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# The Old Farmer's Almanac

An Old Farmer's Almanac Resource

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Guide to

# Cooking

## Spices & Herbs in the Kitchen

*Bring on the  
flavor!*

*34 easy recipes  
teach how  
and why to use  
25 common  
spices & herbs  
in delicious  
family dishes.*

*With lore and  
more, make  
cooking fun!*



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Almanac**

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*Tomatoes and oregano make it Italian, wine and tarragon  
make it French . . . [and] garlic makes it good.*

—Alice May Brock, American author (b. 1941)



Any cook will tell you that the secret to great food is great flavor, which usually results from using spices and herbs in correct portions and combinations.

For some cooks, getting the flavor right can be a challenge: How much spice is enough? How will these herbs taste together? Which is best—fresh or dried?

You'll find the answers to these and other such questions right here.

This fun, informative guide, created by the editors of *The Old Farmer's Almanac*, will greatly increase your culinary confidence about spices and herbs.

You'll prepare tastier dishes and make more appetizing meals by using these reliable recipes and quick-reference charts—as well as have lots to talk about at mealtime after you surprise your family and friends with lore about each herb.

If you wish, print these pages and keep them in your favorite cookbook.

We hope that you find this guide helpful; please let us know at [Almanac.com/CookingQuestions](http://Almanac.com/CookingQuestions).

And think of this as just the beginning: For additional recipes, gardening information for growing your own, and a whole lot more, visit [Almanac.com](http://Almanac.com).



## Allspice

### Flavor

Allspice tastes like a blend of cinnamon, nutmeg, and cloves.

### Lore

Christopher Columbus and his crew found allspice in the West Indies in 1493. His ship's physician noted that the tree had the "finest smell of cloves" ever encountered. In the Caribbean, allspice is known as Jamaica pepper; in Poland, it's called *kubaba*.

### In the Kitchen

Use allspice in pot roasts, stuffings, cakes, biscuits, pies, and relishes.

## CARAMEL-APPLE TART

- 1½ cups cake flour
- ½ cup (1 stick) butter, softened
- 5 tablespoons sugar
- 1 egg
- 1 teaspoon cinnamon
- ¼ teaspoon allspice
- 1 cup brown sugar
- 4 tablespoons all-purpose flour
- 4 cups peeled and sliced apples

**M**ix the first four ingredients together. Add a little water, if necessary, to form a dough. Chill for 2 hours before use. Preheat the oven to 350°F. Roll out the dough to ⅛ inch and press into a well-greased 10-inch tart pan. Set aside any extra pastry for later use. Mix the remaining dry ingredients well. Add the apples, mix well, and spoon into a pastry-lined tart pan. With any remaining pastry, cut out shapes and layer over the tart. Sprinkle with a little more cinnamon and brown sugar, if desired. Bake 40 to 45 minutes, or until light brown.

**Makes 12 servings.**



## Basil, Sweet

### Flavor

Sweet basil has a mild mint-licorice flavor.

### Lore

Basil is considered sacred in India and precious to lovers in Italy. It was once customary for Italian men to wear a sprig of basil as a sign of their marital intentions. Romans believed that cursing while sowing basil would ensure a good crop.

### In the Kitchen

Use basil in tomato dishes, pesto and other sauces, and salad dressings.



## BASIL CARBONARA

- 10 slices bacon
- ¼ cup fresh basil leaves
- 5 cloves garlic
- 2 eggs, beaten
- ½ cup half-and-half
- 1 cup fresh grated Parmesan
- 1 pound pasta

**B**oil some water for cooking the pasta. Fry the bacon, drain, and chop it into ¼-inch pieces. Process or chop the basil and garlic until finely minced. In a bowl, mix the eggs and half-and-half, then add the bacon, basil mixture, and grated cheese. Cook the pasta as directed, and drain. Immediately add the sauce to the hot pasta. Stir lightly to mix. Cover and let sit for 2 to 3 minutes (to ensure that the egg mixture “cooks”). Toss and serve at once with extra Parmesan. **Makes 4 to 6 servings.**

Where salt  
is good,  
so is basil.

—Italian saying

## Bay Leaves

### Flavor

Bay leaves have a woody, pleasantly bitter taste.

### Lore

Thought to deter lightning, witches, and the devil, bay leaves were also used in Ancient Greece and Rome for laurel crowns to mark wisdom and victory. When placed under your pillow, bay leaves bring pleasant dreams.

### In the Kitchen

Use bay leaves with meat, fish, and poultry dishes, and in sauces.



## Cardamom

### Flavor

Cardamom has a mild ginger flavor.

### Lore

Cardamom, related to ginger, was used in old recipes for pickled vegetables, fruits, and herring as well as custards, spiced wines, liqueurs, and sauerbraten. It is also believed to freshen breath and aid digestion.

