder, marjoram, oregano, tarragon, thyme
- GREENS: Onion, pepper
- POTATOES: Dill, garlic, onion, paprika, parsley, sage
- SUMMER SQUASH: Cloves, curry powder, marjoram, nutmeg, rosemary, sage
- WINTER SQUASH: Cinnamon, ginger, nutmeg, onion
- TOMATOES: Basil, bay leaf, dill, marjoram, onion, oregano, parsley, pepper

REDUCING SALT. Here are some tips when using spices and herbs to help you reduce the salt in foods:

- Savory flavors, and flavors with “bite,” such as black pepper, garlic powder, curry powder, cumin, dill seeds, basil, ginger, coriander and onion, are the most effective in replacing the taste of salt.
- Use MINCED or POWERED garlic and onion rather than their SALT form
- Omit the salt when cooking pasta and flavor with basil, oregano, parsley or pepper.
- Check labels to see if “salt” or “sodium” is listed among the ingredients.

Referenced from Nancy Feldman, UCCE Stanislaus County; Source: Food Reflections, Jan/Feb 2001.