

Herbs & Spices

As requested by a reader, I am providing you information on using herbs and spices. I will provide you with a little background information. We will start alphabetically with Allspice.



Allspice is a small brown berry; favor resembles a combination cinnamon, clove, and nutmeg. Native to West India, Jamaica, Guatemala and Honduras. Example of Foods used in -Sausages, braised meats, poached fish, cooked fruits, pudding, pies, and relishes. To grind Allspice at home, do not use a grinder with plastic parts, because the oil in the spice can cloud plastic. Folklore suggests that Allspice provides relief for digestive problems.



Anise, a spice, has a licorice flavor. In foods and beverages, star anise is considered a culinary spice; both the seed and oil are used as flavoring. It is native to Spain; in Turkey prehistorically they hung anise plants near pillows to prevent bad dreams. Anise was also used to aid digestion and ward off epileptic attacks. Example of Foods used in -Cookies, pastries, and bread. FDA warns us to avoid giving infants "teas" brewed from star anise. Brewed "teas" containing star anise have been associated with illnesses affecting infants. The illnesses ranged from

serious neurological effects, such as seizures, to vomiting, jitteriness, and rapid eye movement. <http://www.fda.gov/Food/ResourcesForYou/HealthEducators/ucm089629.htm>

Originate from the West Indies, Arrowroot is a plant that has no flavor. In foods, arrowroot is used as an ingredient in cooking. Arrowroot is often replaced with cheaper starches, including potato, corn, wheat, or rice starch. Arrowroot makes clear, shimmering fruit gels and prevents ice crystals from forming in homemade ice cream. For Gluten free products, 2 teaspoons of Arrowroot can be substitute for 1 tablespoon of corn starch or 1 tsp. of Arrowroot can be substitute for 1 Tbsp. of flour. Example of Foods used in -Arrowroot thickens at lower temperatures than mixtures made with flour or cornstarch. Mix arrowroot with cool liquids before adding hot liquids, then cook until mixture thickens. People use starch taken from the root and rhizome (underground stem) to make medicine.



Basil, an herb, which is aromatic green leaf a member of the mint family. In cooking, holy basil is often added to stir-fry dishes and spicy soups because of its peppery taste. Cookbooks sometimes call it "hot basil. Romans made Basil a symbol of love and fertility and settlers' early America valued it. Example of Foods used in -Tomato dishes, pesto, egg dishes, salads, marinades, fish and compound butters.

The **Bay Leaf** stiff dark green, oblong leaf with a pungent aroma reminiscent of sassafras. Come from the Laurel tree Use Example in Food- Stocks, sauces, soup, stews, and braised meats.



Caraway is a dark brown curved seed grown in Northern Europe. Caraway is a plant that has an interesting place in legend. Superstitions held that caraway had the power to prevent the theft of any object that contained the seed and to keep lovers from losing interest in one another. These days, some people think caraway has healing power, and they use the oil, fruit, and seeds as medicine. Example of Foods used in - Rye bread, cabbage, sauerkraut, and Eastern European Cuisine. Folk or traditional uses Caraway for digestive problems including heartburn, bloating, gas, loss of appetite, and mild spasms of the stomach and intestines, improve control of urination, kill bacteria in the body, and relieve constipation.



Tiny brown **Cardamom** seeds are in white or green pods. Cardamom is sweet, aromatic, and expensive and a native of India and Guatemala. Example of Foods used in - Pickling, Danish pastries and curries. Cardamom contains chemicals that appear to treat stomach and intestinal spasms and gas, and increase the movement of food through the intestine.



Cayenne

Cayenne is a very powerful, ground hot red pepper. Native of India. Example of Foods used in - Soups, sauces, fish, and eggs.

Cayenne Pepper is made from the dried pods of pungent chili peppers. Try adding Cayenne Pepper to salsa, avocado dip, taco, and enchilada sauces for extra zesty flavor.



Chervil is a small, delicate, green leaf which has a mild favor of parsley and tarragon. Traditional grown in Southern Russia, is currently grown USA and Holland. Chervil brings out the favor of other herbs. Chervil is a good source of calcium and potassium, but there isn't enough information available to understand how chervil might work. Example of Foods used in - Soups, salads, sauces, egg dishes, chicken, fish, and dressing.



Chives are the hollow, green top of a value small onion. Example of Foods used in - Salads, egg and cheese dishes, fish, soups, and sauces.