### In the Kitchen

Use cardamom in cakes and pastries (and instead of nutmeg in pumpkin pie), curries, and jellies, and with sweet potatoes.



## SOUR CREAM WAFFLES

5 eggs

½ cup sugar

1 cup all-purpose flour, sifted

1 teaspoon ground cardamom

1 cup sour cream

¼ cup (½ stick) unsalted butter, melted

**B**eat the eggs and sugar together for 5 to 10 minutes with an electric mixer. With a rubber spatula, alternately fold in half of the flour, the cardamom, and the sour cream, and then the remaining flour. Lightly stir in the melted butter and set the batter aside for 10 minutes. Heat a waffle iron until a drop of water sputters when dropped onto it. Pour about ¾ cup of the batter in the center of the hot iron. Close the top and cook over direct heat for 5 minutes. **Makes about 6 waffles.**

## CRANBERRY RELISH

1 tablespoon vegetable oil

1 small onion, chopped

⅔ cup red-wine vinegar

1 cup brown sugar

1 tablespoon grated fresh ginger

1 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper

1 teaspoon cinnamon

½ teaspoon ground allspice

½ teaspoon coriander

½ teaspoon ground cloves

½ teaspoon nutmeg

1 bay leaf

3 cups cranberries, washed and picked over

2 pears, peeled, cored, and diced

**H**eat the oil and sauté the onion, then add the vinegar, brown sugar, spices, and bay leaf. Simmer 20 minutes, or until syrupy. Add the cranberries and pears and simmer for another 15 minutes. Remove the bay leaf and serve at room temperature. **Makes 3 to 4 cups.**

# Celery Seed

## Flavor

Celery seed tastes like celery.

## Lore

Celery seed is welcomed wherever a bit of bitterness is desired. Seventeenth-century Italians developed the parent plant, celery, from a wild, bitter, salt-marsh plant called smallage.

## In the Kitchen

Use celery seed with vegetables, eggs, meat, fish, and poultry.

## HORSERADISH DRESSING

**2 cloves garlic, crushed**

**½ teaspoon celery seed**

**1 teaspoon prepared hot mustard or ground mustard**

**4 tablespoons grated horseradish**

**½ cup olive oil**

**4 tablespoons wine vinegar**

**⅔ cup cottage cheese**

**salt, to taste**

Combine all of the ingredients in a blender and process until smooth. Thin as desired with a little water; add salt. This makes a hearty dressing over cabbage salad or poured over hot or cold cooked vegetables.

**Makes about 1½ cups.**



## FOR GREAT RESULTS

Wrap fresh herbs in damp paper towels. Put them in a cool place where they will keep for a few days. For longer storage, freeze or dry herbs.

# Chervil

## Flavor

Chervil has a mild flavor similar to that of parsley.

## Lore

Chervil is related to parsley and is native to southern Russia. During the Middle Ages, it was used to treat a variety of disorders. Chervil's botanical name means "the heart rejoices."

## In the Kitchen

Use chervil in soups, salads, and sauces, and in egg, fish, veal, lamb, and pork dishes.



## CARROTS WITH GRAPES

**2 pounds carrots**

**2 teaspoons dried basil**

**1 clove garlic**

**½ cup (1 stick) butter**

**1 teaspoon dried chervil**

**¼ teaspoon celery salt**

**2 cups seedless white grapes, halved**

**2 tablespoons fresh lemon juice**

Clean the carrots and cut into julienne strips. In a saucepan, combine the carrots, basil, and garlic; add water to cover, and cook for 20 minutes, or until tender. While the carrots are cooking, melt the butter in a saucepan and add the chervil and celery salt. When the carrots are cooked, drain; discard the garlic. Add the carrots, grapes, and lemon juice to the butter, stir to coat, and heat just until the grapes are warm. Serve as a side dish with chicken or turkey. **Makes 12 servings.**

# Chives

## Flavor

Chives have a delicate onion flavor.

## Lore

Ancient Chinese herbalists suggested eating chives as an antidote to poison. Clusters of chives were also hung in homes to ward off evil spirits. The German word for chives is *Schnittlauch*, which means “cuttable leek.”

## In the Kitchen

Use chives to enliven vegetable, rice, egg, and cheese dishes; dressings, sauces and gravies; and dips.

