BEGINNER’S GUIDE TO HERBS & SPICES Herbs and spices can add great flavor to any cuisine and can help you reduce the amount of added fat, salt and sugar in your diet.

What’s the difference? Herbs are fragrant leaves from plants and can be fresh or dried. Some common herbs are oregano, thyme, parsley, mint, basil and rosemary. Spices are usually dried and ground and come from the bark, fruit, roots and seeds of tropical plants and trees. Common spices are cinnamon, nutmeg, allspice, cloves, curry and pepper.

What’s the key? A little goes a little goes a long way. You can always add more to your dish, but you can’t take it away.

Basic combinations:
- Basil on tomatoes
- Oregano on zucchini
- Rosemary on peas, cauliflower or squash
- Dill on green beans

COOKING QUICK TIPS
- For soups, try out new seasoning combinations by first adding one-eighth teaspoon to one-half cup of liquid, let stand for 10 minutes and taste.
- Choose fresh herbs that look bright and aren’t wilted. Add them toward the end of cooking. Add dried herbs in the earlier stages of cooking. When substituting dried for fresh, use about one-third the amount.
- You can replace salt with flavors that have “bite,” such as pepper, basil, onion or garlic powder, cumin, or curry.

- Reduce sugar by using spices with a hint of “sweet” such as cinnamon, ginger, clove, nutmeg or cardamom.

Lemon-Rosemary Chicken Breasts
1 lemon
1½ teaspoons finely chopped fresh rosemary or ¼ teaspoon dried rosemary
¼ teaspoon salt
Dash pepper
1½ teaspoons olive oil
1 small garlic clove, minced
2 boneless skinless chicken breast halves

Cut 2 thin slices from lemon; set aside. Squeeze 2 teaspoons lemon juice from remaining lemon into small bowl. Add rosemary, salt, pepper, oil and garlic; mix well. Add chicken breast halves; turn to coat. Arrange chicken on broiler pan. Top each with lemon slice. Broil 4 to 6 inches from heat for 5 minutes. Turn chicken, placing lemon slices under chicken. Broil an additional 5 to 7 minutes or until chicken is fork-tender and juices run clear. Discard lemon slices. Makes 2 servings.

Olive Oil Dipping Sauce
1 cup olive oil
2 garlic cloves, minced
2 tablespoons chopped fresh parsley
2 tablespoons chopped fresh basil
2 teaspoons chopped fresh oregano
2 teaspoons chopped fresh rosemary
2 teaspoons freshly ground pepper
½ teaspoon crushed red pepper
½ teaspoon salt

Stir together all ingredients. Serve immediately or cover and chill up to 3 days.
Think Spring!!

Grow Your Own Lettuce

Gourmet lettuce mixes are common in the produce section of the grocery store but often have steep prices. This spring, give your food budget a break, and plant your own blends of burgundy and chartreuse greens. Your homegrown efforts will make colorful, edible container plantings. These cool-weather salad fixings are easy to produce and last until the summer heat sets in.

Materials Needs
- container with drainage hole
- potting soil
- lettuce or seeds

Sowing Seeds

Lettuce grows easily from seeds, and this method yields an abundance of interesting selections. Sources such Renee’s Garden offer enticing options including Paris Market Mix, Monet’s Garden Mesclun (the word “mesclun” is interchangeable with “gourmet salad mix”), and Farmers Market Lettuce Blend. Try one of these mixes to create a really special salad and display.

- First, fill a well-drained container with damp potting soils, and sprinkle a generous amount of seeds on top.
- Lettuce germinates quickly when exposed to light, so barely cover seeds with a thin layer of potting mix.
- Gently mist or sprinkle with water daily until your new crop germinates-usually within 7 to 10 days.

As the seedlings sprout and grow, the container will become thick with lettuce plants. When they reach 2 inches tall; remove half of them so the remaining ones will have sufficient room to mature. Grasp the tiny plants at their bases, gently pulling them from the soil until half are gone.

Thinning the lettuce also serves another purpose: Gently rinse the freshly pulled greens in cold water, and you’ll have the makings of a fresh salad.

Celestial Salad

1 head lettuce or package mixed greens
1-11 oz. can mandarin oranges, drained
1 cup dried cranberries
½ cup chopped green onions
½ cup sliced toasted almonds, divided
½ cup salad oil
½ cup orange juice
¼ cup sugar
3 tablespoons white vinegar
Salt
1 teaspoon celery seed
2 teaspoons powdered dry mustard or 1 teaspoon spicy prepared mustard

Combine greens, oranges, cranberries, onions and ¼ cup almonds. Combine remaining ingredients in covered container and shake well. Pour over salad and toss well. Sprinkle with remaining almonds.

Quick-Fix Fitness

Got a minute? Get in shape!
1. Stretch your arms above your head. Reach for the ceiling!
2. Slowly bring your arms down and touch your toes.
3. Holding your position, without bouncing or bending your legs, try touching the floor.
4. Return to standing position and repeat 1-3.
5. Facing a wall and standing about three feet away, lean against the wall with your palms. Keep your arms out straight, stretch your right calf by slowing lunging your left leg forward, keeping your feet parallel and your rear heel touching the floor.
6. Repeat for your left calf.
7. Using both arms out straight, lean against your desk or a secure table, keeping your back straight. Do five “desk pushups.”

There. In about a minute you’ve worked your arms, shoulders, legs and backs, and even your abdominal muscles. Try it!

Judy Groce Neel, Extension Area Specialist III
Nutrition Educators: Kent Armstrong
Julie Bledsoe
Amy Dever
Lisa Shaddix
Rhonda Dudley