Cilantro is a light green aromatic leaf. Shaped like flat parsley but much more pungent flavor. Leaf from coriander seed. Example of Foods used in - Salads, salsa, sauces, soups, eggs, and dressings.



Cinnamon is a reddish brown aromatic comes from the bark of trees native to China, India, and Southeast Asia. A popular cooking spice in many cultures for centuries, cinnamon also has a long history of use as a folk or traditional medicine. For example, many ancient societies used cinnamon for bronchitis. Additional folk or traditional uses include gastrointestinal problems, loss of appetite, and control of diabetes, as well as a variety of other conditions. Example of Foods used in - Preserves, stewed fruits, breads,

pastries, desserts, ham and hot beverages. Cinnamon bark is used to make powders, capsules, teas, and liquid extracts. Although there are many kinds of cinnamon, Ceylon cinnamon referred to as “true” cinnamon and cassia cinnamon, known as Chinese cinnamon are the most familiar. In many cases, the cinnamon spice purchased in food stores contains a combination of these different types of cinnamon. FDA, science reports: there have not been high-quality clinical studies in people to support the use of cinnamon for any medical condition. Analyzing five clinical trials concluded that cinnamon does not appear to affect factors related to diabetes and heart disease. FDA states Cassia Cinnamon contains coumarin, the parent compound of warfarin, a medication used to keep blood from clotting. Cinnamon should not be used in place of conventional medical care.



Clove is the dried flower bud or topical clove tree. It is Pungent, sweet in flavor and native of Indonesia. Folk or traditional uses clove possibly effective for... premature ejaculation when applied directly to the skin of the penis in combination with other medicines. Example of Foods used in - Whole: marinades, stocks, sauces, braised meats, hams, and pickling; Ground: pastries, fruits and cakes. Research

shows insufficient evidence to rate effectiveness for... toothache. Clove oil and eugenol, one of the chemicals it contains, have long been used topically for toothache, but the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has reclassified eugenol, downgrading its effectiveness rating. The FDA now believes there isn't enough evidence to rate eugenol as effective for toothache pain, "dry socket" following tooth extraction, vomiting, Upset stomach, nausea, gas (flatulence), diarrhea, hernia, pain and swelling (inflammation) of the mouth and throat, or cough.

<http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/druginfo/natural/251.html>



Coriander is a plant that is used as a culinary spice and to prevent food poisoning in whole or ground form. It is round light-brown seed of cilantro leaf with a slightly aromatic flavor. Native to Argentina and Morocco. Coriander is a plant. People use the seed for medicine. Example of Foods used in - Pickling, sausages, stocks, pork, curry, gingerbread, salsa, and dressings. Folk or traditionally, Coriander is used for digestion problems

including upset stomach, loss of appetite, hernia, nausea, diarrhea, bowel spasms, and intestinal gas. It is also used to treat measles, hemorrhoids, toothaches, worms, and joint pain, as well as infections caused by bacteria and fungus.



Cumin is a spice which uses whole or ground seeds. The small seed resembling caraway, but lighter in color and are grown in Mexico and Syria. Example of Foods used in - Chili and curry powder blends, sausages, salsa, eggs and cheese, curry dishes, vegetables, soups, sauces, fish, meats and rice. Folk or traditionally people take cumin for digestion problems including diarrhea, colic, bowel spasms, and gas. Cumin is also used to increase urine flow to relieve bloating (as a diuretic); to start menstruation; and to increase sexual desire (as an aphrodisiac). It's not known how cumin might work on the conditions for which people use it.



liver problems, and gallbladder complaints.

In foods, **dill** is used as an herbs and spice -seed with “dill pickles” flavor. The seed are more pungent than the herb. Some example of foods used in - soups, sauerkraut, marinade. Herb: salads, soups, fish, shellfish, vegetables, sauces and pickling. Some other suggested foods to use with dill include: Sausages, tomato sauces, marinades, fish, and pickling Dill is a plant that has a long history as a culinary spice. Folk -dill for digestion problems including loss of appetite, intestinal gas (flatulence),



Water fennel is a plant in which we use the seeds making it a spice. This greenish brown seed is similar in flavor to anise, and it is grown in South America, Asia, and Africa. Folk or traditionally, people take water fennel for coughs, intestinal gas, and water retention. But, there isn't enough information to know how water fennel might work as a medicine.



Garlic is an herb widely used its best known as a flavoring for food. It is the edible bulb from a plant in the lily family. It has been used as both a medicine and a spice for thousands of years. Garlic's most common folk or traditional uses as a dietary supplement are for high cholesterol, heart disease, and high blood pressure.