## FRENCH-STYLE POTATO SALAD

- 2 pounds whole boiled potatoes
- ¼ cup white-wine vinegar, divided
- ½ cup olive oil
- 1 tablespoon Dijon-style mustard
- salt and pepper, to taste
- 1 cup chopped fresh chives
- 2 tablespoons chopped fresh parsley
- 1 tablespoon chopped fresh tarragon

**S**lice the cooked potatoes while they are still warm. Sprinkle with half of the vinegar. Mix the rest of the vinegar with the oil, mustard, salt, and pepper and pour it over the potatoes. Toss with the chives and herbs. **Makes 4 to 6 servings.**

## FOR GREAT RESULTS

When storing spices, be sure that containers are airtight. Moisture can cause ground spices to lump. Store spices in a cool, dark place. Ground spices will retain their best flavors for about a year. Whole spices may last for three to five years.



# Cilantro

## Flavor

Cilantro has a mild flavor similar to that of parsley.

## Lore

Cilantro is the leaves of the coriander plant and was once considered to prevent baldness. Legend has it that pregnant women have the best luck sowing it.

## In the Kitchen

Use cilantro in soups, salads, and curries, and as a garnish.

## GREEN TOMATO SALSA

- 4 to 5 large green tomatoes
- 1 red bell pepper, seeded and roasted
- 2 jalapeños, seeded and roasted (optional)
- 2 small onions, chopped
- 3 cloves garlic
- 1 teaspoon sugar
- 1 teaspoon ground cumin
- ½ cup fresh cilantro leaves
- salt and pepper, to taste

**C**ombine all of the ingredients (except salt and pepper) in a food processor and chop coarsely. Season to taste with salt and pepper and refrigerate for at least 3 hours to allow the flavors to blend and develop. Remove from the fridge about 20 minutes before serving. **Makes about 3 cups.**

FOR GREAT RESULTS

If you are a fan of low-sodium cooking, substitute strong, flavorful herbs and spices such as basil, black pepper, cumin, curry, garlic, and oregano.

## Cinnamon

### Flavor

Cinnamon has a warm, sweet flavor.

### Lore

Folklore suggests sniffing cinnamon to cure the common cold. Cinnamon is an appetite stimulant. Cinnamon sticks (the bark of the cinnamon tree) were used by colonial Americans as a digestive aid and to flavor or “mull” cider. This spice has also been used in sacred oils for anointing.

### In the Kitchen

Use ground cinnamon in baked goods, stewed fruits, and vegetable dishes, and in spiced teas and coffees.



## Cumin

### Flavor

Cumin has a salty-sweet flavor similar to that of caraway.

### Lore

In Europe, during the Middle Ages, cumin was given to lovers to keep them faithful. Italian and German bread bakers traditionally add cumin to the dough to protect the loaves from being stolen by wood spirits. Hens that are fed cumin stay close to home.

### In the Kitchen

Use cumin whole in yogurt dishes, soups, and breads. Use ground cumin in pork, rice, and sausage dishes, and in chilies and curries.



## BLENDER GAZPACHO

- 1 red bell pepper, seeded
- 1 small cucumber, peeled and seeded
- 2 cups vegetable juice (such as V-8)
- 1 cup salsa
- ¼ cup chicken broth
- ¼ cup chopped fresh parsley
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 tablespoon red-wine vinegar
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- ½ teaspoon ground cumin
- hot sauce, to taste
- salt and pepper, to taste

**C**hop the vegetables into small pieces. Combine all of the ingredients in a large bowl, transfer to a blender or food processor, and process in batches, aiming for a coarse purée. Refrigerate for at least 2 hours. (This is best if made a day ahead, so that flavors can meld.) **Makes 4 servings.**

## COLD STRAWBERRY SOUP

- 1 quart fresh or frozen strawberries
- ⅓ cup orange juice
- ¼ cup cranberry juice
- ½ cup yogurt (any kind)
- 1 teaspoon fresh lime juice
- 2 tablespoons sugar
- 1 tablespoon cinnamon
- ¼ teaspoon nutmeg
- whipped cream, as garnish
- 4 mint leaves, as garnish

**M**ix all of the ingredients together (except the whipped cream and mint leaves) and purée in a food processor or blender. Chill for several hours to allow flavors to blend. Garnish each serving with a dollop of whipped cream; more cinnamon, if desired; and a mint leaf. **Makes 4 servings.**

# Garlic

## Flavor

Garlic has a pungent, aromatic, mild to biting taste when raw. The flavor mellows when it's cooked.

## Lore

Garlic was believed to inspire courage, which is why ancient Romans ate it before battle and Bolivian bullfighters carried it into the ring. Aristotle considered consuming garlic as a guard against hydrophobia, the fear of water. Folklore advises hanging whole bulbs around the neck to cure a cold.

## In the Kitchen

Use garlic in tomato dishes, breads, soups, dips, sauces, and marinades, or with meats, poultry, fish, and vegetables.

