

# Spice Up Your Health With Seasonings That Fight Diseases

Common herbs and spices not only add flavor to your favorite dishes, but the right ones can also help fight cancer, diabetes and heart disease. How do we incorporate them into our everyday lives?

Many of us have lots of little bottles of herbs and spices in our kitchens. But too often they're just collecting dust. Sadly, we only use them for special occasions, like Thanksgiving.

Now it's time to open the right ones more often for better-tasting dishes and an even healthier lifestyle.

**1. A pinch of cinnamon.** Herbs and spices come from plants. The difference is herbs, like basil, rosemary and oregano, come from the leaves, whereas spices come from the other parts.

For instance, cinnamon comes from the bark; ginger comes from the root.

Celebrity chef Christina Ferrare shares cooking tips and recipes on her popular television show, *Home and Family*, on the Hallmark Channel. She says people would be surprised to know about the amazing health benefits of common herbs and spices, such as cinnamon.

"It can lower blood sugar and your triglycerides," she says. "And your triglycerides are a type of fat that are in your blood. And with people with Type 2 diabetes, this is also very good for them as well."

Just a teaspoon of cinnamon packs a powerful punch. Ferrare suggests adding cinnamon and a little brown sugar to plain

yogurt to make a healthy fruit dip.

**2. Paprika and turmeric.** Another spice Ferrare loves to use is paprika.

"I put it on popcorn. I use it on rubs—rubs on chicken," she says. "It contains capsaicin, and it is an anti-inflammatory and has antioxidant effects that may lower the risk of cancer. It also lowers the risk of cardiovascular disease to help with that."

"It's great for arthritis," she adds. "I like to use it on most everything. Believe it or not, when I have pains in my joints, I will use that, and it really does help."

Turmeric is one of the healthiest spices around. In fact, it was actually used as medicine in ancient cultures.

Ferrare explains what makes it so powerful.

"Turmeric contains curcumin, which can inhibit the growth of cancer cells," she says. "It reduces inflammation. It supports your immune system, it's great for your liver function, and, as you know, it's used in Indian cooking."

Turmeric is a beautiful yellow color and has a rich, smoky flavor. Ferrare simply adds a little to water when making rice.

**3. Garlic and oregano.** The great thing about using herbs and spices to flavor food is that we rely less on sugar and salt for taste.

Garlic, for example, is a versatile food that fits a variety of needs. To get the greatest health benefit, let it sit for 15 minutes after chopping. If you do cook it, make sure to keep the temperature low.

Ferrare uses lots of garlic in her recipes.

“Garlic is a superfood,” she says. “It destroys cancer cells. It disrupts metabolism of tumor cells as well, so they won’t develop. It reduces cholesterol and triglycerides. It’s anti-inflammatory and is a great source of vitamin B, vitamin C and iron.”

Add raw garlic to salad dressing, or cook it in pasta sauce.

Speaking of Italian cuisine, oregano, common in Italian food, is gram-for-gram the highest in antioxidants of all the herbs.

“It is an excellent source of fiber,” Ferrare says. “It’s rich in vitamin K, and vitamin K promotes bone growth. I use it on tomatoes, sauces, soups, and put it on pizza.”

Ferrare even takes her love of oregano one step further.

“I love oil of oregano or oregano oil,” she says. “You can get it at any health food store. It comes in a little bottle, and I use it for whenever I’m getting sick or whenever I don’t feel well. It’s like a miracle oil.”

**4. Ginger and rosemary.** Ginger is a healthy addition to tea, desserts, side dishes and main dishes.

“Ginger decreases motion sickness and nausea, and it may relieve the pain and swelling associated with arthritis,” Ferrare says. “It can also hinder blood clotting.”

Ferrare adds ginger to cooked carrots with a little butter and brown sugar. She also enjoys crystallized ginger on its own as a snack. Delicious!

Rounding out Ferrare’s list of healthiest herbs and spices is rosemary.

“I put it on chicken, on potatoes. I chop it into my pasta as well,” she says. “Rosemary stops gene mutations that can lead to cancer. It also helps prevent damage to the blood vessels that raise the risk of heart disease. I just love the aroma,

and it's an excellent source of vitamins as well."

The wonderful flavor from herbs and spices translates into eating less because we tend to feel satisfied sooner than when we eat bland foods, according to research.

The active compounds in herbs and spices degrade over time, so purchase the brands with the "best by" dates on them.

Also store them in airtight containers away from heat, moisture and direct sunlight.

While dried is great, fresh is even better! You just need to use twice as much fresh than dried. You can find fresh herbs and spices in the produce department of your grocery store. You can also grow many at home—even inside!

So step out of your comfort zone and start using herbs and spices in your everyday cooking—for better taste and better health.

*For the original article, visit .*