

# HERBS AND SPICES 101

**H**erbs and spices can play an important role in your kitchen. They enhance the flavor of many foods and can help you tolerate a diet lower in sodium. Herbs and spices don't add fat and they are very low in calories. If you follow a recipe you are usually guided as to how much of which herb and or spice to add.

However, learning how to use herbs will provide you with the freedom of cooking without recipes and enhancing many existing ones. Your food will taste better and you will feel more confident in your kitchen. The best way to learn how to use herbs and spices is to experiment with different flavors. Try to become familiar with a new one each week.

The 10 basic seasonings for a healthy kitchen:

- Basil has a warm, clove-like flavor. It can be used to rev up pasta sauces and give a Thai twist to stir fry dishes. It is delicious in mashed potatoes especially when paired with garlic. Basil is one herb that definitely tastes better fresh since it loses its delicate flavor when dried.
- Black pepper adds a pungent, aromatic heat to many foods. It boosts the flavor of potatoes, rice, fish, poultry, vegetables, fresh-sliced tomatoes and salads. Don't be afraid to use different grinds. Coarse or fresh ground is always delicious over fresh salads.
- Chili pepper is made from ground chilies. It has a rich aroma and a spicy hot taste. Use it to flavor chili, salsa, rice, soup and beans. Chili powder is a mix of seasonings that contains salt.
- Cinnamon can enhance oatmeal or sweet potatoes. It can impart a sweet taste without added sugar.
- Coriander has the essence of a spicy, fresh lime and can lend

## Tips

- 🍴 Chopping or mincing dried herbs increases their flavor release. • For short cooking times, add seasonings at the beginning.
- 🍴 For long cooking times, add the seasonings during the last half hour.
- 🍴 Store dried spices in tightly sealed containers in a dark, dry place.
- 🍴 Buy herbs and spices in small quantities to avoid staleness.

a wonderful flavor to rice, grilled chicken or fish. It goes well with garlic powder, chili pepper, cumin and annato (a Latin seasoning with a yellow color) for a Latin-style rice dish.

- Cumin has an earthy flavor that is delicious when added to beans and chili. It is one of the most important seasonings for hummus, a middle-eastern bean dip made from chick peas.
- Dried dill leaves are always handy to have on hand. They add a delicious, delicate flavor to pasta, potatoes, potato salad and baked fish. Salmon is always very tasty when baked with a layer of dried dill leaves on top.
- Garlic powder is a low-sodium alternative to garlic salt and really helps boost flavor. Use it in rice, soup, chili, salads and mashed potatoes. Try a seasoning mix that contains granulated garlic and dried parsley or make your own by mixing these two seasonings.
- Italian seasoning is a mixture containing oregano, marjoram and basil. What a convenience to be able to add all three of these herbs without having to hunt for three different jars in your cabinet!!
- Oregano is a bold herb that boosts the flavor of beans, salsa, chili, pasta and salads. It becomes more potent when dried so use sparingly.