## GRILLED PORTOBELLOS

- 4 portobello mushrooms
- 4 cloves garlic, minced
- ½ teaspoon dried thyme
- ½ teaspoon dried, crumbled rosemary
- ¼ cup olive oil
- ¼ cup balsamic vinegar
- 1 tablespoon chopped fresh chives
- 2 tablespoons ketchup
- 1 tablespoon honey
- 1 tablespoon soy sauce
- salt and pepper, to taste
- 2 cups cooked rice

Rinse the mushrooms and pat dry, then cut off and chop the stems. Mix the garlic, thyme, rosemary, and olive oil and drizzle the mixture over the caps. Combine the remaining ingredients (except the cooked rice) with the chopped stems in a small saucepan. Simmer for 5 minutes. Baste the caps with the sauce, and grill (or broil) for 2 to 3 minutes per side. Serve with rice, with the remaining sauce on the side. **Makes 4 servings.**



*There are five elements: earth,  
air, fire, water, and garlic.*

—Louis Diat, French chef (1885–1957)



# Ginger

## Flavor

Ginger has a sweet, fiery flavor.

## Lore

In the 1800s, a tincture of ginger (produced by steeping an ounce of gingerroot over gentle heat in a pint of spirits for a week) was an “expellant to purgative droughts” and a cure for seasickness.

## In the Kitchen

Use ginger in pies, pickles, puddings, cookies, cakes, cheese dishes, salad dressings, and soups.

## MAPLE SYRUP CAKE

- ½ cup (1 stick) butter
- 1 cup sugar
- 2 eggs, beaten
- 1 cup maple syrup
- 2½ cups all-purpose flour
- 2 teaspoons baking powder
- ¾ teaspoon baking soda
- ½ teaspoon ground ginger
- ½ cup hot water
- pecan or walnut halves, as garnish

Preheat the oven to 350°F. Grease an angel food cake pan. Cream the butter with the sugar. Add the beaten eggs and maple syrup. Sift together the dry ingredients and add, alternating with hot water. Pour into the pan and bake for about 50 minutes. Garnish with pecan halves. **Makes 12 servings.**



Add herbs and spices to slow-cooking dishes an hour or less before serving. Cooking them for too long may result in an overpowering flavor.

## Lovage

### Flavor

Lovage smells lemony and tastes like celery.

### Lore

Ancient Greeks and Romans chewed on lovage seeds to aid digestion. Lovage can grow up to 7 feet tall, and its stalks make good drinking straws.

### In the Kitchen

Lovage complements soups and stews, rice and vegetable dishes, and stuffings and salad dressings. Young stalks are sometimes candied. The seeds can be sprinkled on breads and biscuits prior to baking.

## PICKLED CARROT STICKS

**4 pounds carrots, peeled and cut into 4-inch sticks**

**6 lovage sprigs**

**18 peppercorns**

**1 tablespoon mustard seeds**

**5 cloves garlic, thickly sliced**

**3½ cups white or cider vinegar**

**½ cup sugar**

**S**tand the carrots upright in six sterilized pint-size canning jars. Add a sprig of lovage to each jar. Divide up the peppercorns, mustard seeds, and garlic; sprinkle equal amounts into each jar. Boil together the vinegar, 2½ cups of water, and the sugar until the sugar dissolves. Pour the hot liquid over the carrots, covering them completely and leaving a ¼-inch head space. Seal and refrigerate for at least 1 week before using.

**Makes 6 pints.**

## Mace

### Flavor

Mace has a mild nutmeg flavor.

### Lore

Mace is the dried aril (lacelike covering over the shell) of nutmeg; when fresh, it appears as pressed, flat blades. It is most commonly used ground. Old recipes used mace sparingly (often with cherries) because it was quite precious.

### In the Kitchen

Use mace in doughnuts and other baked goods, in sauces, and with chicken, creamed fish and other seafood, and fruits.

## MULLIGATAWNY SOUP

**2 tablespoons butter**

**1 medium onion, sliced**

**1 medium carrot, diced**

**1 celery stalk, diced**

**1 green bell pepper, seeded and diced**

**1 apple, peeled and sliced**

**1 cup diced cooked chicken**

**⅓ cup all-purpose flour**

**1 teaspoon curry powder**

**⅛ teaspoon ground mace**

**2 whole cloves**

**1 sprig fresh parsley**

**2 cups chicken stock or broth**

**1 cup chopped cooked or canned tomatoes**

**salt and pepper, to taste**

**M**elt the butter in a large saucepan or stockpot over medium heat. Add the onion, carrot, celery, green pepper, apple, and chicken and sauté until the onion is tender. Gradually stir in the flour and curry powder. Add the remaining ingredients and simmer, covered, for 30 minutes. Remove the cloves. Serve hot. **Makes 6 servings.**



# Marjoram

## Flavor

Marjoram has a delicate, flowery taste.