The Healing Power of Ginger



"The Positive Pear"

Ginger is light brown knobby roots from tropical plant that has green-purple flowers and an aromatic underground stem (called a rhizome). It is commonly used in cooking as a spice: fresh whole, dried powder, candied crystallized, or pickled. Example of Foods used in - Baked goods desserts, fruits, curry dishes, pickling, and chutney. Often used in Chinese, Caribbean, and Japanese cuisine. Historically, ginger has been used in Asian medicine to treat stomach aches, nausea, and diarrhea. FDA science says, studies suggest that short-term use of ginger can safely relieve pregnancy-related nausea and vomiting. Studies are mixed on whether ginger is effective for

nausea caused by motion, chemotherapy or surgery.



Juniper is a short to medium-height tree that grows wild in some parts of Europe, North America, and Asia. The juniper berry, a slightly soft, purple berry with a "piney" flavor," is often used as a condiment and a flavoring ingredient in gin and bitter preparations. The extract and essential oil are used as a flavoring ingredient in foods and beverages. Example of Foods used in - Marinades, game dishes, and sauerkraut.



Mace and **Nutmeg** are plant products. Nutmeg is the shelled, dried seed of the plant *Myristica fragrans*, and mace is the dried net-like covering of the shell of the seed. Mace is aromatic, similar to nutmeg in flavor but milder. Example Mace in foods include: baked goods, desserts, fruit, sausages, fish, vegetables, and preserves. Nutmeg can be used in: baked goods, pies, cream sauces, soups, chicken, veal, vegetables, desserts, and breads. Try this salt

substitute to help cut down on your salt (sodium) intake but always talk to your doctor before trying any salt substitute. Mix the following ingredients together and put them in a shaker: 1/2 tsp. cayenne pepper, 1/2 tsp. garlic powder; 1 tsp. (5 g) each: Basil, Onion powder, Black pepper, Parsley, Mace, Sage, Marjoram, Savory, and Thyme.

<http://www.webmd.com/food-recipes/tc/salt-substitute-recipe-overview>



Marjoram is a plant. Gray green herb from mint family. Similar to oregano but milder. You probably recognize it as a common cooking spice. Marjoram has an interesting place in early Greek mythology. As the story goes, the goddess of love, Aphrodite, grew marjoram, and, as a result, marjoram has been used ever since in various love potions. Well I'm not sure of the love potions but some example of foods which Marjoram is commonly used include:

beef, veal, lamb sausage, pates, poultry, soups, soups, vegetables, salads, and sauces. In other folklore - Marjoram tea was also used for various digestion problems including poor appetite, and stomach cramps. Some women use marjoram tea for relieving symptoms of menopause, treating mood swings related to menstrual periods. Don't confuse marjoram with winter marjoram or oregano (*Origanum vulgare*), which is also referred to as wild marjoram. <http://www.webmd.com/>



Mint is an aromatic herb with cool flavor. Spearmint and peppermint are most common. The herb peppermint, a cross between two types of mint (water mint and spearmint) grows throughout Europe and North America. Peppermint is often used to flavor foods, and the leaves can be used fresh or dried in teas. Example of Foods used in - Lamb, fruits, tea, fruit beverages, peas, carrots, potatoes, jellies, soups, and sauces.. National Center for

Complementary and Alternative Medicine (NCCAM) science says, several studies suggest that peppermint oil may improve symptoms of irritable bowel syndrome.



Mustard seed is a very pungent white, yellow or brown seed spice with antioxidants to support the immune system. Example of Foods used in - Prepared mustard, pickling, sauces, and salsa.



Nasturtium is a yellow, orange, and red flowers and sharp casting leaves and seeds with pungent odor plant. Example of Foods used in - Salads, pickling, and mustard. Nasturtium contains vitamin C and might help fight bacteria, fungi, viruses, and tumors.

<http://www.webmd.com/>



Oregano is a pungent herb, similar to marjoram, but stronger. Native to Italy and Mexico and is also grown domestically. In foods and beverages, oregano is used as a culinary spice and a food preservative. The leaf is used to make medicine. Example of Foods used in - Italian & Mexican dishes, tomato sauces, soups, sauces, stews, meats, salads, and marinades. Folk or traditionally the oil of oregano has been taken by mouth for intestinal parasites,

allergies, sinus pain, arthritis, cold and flu, swine flu, earaches, and fatigue. It is applied to the skin for skin conditions including acne, athlete's foot, oily skin, dandruff, canker sores, warts, ringworm, rosacea, and psoriasis; as well as for insect and spider bites, gum disease, toothaches, muscle pain, and varicose veins. Oregano oil has also been used topically as an insect repellent.



