

Herbs, spices and flavour

Herbs and spices are important for adding flavour to foods and they work well with healthier fats. They also contain important phytonutrients. Useful store cupboard ingredients to add flavour include:

Base ingredients

These ingredients help to make delicious flavour foundations for meals.

- onions and shallots
- garlic
- leeks, celery and spring onions
- tomatoes
- carrots
- bell peppers



Spices and pastes

These provide a range of flavours from sweetness to a kick of heat.

- black pepper
- garam masala (savory spice blend)
- curry powder (savory spice blend)
- dried mixed or fresh herbs
- paprika /smoked paprika
- mixed spice (sweet spice blend)
- cinnamon
- cumin
- ginger
- sumac
- tomato puree
- pesto
- harissa



Acidity and sourness

These help to balance flavours and bring out more flavour in your meals.

- lemon
- lime
- orange
- apple cider vinegar
- red wine vinegar
- white wine vinegar
- natural or Greek yoghurt



Healthier fats

These help to enhance mouth feel and carry flavours.

- seed oils e.g. rapeseed or sunflower oil
- olive oil
- nuts and seeds



Tips for including more herbs, spices and flavour

Try adding herbs and spices to your existing meals as an easy introduction.



Lightly fry onions and garlic in seed oil or olive oil and add spices to build a flavourful base for chillies, curries, casseroles and soups.



Add most of your spices at the beginning of cooking so they have time to release their flavours. Finish with a sprinkle of spices and a scattering of fresh herbs for added flavour.



Garam masala and curry powder are savoury spice blends and bring out the flavours of pulses and vegetables in meals.



Mixed spice is a sweeter spice blend which adds natural sweetness to meals. Add to porridge and roasted vegetables.



Add 1 tablespoon of harissa or pesto to 4 tablespoons of natural or Greek yoghurt to make a less processed sauce for hot and cold meals.



Citrus fruits like lemon or lime as well as vinegar (e.g. apple cider, red or white wine vinegar), can enhance flavours of salad, vegetable and grain dishes. Add as a dressing or squeeze lemon or lime juice over the meal before serving.



Are all spices hot?

Only a small number of spices are hot, for example, black pepper, chilli and cayenne peppers are 'hotter' spices. Most other spices are fragrant or sweet scented.



Did you know?

Herbs and spices have been used for thousands of years for both cooking and medicinal purposes. As well as adding flavour they also contain important phytonutrients.



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