## Lore

### The Old

*Farmer's Almanac* once suggested marjoram for those “given to overmuch sighing.” Ancient Greeks believed that it could revive the spirits of anyone who inhaled it.

## In the Kitchen

**Marjoram complements almost any meat, fish, dairy, or vegetable dish that isn't sweet. Add it near the end of cooking to capture the most flavor.**



# Mint

## Flavor

Mint leaves have a fruity, pungent taste.

## Lore

The Ancient Greeks named mint after a mythical character, Menthe. During the Middle Ages, powdered mint leaves were used to whiten the teeth.

## In the Kitchen

**Mint is common in Middle Eastern dishes. Use it with roast lamb or fish, and in salads, jellies, or teas.**

## GARDEN-FRESH TABBOULEH

- 1 cup bulgur (cracked wheat)**
- 1 cup chopped fresh parsley**
- ½ cup chopped scallions**
- 1 clove garlic, minced**
- ¼ cup chopped fresh mint leaves**
- 3 tablespoons fresh lemon juice**
- 1 large tomato, chopped**
- ½ cup garbanzo beans, cooked or canned**

**P**ut the bulgur into a bowl and cover it with 1½ cups of boiling water; stir. Cover the bowl with a towel and let it stand for about 1 hour, or until all of the water is absorbed. Add the remaining ingredients and mix well. Cover the bowl and refrigerate for at least 2 hours to blend the flavors. Serve in pita pockets or with feta cheese. **Makes 6 servings.**

*As for the garden of mint, the very smell of it alone recovers and refreshes our spirits, as the taste stirs up our appetite for meat.*

—Pliny the Elder, Roman scholar  
(A.D. 23–79)

## SHRIMP, ARUGULA, AND CHICORY SALAD

- ¼ cup olive oil**
- 1 tablespoon minced garlic**
- 1 onion, finely chopped**
- ¼ cup chopped scallions, including the green part**
- ½ to ¾ pound cooked, shelled, and deveined shrimp**
- 3 tablespoons chopped fresh marjoram**
- 1 tablespoon chopped fresh cilantro leaves**
- 3 tablespoons fresh lemon juice**
- 2 tablespoons rice vinegar**
- ½ cup arugula leaves**
- 1 bunch chicory, washed, stemmed, and dried**

**H**eat the olive oil in a large skillet and sauté the garlic, onion, and scallions over medium heat for about 3 minutes, stirring constantly. Add the shrimp and sauté for another 2 minutes. Stir in the marjoram and cilantro. Remove from the heat and add the lemon juice and vinegar. In a medium bowl, combine the arugula and chicory. Top with the shrimp mixture. **Makes 4 servings.**



# Nutmeg

## Flavor

Nutmeg has a nutty, sweet taste.

## Lore

Early citizens of Connecticut whittled fake wooden nutmeg seeds and sold them to gullible housewives, earning the state the nickname “The Nutmeg State.” Nutmeg was once considered good for head ailments and eyesight.

## In the Kitchen

**Add nutmeg to sweet foods, such as pies, custards, and cakes; applesauce; eggnog; soufflés; and meat and vegetable dishes.**

## CARROT AND ZUCCHINI MUFFINS

- 2 eggs, beaten
- 1 cup plus 2 tablespoons plain yogurt
- 1 cup canola oil
- 1 cup grated carrots
- 1 cup grated zucchini
- 4 cups all-purpose flour
- 1 cup sugar
- 2 tablespoons baking powder
- 1 teaspoon nutmeg
- 1 cup coarsely chopped pecans

**P**reheat the oven to 375°F. Grease 18 to 24 muffin cups or line with paper. In a large bowl, mix the eggs, yogurt, and oil; then stir in the carrots and zucchini. Set aside. In another bowl, sift together the flour, sugar, baking powder, and nutmeg. Add the dry ingredients to the wet mixture and stir until just combined. The batter will be lumpy. Stir in the pecans. Spoon the batter into the prepared muffin cups and bake for 15 to 20 minutes. **Makes 18 to 24 muffins.**



# Oregano

## Flavor

Oregano is reminiscent of thyme and zestier than marjoram.

## Lore

Related to wild marjoram, oregano was used to cure “sour humours” that plagued elderly farmers. The name oregano is from the Greek words *oros* and *ganos*, meaning “joy of the mountain.”

