

Herbs and spices: Enhance the flavor of food

Want to enhance the flavor of your food without adding fat, salt or sugar? Use herbs and spices to contribute bright color, savory taste and sensational aroma. Here's a close look at some useful herbs and spices and what foods they work best with.

Herb or spice	Description	Use to enhance
Basil	An herb with a sweet, clove-like taste	Italian foods, especially tomatoes, tomato sauces, pasta, chicken, fish and shellfish
Bay leaf	A pungent, woody herb with a slight cinnamon taste	Bean or meat stews and soups
Caraway	Seeds with a nutty, licorice flavor	Cooked vegetables such as beets, cabbage, carrots, potatoes, turnips and winter squash
Chervil	An herb in the parsley family with a subtle flavor of licorice and lemon	French cuisine, fish, shellfish, chicken, peas, green beans, tomatoes and salad greens
Chili powder <i>Note:</i> Some chili powders have salt in them	A commercial mix of ground chili peppers, cumin, oregano, and other herbs and spices	Bean or meat stews and soups
Chives	A member of the onion family, with long, hollow green stems and a mild onion flavor	Sauces, soups, baked potatoes, salads, omelets, pasta, seafood and meat
Cilantro	An herb with a lively, citrusy, evergreen-like flavor	Mexican, Latin American and Asian cuisine, rice, beans, fish, shellfish, poultry, vegetables, salsas and salads
Cumin	A spice with an earthy, nutty flavor and smell	Curried vegetables, poultry, fish and beans
Curry	A combination of spices that can include cumin, pepper, chili peppers, ginger, onion, cinnamon, paprika, cilantro or tumeric	Indian or southeast Asian cuisine, lamb, and meat-based dishes and soups
Dill (fresh)	An herb with a mild sweet but tangy flavor	Seafood, chicken, yogurt, cucumbers, green beans, tomatoes, potatoes and beets
Dill (seeds)	Seeds with a mild sweet but tangy flavor	Rice and fish dishes
Ginger (dried)	A spice with a slightly sweet flavor and a hint of citrus	Rice, chicken and marinades
Mace	A spice with a sweet, warm flavor	Baked goods, fruit dishes, carrots, broccoli, Brussels sprouts and cauliflower
Marjoram	An herb similar to oregano but with a minty, basil flavor	Tomato-based dishes, fish, meat, poultry, eggs and vegetables

Oregano	An herb with a somewhat sweet and peppery flavor	Italian and Greek cuisine, and meat and poultry dishes
Paprika	A bright, brownish-orange spice that, depending on the variety, can add a mild, sweet flavor or a spicy flavor	Spanish dishes, potatoes, soups, stews, baked fish and salad dressings
Rosemary	An herb with a piney flavor	Mushrooms, roasted potatoes, stuffing, ripe melon, poultry and meats, especially grilled
Sage	An herb with a rich, musty flavor	Poultry stuffing, chicken, duck, pork, eggplant, and bean stews and soups
Tarragon	An herb with a mild licorice flavor	Chicken, veal, fish, shellfish, eggs, salad dressings, tomatoes, mushrooms and carrots
Thyme	An herb with a strong minty and somewhat bitter flavor	Fish, shellfish, poultry, tomatoes, beans, eggplant, mushrooms, potatoes and summer squash
Turmeric	A spice with a deep yellow color that has a sharp, woody taste	Indian cuisine, potatoes and light-colored vegetables to add color and taste

Source: Mayo Clinic website accessed Feb. 17, 2006.