## Ask the Expert: How Can I “Spice” Up My Health?

*Written by Amanda Vetter, Undergraduate Student in Nutrition Science, Purdue University*

Cooking with herbs and spices is a tasty way to give your dishes flavor, an extra nutritional boost, and decrease the amount of sodium and sugar added during food preparation. Like fruits and vegetables, spices also contain antioxidants, but because dry spices have the water removed, the antioxidants are concentrated.

Spices may promote immunity, reduce inflammation linked to heart disease, help curb appetite, enhance satiety, and boost metabolism. The variety of herbs and spices available leads to endless flavor possibilities. Try adding a few of these spices to everyday meals to start reaping their benefits!

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cinnamon: Cinnamon contains iron, calcium, and manganese and is loaded with antioxidants. One half teaspoon of cinnamon has more antioxidant power than a half cup of raspberries! Some studies suggest that cinnamon may help control blood glucose, blood pressure, low-density lipoprotein, and cholesterol, especially in people with Type 2 diabetes. Try sprinkling cinnamon on top of applesauce, sweet potatoes, or oatmeal for a little extra kick.</th>
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<td><strong>Cumin:</strong> Cumin is a good source of iron and vitamin C and a strong anti-inflammatory antioxidant that may aid digestion. It is commonly found in Mexican, Thai, Indian, Greek, and Mediterranean foods. Try using cumin as a rub on meats and in tacos or rice.</td>
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<td><strong>Garlic:</strong> Garlic may reduce cholesterol level, improve circulation, and reduce blood pressure, benefitting the cardiovascular system. Garlic may also improve immune function. Enjoy garlic crushed, chopped, or minced and added to dressings, sauces, purées, and butters, for roasting, casseroles, and stews.</td>
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<td><strong>Curry Powder:</strong> Curry powder is a blend of as many as twenty different spices, herbs, and seeds. This spice combination is high in antioxidants that may aid in digestion, lower cholesterol, reduce inflammation, and protect against Alzheimer’s disease. Curry powder works great as a rub for meats, in sauces, or in soups.</td>
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### Tips:
- Spices and herbs should enhance, not disguise the taste of food. Start with ¼ teaspoon of dry herbs for 1 pound of meat or 1 pint of sauce.
- For chilled foods such as salads and dips, add seasonings several hours ahead to allow the flavors to blend.
- Start building up your spice rack with commonly used spices like garlic, oregano, and basil, or look for spice blends for delicious variety all in one.
- Be aware that spices with “salt” in the label (rather than “powder”) contain sodium.
- Reach for the pepper shaker rather than the salt shaker!

### Sources:
Food Safety:
How to Store and Use Herbs and Spices Safely

Written by Kiara McIntosh, Undergraduate Student in Food Science, Purdue University

Cooking with herbs and spices is a great way to add a special touch to your recipes during the holidays...but how long have you had those spices in the cabinet? Like most foods, spices are perishable and may harbor bacteria and viruses. Since the shelf life of spices may vary, a good rule is to keep ground spices for a year and whole spices for two years.

With care and attention to the shelf life, you can avoid bringing unwanted contaminants into your home. In 2013, the Food and Drug Administration published an article announcing the finding of Salmonella in dried spices. This pathogen has the ability to endure in dry foods for an extended amount of time.

A few practices that preserve the quality of spices and herbs are storing them away from sunlight, in an airtight container, and away from moisture. Avoid directly sprinkling spices from the container over steamy foods, especially while cooking, to prevent moisture from getting into the container. Store spices away from heat-producing appliances. A simple way to test the freshness of a spice is by checking the strength of the aroma. If the spice smells flavorful and strong, it is probably still good for use. Label spices with a permanent marker to note the day they were opened.

To reduce the risk of harm from a contaminated spice, add dried spices before cooking. Clean fresh herbs carefully with water before use. Prolonged heating of fresh herbs can cause flavor loss, so less delicate herbs like thyme, rosemary, and oregano can be added the last 20 minutes of cooking. Delicate herbs like mint, basil, cilantro, and parsley can be added a few minutes before the end of cooking.

Safe storage and usage of herbs and spices will ensure they will provide reliable, delicious flavors in many dishes!

A Glimpse into Indian Cuisine

Written by Nicolette Mehas, Research Assistant in the Department of Nutrition Science, Purdue University

A typical Indian diet incorporates a variety of spices and fresh ingredients to create unique flavor combinations. Some of the common dishes featured in Indian cuisine are described here. Rice and flatbreads made of wheat are common starches used to complete a meal. Yogurt is used frequently as a marinade, thickeners, or cooling component when paired with spicy foods. Chutney is a traditional dip or relish that can be made either sweet, salty or spicy and added to many different dishes. Curries are popular mixed dishes that combine chopped vegetables and proteins flavored with a curry mix. Curries may often contain beans, a staple food that provides plant-based protein. Try making your own Indian cuisine using the recipes below!