## In the Kitchen

**Use oregano in any tomato dish, with summer squash or potatoes, in mushroom or bean dishes, or in a marinade for lamb or game.**

## ITALIAN SAUSAGE PASTA

- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 1 pound Italian sausage
- 1 yellow onion, chopped
- 4 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 cup dry white wine or water
- ½ cup sun-dried tomatoes, drained and chopped
- 1 tablespoon chopped fresh oregano
- 1 pound pasta
- grated Parmesan, as garnish

**B**ring 4 quarts of water to a boil. Meanwhile, heat the olive oil in a skillet. Remove the sausage from the casings, crumble it into the skillet, and brown. Remove and set aside the sausage, then sauté the onion and garlic. Add the wine, followed by the sun-dried tomatoes. Return the sausage to the skillet and add the oregano. Cook the pasta as directed and drain, then toss with the sauce and garnish with the Parmesan. **Makes 6 servings.**



# Paprika

## Flavor

Paprika has a tangy-sweet flavor.

## Lore

Paprika is the national spice of Hungary and is essential to goulash and other meat stews. Hungarian paprika, made from the dried flesh of sweet red peppers, has a bright red color.

## In the Kitchen

Use paprika in stews, salad dressings, and omelets, and with fish.

## SHRIMP CREOLE

- 2 tablespoons butter
- 1 cup chopped onion
- 1 cup chopped green bell pepper
- 1 clove garlic, minced
- 2 cups stewed tomatoes
- 1/8 teaspoon paprika
- salt and pepper, to taste
- 1 pound raw shrimp, shelled and deveined
- 3 cups cooked white rice

In a large heavy skillet, melt the butter over medium heat. Add the onion, green pepper, and garlic and sauté 5 minutes, or until the pepper is tender. Add the tomatoes and seasonings and simmer for 5 minutes. Add the shrimp and simmer for 10 minutes. Serve over white rice. **Makes 6 servings.**



# Poppy Seed



## Flavor

Poppy seeds have a sweet, nutty flavor.

## Lore

Poppy flowers are a symbol of sleep. Legend has it that they grow where battles raged and where England's holy maid Margaret slew the dragon.

## In the Kitchen

Use poppy seeds in breads, cakes, pastries, and salad dressings. Also try them with vegetables and noodles.

## SPINACH-STRAWBERRY SALAD

- 1/2 cup sugar
- 2 tablespoons sesame seeds
- 1 tablespoon poppy seeds
- 1 1/2 teaspoons minced onion
- 1/4 teaspoon Worcestershire sauce
- 1/4 teaspoon paprika
- 1/2 cup vegetable oil
- 1/4 cup cider vinegar
- 1 bag (10 ounces) fresh spinach, washed
- 1 pint strawberries, sliced thin

In a blender, combine the sugar, sesame seeds, poppy seeds, onion, Worcestershire sauce, paprika, oil, and vinegar. Blend well. If the dressing seems thick, add a few drops of water. Remove the stems from the spinach and tear the leaves into bite-size pieces. Place in a salad bowl. Arrange the strawberries on top. Drizzle the dressing over the strawberries and serve. **Makes 4 to 6 servings.**

# Rosemary

## Flavor

Rosemary has a fresh, sweet flavor.

## Lore

The word rosemary comes from the Latin words *ros* (dew) and *marinus* (sea). It is one of the most common plants on the hillsides surrounding the Mediterranean Sea. Bathing in rosemary was believed to restore youth and clear the complexion.

## In the Kitchen

Use rosemary in poultry, lamb, and tomato dishes; in soups and stews; and with vegetables. Try it finely chopped in breads and custards.

## ROSEMARY CHICKEN

- 2½-pound frying chicken, quartered
- 2 teaspoons chopped fresh rosemary
- 1 teaspoon salt
- ¼ teaspoon coarsely ground black pepper
- 8 small red potatoes, washed
- 2 medium fennel bulbs
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 3 cloves garlic, coarsely chopped
- ½ cup dry white wine

**P**reheat the oven to 450°F. Arrange the chicken in a large roasting pan and sprinkle with rosemary, salt, and pepper. Cut the potatoes in half and cut the fennel bulbs into wedges that equal the size of the potato pieces. In a mixing bowl, toss the potato and fennel pieces with the olive oil and garlic. Place the vegetables around the chicken and pour the wine over all. Put the pan in the oven and immediately reduce the heat to 350°F. Roast for an hour, basting occasionally with juices. Chicken should be golden brown and the vegetables tender. **Makes 4 servings.**



*Why should a man die, when he can go to his garden for sage?*

—10th-century saying

# Sage

## Flavor

Sage has a strong and warm taste reminiscent of turkey stuffings prepared for the holidays.

## Lore

Sage was the herb of Zeus, the ruler of Mount Olympus in Greek mythology, and was thought to promote strength and longevity. Legend had it that it quickened the memory and relieved trembling.