Paprika is a spice round from dried sweet, red pepper. Example of Foods used in - Fish, seafood, meats, salads, sauces, dressings, and garnish.



Parsley piert is a green leaf sometimes curly or flat with delicate sweet flavor herb which is an excellent source of vitamin C. Example of Foods used in - Garnish fried, stews, sauces, salads, vegetables and potatoes. Folk or traditionally people take parsley piert for fever, kidney stones, bladder stones, and fluid retention though there isn't enough information to know how parsley piert might work.



Black and white pepper are made from the *Piper nigrum* plant and are widely used. Black pepper is ground from dried, whole unripe fruit; it is pungent and aromatic. White: what is left when black outer casing is removed it is milder and adds sharp tang to all foods. In foods and beverages, black pepper, white pepper, and pepper oil (a product distilled from black pepper) are used as flavoring agents. Folk or traditionally people take black pepper for

stomach upset, bronchitis, and cancer. Some have taken white pepper for stomach upset, malaria, cholera, and cancer; though, there is conflicting evidence about pepper's role in fighting cancer. Some evidence suggests pepper might protect against colon cancer, but other evidence suggests it might promote liver cancer. Black pepper is sometimes applied directly to the skin for treating nerve pain (neuralgia) and a skin disease called scabies.



Poppy seeds, a spice, are tiny blue black seeds with crunchy nut like flavor. It is a product of the opium poppy, but does not contain opium. Example of Foods used in - Breads, rolls, pastry, fillings, cookies, cakes, salsa, and dressings.



Rosemary is a very aromatic herb with light green leaf resembling pine needles. Often it is healthy and strong, even in cold weather. Rosemary is an excellent herb to use in Lamb, fish, beef, sauces, soups, stews, salads, and marinades. Folk and traditionally, Rosemary was used for digestion problems, including heartburn, intestinal

gas (flatulence), liver and gallbladder complaints, and loss of appetite. It has also used for gout, cough, headache, and high blood pressure. Rosemary is also traditionally used topically (applied to the skin) for preventing and treating baldness; although, it's not clear how rosemary works for hair loss, applying it to the scalp irritates the skin.



Saffron is a plant, in which, the dried stigmas (thread-like parts of the flower) are used to make saffron spice. It can take 75,000 saffron blossoms to produce a single pound of saffron spice. Saffron is largely cultivated and harvested by hand. Due to the amount of labor involved in harvesting, saffron is considered one of the world's most expensive spices. Saffron gives bright yellow color to foods with a mild distinctive flavor. Saffron is a good choice for baked goods, rice, potatoes, soups, sauces, curry, and meats. Folk or

traditionally, Saffron is used for asthma, cough, whooping cough (pertussis), and to loosen phlegm (as an expectorant). It is also used for sleep problems (insomnia), cancer, “hardening of the arteries” (atherosclerosis), intestinal gas (flatulence), depression, Alzheimer’s disease, fright, shock, spitting up blood (hemoptysis), pain, heartburn, and dry skin. There isn't enough information to know how saffron might work.



Sage is an herb with pungent gray green herb with fuzzy oblong leaves. Sage has been used for centuries as a spice and seasoning in cooking in foods like: stuffing, meat, poultry, soups, stews, salads, and fish. National Institutes of Health, National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine (NCCAM) found that sage has not been well studied as a treatment for sore throat. Though, two small studies suggest that sage may improve mood and mental performance in healthy young people and memory and attention in older adults. Sage is generally regarded as safe by FDA for food as a

seasoning. However some species of sage contains thujone, which can affect the nervous system. Extended use or large amounts may result in restlessness, vomiting, vertigo, rapid heart rate, tremors, seizures and even kidney damage. Ingesting 12 drops or more of the essential oil is considered a toxic dose.



