



***SOUTH CAROLINA FAMILY AND COMMUNITY LEADERS***  
Affiliated with National Volunteer Outreach Network, Country Women's Council, U.S.A., Associated  
Country Women of the World and in partnership with Clemson University Cooperative Extension Service  
SCFCL website: <http://www.scfcl.com>

## **Leader Training Guide**

### **Cooking With Herbs**

#### Objectives:

1. Participants will identify ways to use herbs in place of salt
2. Participants will explain how to combine food with different spices and herbs for the best flavor
3. Participants will recognize methods to properly store their fresh and dried herbs
4. Participants will identify the best time to add fresh or dried herbs to a recipe while cooking

#### Lesson Overview/Introduction:

Learning how to properly combine herbs and spices with foods is a great way to maximize a recipe's flavor and decrease salt intake.

According to the CDC, a diet that is too high in sodium, or table salt, can increase blood pressure and increase the risk of hypertension, stroke, and cardiovascular disease. Salt causes your body to retain fluid, which in turn increases your blood pressure and can also increase your risk of cardiovascular disease. Decreasing the amount of salt used in cooking is one way of reducing the risk of developing high blood pressure as well as maintaining blood pressure.

#### Lesson:

How to reduce salt in cooking and use herbs and spices:

- Use savory flavors, or flavors with "bite" such as black pepper, garlic powder, curry powder, cumin, dill, basil, ginger, coriander, and onion
- Omit salt when you cook pasta and instead use basil, oregano, parsley and pepper or an overall Italian seasoning blend
- Use powdered garlic and onion rather than onion salt or garlic salt
- Always check labels to see if salt or sodium is listed in the ingredients

Some great flavor combinations for meat, poultry and fish are:

- Beef- Try bay leaf, marjoram, nutmeg, onion, pepper, sage or thyme
- Lamb- Try curry powder, garlic, rosemary or mint
- Pork- Try garlic, onion, sage, pepper or oregano
- Veal- Try bay leaf, curry powder, ginger, marjoram or oregano
- Chicken- Try ginger, marjoram, oregano, paprika or poultry
- Fish- Try curry powder, dill, dry mustard, marjoram, paprika or pepper

There are also some great combinations for vegetables such as:

- Carrots- Try cinnamon, cloves, dill, ginger or marjoram
- Corn- Try cumin, curry powder, onion, paprika or parsley
- Green Beans- Try dill, curry powder, marjoram, oregano, tarragon or thyme
- Greens- Try onion, pepper
- Potatoes- Try dill, garlic, onion, paprika, parsley or sage
- Summer Squash- Try cloves, curry powder, marjoram, nutmeg, rosemary, or sage
- Winter Squash- Try cinnamon, ginger, nutmeg, onion
- Tomatoes- Try basil, bay leaf, dill, marjoram, onion, oregano, parsley, pepper

Need to substitute fresh herbs for dried? Follow this rule of thumb:

1 tablespoon of finely cut fresh herbs is the same as 1 teaspoon crumbled dried herbs or ¼ to ½ teaspoon ground dried herbs.

If you don't have a spice or herb blend on hand, here are great options with choices most likely in your cabinet already:

- Apple pie spice (great choice for fresh apples and pears)  
1 teaspoon cinnamon  
1/8 teaspoon nutmeg
- Pumpkin pie spice (excellent on sweet potatoes and winter squash)  
1 teaspoon cinnamon  
¼ teaspoon ginger  
1/8 teaspoon nutmeg  
1/8 teaspoon allspice
- Italian seasoning (tasty on fish or potatoes)  
¼ each of oregano, marjoram, and basil  
1/8 teaspoon rubbed sage
- Poultry seasoning (also good with tomato-based sauces)  
¾ teaspoon ground sage  
¼ teaspoon ground thyme

### **How to store your fresh or dried herbs to keep them fresh longer**

To prevent flavor or color loss to your herbs and spices, avoid moisture, light, heat, and air.

- Store your herbs in tightly covered containers
- Store them in a dark location
- If you store in a spice rack, make sure the spice rack is out of the way of direct sunlight, heat, and air
- If adding spices directly to cooking, make sure you don't sprinkle container directly over cooking pots as this can cause moisture to gather inside
- Use a dry spoon to measure all your spices and herbs from a container

- Good spices to refrigerate are paprika, chili powder, and red pepper
- If storing any spices in refrigerator, use an airtight container to avoid moisture from gathering inside

### **When is the best time to add spices and herbs to recipes?**

- Delicate *fresh* herbs such as oregano, tarragon, basil and thyme can be added around the last 20 minutes of cooking
- Whole dried herbs and spices such as whole allspice or bay leaves release their flavor slower than a dried or crumbled spice and are ideal for dishes that are cooked for longer periods of time such as a soup or a stew
- Ground dried spices and herbs will release their flavor quickly and taste better when added near the end of cooking
- For uncooked foods, add fresh or dried spices and herbs *several hours* before you serve to allow the flavors to come together.

### Lesson Summary

Spices and herbs can be used in place of salt to help keep the flavor of food and reduce your risk of hypertension.

### Suggested Activities

At the meeting, allow members to combine ingredients to make Italian seasoning (recipe in the lesson.) Make popcorn on the stovetop: In large pot with lid, add ¼ cup popcorn kernels and 1-2 tablespoons vegetable oil.) Season popcorn with Italian seasoning and parmesan cheese to taste, usually around 1-2 tsp per serving of popcorn.

Place several spices and herbs in clear plastic bags and have everyone guess what the spice or herb it is. Number the bags and have a list of the number that goes with the seasoning. People are allowed to smell, see, and taste the seasoning to guess which one it is. Once each member has made their guesses, reveal the identity of each spice/herb.

Try some of the combinations of foods and spices in the lesson to see which combinations suit your taste best. For example, cook some easy vegetables such as carrots or corn in the microwave and test different flavor combinations.

Lesson Prepared by: Shanna Sykes, RD, Rural Health and Nutrition Extension Agent, Clemson University

Lesson Review by: Rhonda Matthews, M.Ed., Extension Associate, Clemson University

Sources/References:

<https://food.unl.edu/documents/Spice&HerbsHandout08.pdf>

<https://www.cdc.gov/bloodpressure/index.htm>