## In the Kitchen

Use sage in cheese dishes, stuffings, soups, salads, and pickles, and with beans and peas. Sage is an excellent substitute for salt in low-sodium diets.

## ROASTED CORN WITH HERB BUTTER

- 1 tablespoon chopped fresh basil
- 1 tablespoon chopped fresh sage
- 1 tablespoon chopped fresh thyme
- 1 tablespoon chopped fresh chives
- ½ cup (1 stick) butter, softened
- 6 large ears corn, with husks on

**M**ix all of the herbs into the softened butter, form into a stick or log, and refrigerate until firm. Sprinkle the corn husks with water and preheat the broiler or grill. Roast the corn on a baking sheet under the broiler or on the (covered) grill, turning until all sides are blackened. Keep turning and roasting for 20 to 30 minutes, or until the corn kernels are tender. Peel back the husks and silk and serve with the chilled herb butter. **Makes 6 servings.**



# Tarragon

## Flavor

Tarragon has a slightly bitter anise-licorice flavor.

## Lore

The word “tarragon” originates from the French word *estragon*, or “little dragon,” because of the serpentine appearance of its roots. It was considered soporific and good for the breath.

## In the Kitchen

Use tarragon with meats, eggs, poultry, seafood, and pasta, and in salad dressings, marinades, and sauces.

## HERB-STUFFED PASTA

**8 ounces jumbo pasta shells**

**8 ounces cream cheese**

**4 ounces ricotta cheese**

**2 eggs, beaten**

**1 clove garlic, minced**

**2 tablespoons chopped fresh chives**

**2 tablespoons chopped fresh parsley**

**2 tablespoons chopped fresh tarragon**

**salt and pepper, to taste**

**½ cup bread crumbs**

**P**reheat the oven to 400°F.

Grease a casserole.

Cook the pasta as directed; do not overcook. Drain and set aside. While the pasta is cooking, combine the cheeses, then mix in the eggs and seasonings. Stir the bread crumbs in last. Stuff each pasta shell with a bit of the cheese mixture. Arrange the stuffed shells in the casserole. Cover and bake for 10 minutes, or until the filling is hot.

**Makes 6 servings.**



# Thyme

## Flavor

Thyme has a pleasant, pungent, clove flavor.

## Lore

*The Old Farmer's Almanac* once published this 15th-century folk remedy for headache: “Heat hillwort [thyme] and sysell [vinegar], and put it in your nostrils that the odor may go to the brain.”

## In the Kitchen

Use thyme in casseroles, soups, stews, and ragouts, and with eggs, potatoes, fish, and green vegetables.

## LENTILS AND LAMB

**2 pounds boned lamb**

**2 tablespoons olive oil**

**1½ cups dried lentils**

**1 onion, chopped**

**4 cloves garlic, minced**

**1 bay leaf**

**1 teaspoon chopped fresh thyme**

**½ teaspoon chopped fresh rosemary**

**1 teaspoon salt**

**½ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper**

**3 carrots, peeled and chopped**

**C**ut the lamb into cubes and brown it in the oil in a large stewpot. Add 4 cups of water and the lentils (no presoaking required), then add the onion, garlic, and seasonings. Cover and simmer for 2 hours. Add the carrots and cook for another 20 to 30 minutes. Remove the bay leaf. **Makes 6 servings.**

# Turmeric

## Flavor

Turmeric has a mild earthy flavor.

## Lore

Hindus consumed turmeric for vigor and used it in wedding rites. For centuries, garments were often colored with the yellow powder. Turmeric is also believed to be mildly antiseptic.



## In the Kitchen

Use turmeric with eggs; in chutneys, relishes, and pickles; and in rice and bean dishes.

## SWEET MUSTARD PICKLES

- 12 small cucumbers, sliced**
- 1 head of cauliflower, washed and separated into florets**
- 3 pounds small onions, sliced**
- ½ cup salt**
- 1½ cups all-purpose flour**
- 6 cups sugar**
- 1 tablespoon turmeric**
- 4 tablespoons ground mustard**
- 2 quarts apple cider vinegar**

**P**ut the vegetables into a bowl and sprinkle with the salt. Let stand overnight. In the morning, rinse and drain. Combine the flour, sugar, turmeric, and mustard in a pot. Stir in the vinegar, and cook until thickened, constantly stirring. Pour the vegetables into the mixture, adding more vinegar, if necessary, to cover. Simmer for 30 minutes, then process in sterilized glass jars. **Makes 4 to 6 quarts.**

## FOR GREAT RESULTS

If you plan to sauté or roast spices, be careful because they tend to burn quickly. As soon as the aroma is released, remove the spice from the heat. Continue to shake and stir the spice for several minutes.

