

6 SUPER SPICES

Health Perks with Good Taste

Spices bear a long and exotic history. Early hunters and gatherers made the first marinade by wrapping their meat in leaves, bark, and seeds. Ancient Egyptian papyri sketch the medicinal uses of various spices. During Shlomo Hamelech's reign, spices were regarded as valuable commodities, as illustrated by the Queen of Sheba's fragrant gift to him. Later on, Indian medical writings from the 2nd century detail the health benefits of many seasonings. While contemporary science has yet to prove that any particular spice can cure disease, there's ample evidence that many flavorings serve up an array of health bonuses. Here's a review of six spices and what they can do for you:

WRITTEN BY DEBBIE BURACK



CINNAMON

Native to Southeast Asia, cinnamon bark is saturated with essential oils. While Ceylon cinnamon is the most common, its darker-colored cousin, Cassia cinnamon, is most strongly associated with health benefits. As little as 1 ½ tsp per day of this zesty seasoning is recommended.

According to the Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center (MSK-CC), cinnamon has demonstrated antioxidant, antibacterial and anti-inflammatory properties in laboratory studies. It's also been linked with lowering blood glucose levels in people with type 2 diabetes, and preliminary research indicates that it helps decrease lipids.

GREAT GO- WITH'S:

- ➡ Add ½ tsp into coffee grounds before brewing, or shake onto a steamy cup of hot cocoa.
- ➡ Pass on the butter and salt, and add cinnamon to baked sweet potatoes.
- ➡ Drop a cinnamon stick into the cooking water of lentils; remove before serving.
- ➡ Sprinkle over sliced apples, atop oatmeal, and into pancake or French toast batter.

CHILI PEPPERS

Capsaicin, a bioactive compound found in chili peppers, sets fire to more than your taste buds! Shown to enhance fat-burning capacity, this sizzlin' spice boosts your metabolism, according to a University of Wyoming study. Capsaicin may also help you live longer. Researchers at the Chinese Academy of Medical Sciences showed that people who ate peppery foods at least six times a week had a 14% lower risk of premature death for all causes, versus people who ate spicy foods less than once a week.

GREAT GO- WITH'S:

- ➡ Turn any stew, burger, chili, salsa, or soup into a Cajun experience by adding chopped chili peppers.
- ➡ For contemporary fusion flavor, mix into recipes with ginger or chocolate.
- ➡ Zap bland foods, such as mashed avocado or air-popped popcorn, with a few shakes of cayenne pepper.

CUMIN

Related to the caraway family, cumin seeds boast longtime use for digestion problems. In addition, just one tablespoon of these coarse kernels fulfills 22 percent of your daily iron requirement, which helps rev your energy level and strengthen your immune system. In order to bring out their savory flavor, cumin seeds are generally toasted in a pan for a few minutes, or they can be ground into a powder.

GREAT GO- WITH'S:

- ➡ Toss toasted seeds with roasted vegetables and drizzle lightly with olive oil.
- ➡ For a North African-inspired pilaf, mix seeds into a pot of brown rice before cooking, and add almonds and dried apricots before serving.
- ➡ For a relaxing cuppa tea that will also soothe your stomach, boil seeds in water and let steep for 8-10 minutes before sipping.
- ➡ Upgrade an ordinary bowl of chick peas or legumes by stirring in cumin powder.



OREGANO

Oregano is associated with many powerful health claims, as outlined by a 2015 article in Medical News Today. With a pleasant and robust flavor, fresh or dried oregano goes easily into any meal. Packed with carvacrol, a potent antimicrobial agent, oregano slows the reproduction of normal food bacteria, thus helping to prevent food poisoning. One fascinating study showed that Himalayan oregano’s essential oil can kill the hospital superbug MRSA. Packed with vitamin K, which promotes bone growth and density, oregano has shown effectiveness against osteoporosis. It also boasts a soaring amount of antioxidants (one teaspoon contains as many antioxidants as 3 cups of spinach!), as well as proven anticancer agents.

GREAT GO- WITH'S:

- ➡ Stir fresh oregano into ground beef for burgers with gourmet flair.
- Mix dried flakes with a bit of ➡ olive oil and red wine vinegar and drizzle over salad.
- ➡ Add to scrambled eggs, or whip up an herb frittata.
- ➡ Mince fresh oregano and knead a few tablespoons into bread dough for aromatic dinner rolls. Or blend into a pesto and spread on pitas.