These recipes feature healthy Indian dishes containing a variety of herbs and spices. Vitamins A, C, and B1, fiber, and folate are some of the nutrients offered in these recipes! Check out our upcoming cooking demonstration videos of these recipes by Registered Dietitian Michelle Singleton on the IEFRN website at: https://www.purdue.edu/indianasefrnetwork/resources/videolibrary.aspx.

Sources: Curry in a Hurry Cooking Demonstration, Purdue University; http://worldroom.tamu.edu/Presentations/India/Food/The%20Cuisine%20of%20India.pdf; Top Picture: https://share.america.gov/food-talk-big-americas-melting-pot/

Baked Chicken with Cilantro Mint Chutney

**Ingredients** (8 servings)
- 4 6oz. boneless, skinless chicken breasts
- 3 tablespoons onion, finely diced
- 2 tablespoons of garlic powder
- ½ teaspoon, cayenne pepper
- 1 ½ teaspoons vegetable oil
- 1 ¼ teaspoons cumin
- ¼ teaspoon salt

**Chutney:**
- 1 cup fresh cilantro
- ½ cup fresh mint leaves
- ½ cup green onions, chopped
- 1 tablespoon jalapeno pepper, diced
- 1 teaspoon vegetable oil
- ¼ teaspoon cumin

**Directions**
1. Butterfly chicken breasts. Combine onion, garlic powder, cayenne pepper, and oil in a large zipper storage bag. Add chicken and cumin to bag. Seal and massage marinade into chicken. Let sit in refrigerator for 2 hours.
2. Preheat oven to 400° F. Remove chicken from bag. Place chicken in a baking dish that has been sprayed with non-stick cooking spray. Sprinkle chicken with ¼ teaspoon salt. Bake for 20 minutes or until 165° F.
3. While chicken is cooking, make chutney. Finely dice and combine cilantro, mint, green onions, and jalapeno. Stir in oil and cumin last. Serve chicken topped with chutney.

Fall Vegetable Curry with Yogurt

**Ingredients** (4 servings)
- 1 ½ teaspoons vegetable oil
- 1 cup sweet potato, diced
- 1 cup cauliflower florets (or frozen cauliflower)
- ¼ cup onion, diced
- 2 teaspoons curry powder
- ½ cup vegetable broth, low sodium
- ¼ teaspoon salt
- 1 can (15 oz) reduced sodium chickpeas rinsed and drained (or dried chickpeas)
- 1 can diced tomatoes, no added salt
- 2 tablespoons fresh cilantro
- ½ cup plain non-fat yogurt

**Directions**
1. Heat oil in a large non-stick pan over medium-high heat. Add peeled and diced sweet potato to pan and sauté for 3 minutes. Decrease heat to medium and add cauliflower, onion, and curry powder. Cook 1 minute, stirring consistently.
2. Add broth, salt, chickpeas, and tomatoes. Bring to a boil. Cover, reduce heat, and simmer 10 minutes or until vegetables are tender, stirring occasionally.
3. Sprinkle with cilantro and serve with yogurt.

Both recipes adapted with permission from Curry in a Hurry Cooking Demonstration, Purdue University

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**Baked Chicken Breasts with Cilantro Mint Chutney**
*Per serving:* 157 Calories, 5g Total Fat, 1g Total Saturated Fat, 105mg Sodium, 11g Total Carbohydrate, 3g Total Sugars, 4.5g Total Dietary Fiber, 27g Total Protein

**Fall Vegetable Curry**
*Per serving:* 207 Calories, 4g Total Fat, 0g Total Saturated Fat, 417mg Sodium, 37g Total Carbohydrate, 8g Total Sugars, 8g Total Dietary Fiber, 10g Total Protein
Send comments and/or change of address to:
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This newsletter is edited by Nicolette Mehas and Heather A. Eicher-Miller, PhD and is created by the Eicher-Miller Lab in the Department of Nutrition Science at Purdue University. This institution is an equal opportunity provider.

### Check Out our Upcoming NEP Assistant Interviews!

Written by Nicolette Mehas, Research Assistant in the Department of Nutrition Science, Purdue University

The Purdue Extension Nutrition Education Program (NEP) provides educational workshops on making healthy choices, managing resources, preparing meals, and more, all across Indiana. NEP Assistants deliver nutrition education to participants to help individuals and families select nutritious foods that fit within their budget. Be sure to check out the upcoming NEP Assistant interviews on the IEFRN website to learn more about the inspiring NEP Assistants below and how they make a difference in the community!

**WHAT:** NEP Assistant interview questions and answers

**WHERE:** The IEFRN Website at: https://www.purdue.edu/indianasefrnetwork/default.aspx

**WHEN:** Early December

**WHY:** NEP Assistants have many diverse experiences and interesting tips to inspire others to make healthy, budget-friendly food choices.

**Velvet Miller**
Delaware County

**Carolyn Schmidt**
Warrick County

**Micki Byrd**
Clark County

Source: http://www.purdue.edu/hhs/extension/programs/detail.aspx?programId=5&category=food