Savory is a fragrant herb from the mint family. A summer crop preferred to winter crop. Example of Foods used in - Salads, eggs, vegetables, stuffing, soups, meats, fish, and sauces. Summer savory is a plant used as a culinary spice, and its oil is used as a flavoring agent. Folk or traditionally, people take summer savory for coughs, sore throat, and intestinal disorders including cramps, indigestion, gas, diarrhea, nausea, and loss of

appetite. People with diabetes take it to relieve frequent thirst. It has also been used as a tonic and as an aphrodisiac to increase sex drive. Some people apply summer savory directly to the skin for insect bites. FDA needs more research to prove that the chemicals in summer savory decrease muscle spasms and kill bacteria and fungus as well as all the other claims.



Sesame is small yellowish seed with high oil content and nutty taste. Imported from Asia, East and Central America. Some example of foods in which sesame is often used include: bread, roll garnish, salads, and oriental candy.



Tarragon is an herb. Delicate green herb with small oblong leaves. Flavor is similar to mint and licorice. Some people call it “mugwort.” Be careful not to confuse tarragon with mugwort (*Artemisia vulgaris*). Try tarragon in you Béarnaise sauce, vinegar, chicken, fish, salads, dressings, and egg dishes. Tarragon is a good source of potassium. It also contains ingredients that seem to be able to fight certain bacteria. Folk or traditionally: tarragon is used to treat digestion problems, poor appetite, water retention, and toothache; to start menstruation; and to promote sleep.



Thyme is a tiny brownish green leaf, very aromatic herb which is often used in soups, chowder, stocks, sauces, meats, poultry, and salad dressing. Folk or traditionally Thyme is taken by mouth for bronchitis, whooping cough, sore throat, colic, arthritis, upset stomach, stomach pain (gastritis), diarrhea, bedwetting, a movement disorder in children (dyspraxia), intestinal gas (flatulence), parasitic worm infections, and skin disorders. It is also used to increase urine flow (as a diuretic), to disinfect the urine, and as an appetite stimulant. Some people apply thyme directly to the skin for hoarseness (laryngitis), swollen tonsils (tonsillitis), sore mouth, and bad breath. Thyme oil is used as a germ-killer in mouthwashes and liniments. It is also applied to the scalp to treat baldness and to the ears to fight bacterial and fungal infections. Thymol, one of the chemicals in thyme, is used with another chemical, chlorhexidine, as a dental varnish to prevent tooth decay. More evidence is needed to rate the effectiveness of thyme for these uses.

<http://www.webmd.com/vitamins-supplements/ingredientmono-823-THYME.aspx?activeIngredientId=823&activeIngredientName=THYME>



Turmeric is a shrub related to ginger with a mild but peppery flavor. It is grown throughout India and other parts of Asia and Africa. Known for its warm, bitter taste and golden color, turmeric is commonly used in fabric dyes and in foods such as curry powders, mustards, and cheeses, but it should not be confused with Javanese turmeric. Try turmeric in your curry powder, pickles, relish, salads, eggs, rice, and chow-chow dishes. National Institutes of

Health, National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine (<http://nccam.nih.gov/health/herbsataglance.htm>) says that there is little reliable evidence to support the use of turmeric for any health condition because few clinical trials have been conducted. But, preliminary findings suggest a chemical found in turmeric-called curcumin may have anti-inflammatory, anti-cancer and antioxidant properties though these have not been tested in humans. Turmeric is considered safe for most adult though, high doses or long-term use may cause indigestion, nausea or diarrhea. People with gallbladder disease should avoid using turmeric as a dietary supplement, as it may worsen the condition.

This segment concludes the series on herbs, spices and seasonings. I hope you are more informed and are willing to try these seasonings to spice up you food and taste buds. Remember spice is right and enjoy each bite eating slower while enjoying your family at the dining table.

REFERENCES

1. American Heart Association.
http://www.heart.org/HEARTORG/GettingHealthy/NutritionCenter/HealthyDietGoals/Sodium-Salt-or-Sodium-Chloride_UCM_303290_Article.jsp
2. Dietary Guidelines for American 2010.
<http://www.health.gov/dietaryguidelines/dga2010/dietaryguidelines2010.pdf>
3. The Food Science Resource.
<http://www.ifis.org/resources/features/spicing-things-up/>
4. National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine (NCCAM).
<http://nccam.nih.gov/health/garlic>

I have found the folk uses of these herbs and spices interesting, but let's remember most folklore or tradition uses have not been approved by USDA as medicine. I recommend the herbs and spices to be used to add favor to your foods. If you are taking any supplement for health reasons on a weekly bases your physician should be informed as many supplements can alter the effectiveness of prescribed prescriptions. Next week we will continue with the herb Oregano.