TURMERIC

Derived from the rootstock of a tropical plant, turmeric has a bold golden color and a pungent flavor. Filled with active curcuminoids, turmeric displays antioxidant, anti-inflammatory, antibacterial, antifungal and anticancer actions, according to a 2007 report published in Advances in Experimental Medicine and Biology. Curcuminoids subdue free radicals that can damage DNA, and they impede molecules involved with the body’s inflammatory response.

GREAT GO-WITH'S:

- ➡ To infuse flavor and color into plain rice, add ground turmeric to the cooking water.
- ➡ Rub it on chicken or fish before cooking to give a mustardy sensation.
- ➡ A staple in Southeast Asian cuisine, turmeric intensifies orange soups, lentil dishes, and curries.

GINGER

A piquant rhizome, ginger has been used by healers since antiquity. Greeks wrapped it in bread as a digestive treatment, Chinese sailors nibbled it to relieve seasickness, and American colonists brewed it into a cure-all tonic. Clinical trials testify to ginger’s potential to help alleviate nausea and vomiting, as reported by MSKCC. Another study showed that ginger significantly reduced knee pain in patients with osteoarthritis.

GREAT GO-WITH'S:

- ➡ Either ground or chopped crystalized bits add tang to sweet batters, such as banana bread, carrot muffins, or pear cobbler.
- ➡ Traditionally used in Asian stir-fries, ginger adds zip to all vegetables, meat, poultry, and fish.
- ➡ To brew a cup of ginger tea: grate 2 teaspoons of fresh ginger root in 1 ½ cups of tepid water. Steep for 15 minutes, sweeten with honey, and drink.

Herbs and spices please your palette without adding the empty calories of sauces or syrups, or unhealthy sodium from a salt shaker. Easy to find and space-efficient to stock, they’re a worthwhile investment for boosting flavor and health. **fyi**

SOURCES: Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center. Integrative Medicine: About Herbs, Botanicals & Other Products Medical News Today: “Oregano: Health Benefits, Side Effects.” Sept. 2015 | CNN: “Spicy Foods May Help You Live Longer.” Aug. 2015 | The Washington Post: “Spices and Their Health Benefits.” Jan. 2014 | WebMD: “Spices and Herbs, Their Health Benefits.”

Polenta Cakes topped with Eggplant Caviar

THE BEE’S KITCHEN | SABRINA OVADIA

For the polenta cakes:

- 1 tube of polenta cut into 1/2 inch slices
- 1 cup of flour
- 1 cup of breadcrumbs mixed with 2 tbsp of dried cilantro
- 2 eggs, beaten
- 1 large eggplant
- Oil for frying
- Olive oil
- 1 teaspoon of salt
- 1 teaspoon of paprika
- 1 teaspoon of cumin
- 2 garlic cloves, grated
- Juice from half a lemon

For the tomatoes confit:

- 1 cup of cherry tomatoes
- Salt
- Pepper
- Olive oil
- Fresh cilantro for garnish

To make the polenta cakes:

SET UP a three-step process for the breading: flour, eggs and bread-crumbs. DIP first in the flour, SHAKE off the excess, then DIP in the eggs, and finally into the breadcrumbs. HEAT up vegetable oil in large skillet and lightly fry the polenta cakes on both sides for about 3 to 4 minutes on each side. SET ASIDE.

To prepare the eggplant caviar:

HEAT UP the broiler and broil the eggplant for a few minutes on each side. REMOVE the skin and mash with a fork. ADD salt, one tbsp of olive oil, lemon juice, garlic, paprika, cumin, and mix very well.



Pita Chips with Zaatar and Roasted Peppers

THE BEE’S KITCHEN | SABRINA OVADIA

- 3 mini pitas, cut into 4 wedges
- 1/3 cup olive oil
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1 teaspoon pepper
- 1 teaspoon garlic powder
- 1 red pepper
- 1 green pepper
- Salt
- Olive oil
- 1/3 cup of crumbled feta
- Few tablespoons of zaatar

PREHEAT the oven to 350. In a small bowl, whisk together olive oil, salt, pepper, and garlic. Brush on both sides of each pita wedge. Place on a baking sheet and bake for 12-15 minutes. Set aside. PLACE THE PEPPERS on the broiler and roast for about 5 to 6 minutes on each side, turning them often to avoid burning. When cool, peel them and cut into thin slices. TO ASSEMBLE: place first the pita chip, then the roasted peppers and the feta cheese. Top with some zaatar.