## HEALTH BENEFITS OF SPICES AND HERBS

Allspice	Relieves indigestion
Basil	Relieves insomnia
Cardamom	Eases congestion
Cinnamon	Anti-inflammatory
Cumin	Antioxidant
Ginger	Soothes nausea
Mint	Eases muscle tension
Nutmeg	Relieves insomnia
Rosemary	Antioxidant
Sage	Aids digestion
Turmeric	Antioxidant

## SYMBOLIC MEANING OF HERBS

<i>Herb</i>	<i>Meaning</i>
Basil	Good wishes, love
Chives	Usefulness
Cumin	Fidelity
Marjoram	Joy, happiness
Mint	Eternal refreshment
Oregano	Substance
Rosemary	Remembrance
Sage	Wisdom, immortality
Tarragon	Lasting interest
Thyme	Courage, strength



## FOR GREAT RESULTS

One tablespoon of fresh herbs is equal to one teaspoon of dried herbs.

## Special Mixes



### SPICY CHICKEN RUB

- 2 teaspoons chili powder
- 1 teaspoon ground oregano
- 1 teaspoon cilantro leaves, dried and crumbled
- ½ to 1 teaspoon cayenne pepper
- 1 teaspoon garlic powder
- ½ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
- ½ teaspoon ground ginger
- ½ teaspoon ground cumin

Combine and store in an airtight container. When ready to use, mix a small amount with water to form a paste. Rub on the poultry and cook.

### PUMPKIN PIE SPICE BLEND

- ⅓ cup cinnamon
- 1 tablespoon ground ginger
- 1 tablespoon nutmeg or mace
- 1½ teaspoons ground cloves
- 1½ teaspoons allspice

Combine and store in an airtight container. Add 1 to 1½ teaspoons of this mix to pumpkin pie filling.

### BREAKFAST SPICE SHAKER

- 1 cup sugar
- 3 tablespoons cinnamon
- 1 teaspoon nutmeg or mace
- 1 teaspoon cardamom

Combine and store in an airtight container. Sprinkle on pancakes, toast, or oatmeal.

### CURRY POWDER

- 4 tablespoons ground coriander
- 3 tablespoons ground turmeric
- 2 tablespoons ground cumin
- 1 tablespoon freshly ground black pepper
- 1 tablespoon ground ginger
- 1 teaspoon ground fennel seeds
- 1 teaspoon chili powder
- ½ teaspoon cayenne pepper

Combine and store in an airtight container. Add to chicken or egg salad or rice, or use to make meat or vegetable curry.

### FAJITA BLEND

- 4 tablespoons chili powder
- 2 tablespoons ground cumin
- 2 teaspoons ground oregano
- 2 teaspoons garlic salt

Combine and store in an airtight container. Sprinkle on fajita meat or stir into meatloaf or burgers for a spicy kick.

### SEAFOOD SPICE

- 2 tablespoons allspice
- 2 tablespoons celery salt
- 2 tablespoons ground mustard
- 1 tablespoon ground ginger
- 1 tablespoon paprika
- ¾ teaspoon cayenne pepper

Combine and store in an airtight container. Add to seafood salads and chowders, or sprinkle on fish fillets.





## Herb Bouquets

**H**erb bouquets, or *bouquets garnis* (“gar­nished bouquets”), are used to flavor soups, stews, and chowders as well as poached chicken and fish. For the recipes below, put the dried herbs and spices into a 4-inch square of cheesecloth and tie securely. Always remove the bouquet before serving.

### CHICKEN BOUQUET

- 1 bay leaf
- 1 tablespoon tarragon
- 1 tablespoon parsley
- 1 teaspoon rosemary
- 1 teaspoon thyme

### BEEF BOUQUET

- 1 teaspoon black peppercorns
- 2 whole cloves
- 1 broken bay leaf
- 2 teaspoons thyme
- 2 teaspoons marjoram
- 2 teaspoons savory
- 1 tablespoon parsley
- ½ teaspoon crushed lovage leaves

### FISH BOUQUET

- 1 bay leaf
- 2 black peppercorns
- 1 teaspoon thyme
- 1 teaspoon fennel weed
- 1 teaspoon crushed lovage leaves
- 1 tablespoon parsley

## Herb Substitutions

When you're out of... Use...

Allspice	Cinnamon or a dash of nutmeg or mace
Basil	Marjoram, oregano, or thyme
Cardamom	Ginger
Chives	Scallion, onion, or leek
Cinnamon	Nutmeg or allspice
Ginger	Allspice, cardamom, mace, or nutmeg
Marjoram	Basil, oregano, or thyme
Rosemary	Thyme or tarragon
Sage	Marjoram or rosemary
Tarragon	Chervil
Thyme	Basil, marjoram, or oregano

