

10 Healthy Herbs & Spices and their Benefits

Description

Clear out your medicine cabinet to make room for healthy herbs and spices instead. Besides just a healthy way to boost flavor, they provide numerous health benefits too.

To create interesting flavors, I spin our spice rack around for every meal I make. Its fun to try new herbs and spices to see what you can make; sometimes good (daddy/husband of the year!!)â€¦ sometimes bad (hello, couch), but always healthy. If you donâ€™t already have these 10 herbs and spices, stock up now and start adding taste and nutrition to your meals.

1. Cayenne Pepper



If you want to add a lot of intense heat to your food, cayenne pepper is the best spice for the job. A tiny bit of cayenne goes a long way (I know from experience; so does Kelleyâ€¦, again, sorry dear), so start with very little and work your way up to what youâ€™re comfortable with. Several reasons to [just add cayenne](#)â€• include its ability to relieve congestion by clearing mucus from the lungs and nose, boost immunity, prevent stomach ulcers by killing bacteria, help with weight loss, reduce blood cholesterol, triglyceride levels and platelet aggregation, prevent many types of cancer, and relieve pain. Use it in anything you want to make spicy; vegetables, salad, chili (duh), corn bread, various dips, soups, and even chocolate (you have to try it). An interesting note: The hotter the pepper, the more capsaicin it contains.

2. Black Pepper



Slightly spicy and incredibly versatile, it's no surprise that black pepper is the most common spice in the world. Black pepper is a great way to top off anything from eggs and salad to cooked grains and meat. For the best flavor and health benefits, freshly grind whole peppercorns using a pepper mill or coffee grinder. Black pepper has antioxidant and antibacterial properties; it improves digestion, helps prevent intestinal gas, is diaphoretic (promotes sweating), and diuretic (promotes urination). Black pepper provides high-quality amounts of manganese, vitamin K, iron, and the peppercorn's outer layer is said to promote the breakdown of fat cells.

3. Cinnamon



Cinnamon is one of the best spices around as it can be used in a variety of dishes. It is a very potent spice, and only a little cinnamon is needed to bring its signature intense flavor to a dish. Cinnamon aids in digestion, circulation, and helps to treat diarrhea, nausea, vomiting, and menstrual cramps. This spice is also well known for its blood-stabilizing abilities.

4. Cumin



A popular food spice, cumin has a deep smoky flavor that is used in a variety of dishes, mainly Mexican and Indian recipes. Cumin is one of the best spices for cooking because it can be used to add a smoky flavor without the spiciness of chile peppers. Cumin's list of health benefits include aiding the digestive system, improves liver function, promotes assimilation of other foods, relieves abdominal distention, gas, and colic, as well as migraines and headaches. I put this on cooked foods and mixed into salads for a wonderful smoky salad.

5. Oregano



Oregano is a powerful antioxidant rich in phytonutrients. One gram of oregano contains 42 times more antioxidants than apples, 30 times more antioxidants than potatoes, 12 times more antioxidants than oranges and 4 times more antioxidants than blueberries. Two of the most important components of oregano are thymol and carvacol which have strong antibacterial properties. A study showed that in

Mexico, oregano was more effective against amoebas than prescribed drugs. Fresh or dried oregano can be added to Italian and Mexican dishes, salads, egg dishes, vegetables, meats and more.

6. Cloves



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Cloves are the top spice that contributes to the distinctive smell of Indian food and drinks like chai tea. Cloves, whether whole or crushed, have a strong flavor and are best used in small amounts. Sprinkle a bit of ground cloves in your coffee or tea for a nice chai flavor, or add a pinch to baking recipes for something sweet and spicy.

7. Turmeric



Turmeric ranks among the best spices for adding color to a dish, and has a warm, peppery flavor similar to ginger and orange; it's what makes mustard yellow. Most of its benefits are from curcumin, a compound in turmeric that has potent antioxidant, antibacterial, and anti-inflammatory properties. This yellow-colored spice is the highest known source of beta carotene. Turmeric tones the

spleen, pancreas, liver, and stomach, and strengthens the immune system, enhances digestion, it may help control blood sugar in diabetics, and it helps to dissolve cysts and gallstones.

8. Coriander / Cilantro



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Coriander is known for being anti-diabetic, anti-inflammatory, and cholesterol lowering. It increases HDL (the “good” cholesterol), and may help reduce free radical production. Coriander is a good source of dietary fiber, manganese, iron, and magnesium. The leaves of the plant, commonly known as cilantro in the United States, may have anti-microbial and anti-bacterial properties.



Dried coriander is used for making baked goods, as a component in curries, and as a pickling spice. Cilantro is best when fresh, but either dried or fresh, it makes great salsa and adds flavor to dips, spreads, soups, and stews.

9. Parsley



Parsley is found in two varieties, curly and flat leaf. Fresh parsley is more flavorful than the dried variety. The curly version tends to have a more intense flavor than the flat-leaf variety. Use it in soups, salads, and casseroles, or to top any savory meal with or without meat. Among parsley's beneficial properties is its ability to fight cancer; Animal studies have shown that it can inhibit tumor formation, particularly in the lungs. It's also known to reduce the effect of carcinogens including those found in cigarette smoke and charcoal grill smoke.

As with most on this list, parsley is a rich source of antioxidants and essential nutrients like vitamin C, beta-carotene, and folic acid. It is also a great breath freshener and is commonly served at the end of a meal. Which is why I buy and recommend the [bulk 1 pound bag](#)!

10. Ginger



Spicy and pungent with just enough sweetness, ginger should be in the kitchen of every home cook. Great for adding an amazing sharpness to Chinese and Japanese recipes or a touch of spice to baked goods like cookies and cakes, ginger is one of the most unique spices because of its usefulness. It is warming, stimulates digestion, and boosts circulation, respiration, and nervous system function. Ginger is an anti-inflammatory and is useful for colds and fevers, alleviates motion sickness and nausea, and destroys intestinal parasites.

You really can't go wrong adding any herb or spice to your meals (unless you're allergic), but these are what I consider some of the best to have and use daily. I think [garlic powder](#) deserves an honorable mention for the list, but this is best consumed as fresh cloves crushed and chopped in recipes.

How many of these do you currently have and use in your kitchen?



My typical mound of spices. And I still had more to add!

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