

Herbs And Spice ...Are *Tastes to Entice*

It's **Pumpkin Season** and a marvelous opportunity to tantalize your taste buds. How? Treat your tongue and nose to some *innovative*, savory sensations this fall. Stretch and reach for **new herb and spice** 'friends.' Get to know and use these heart and blood-healthy alternatives (see chart below) replacing over-used, addictive choices of sugar, salt, and fat. Cultivate a healthy option.

Herbs and spices provide a diverse array of flavors (so many) and blends* that can help us discover new ways of thinking about fruits and vegetables and are super health promoting foods (antioxidants and phyto-protective chemicals). Caution: one new flavor discovery begets another! When this happens there's no 'turning back.' You are on your way to new gastronomic galaxies!!! Yum fuuuuun.

Anise	salads, especially apple; seeds in cookies	Basil and Cilantro	tomato dishes, cucumbers, green salads, sandwiches, pesto
Cinnamon	pumpkin, apple sauce, apples, cookies, pies	Nutmeg	pumpkin, pears, cookies, pies
Coriander	cookies and French dressing in combination with other spices	Cumin	for chili and curry powders
Dill	fresh chopped in salads and sandwiches, bean spreads, cucumbers, tomatoes	Dulse, Sea Veggies	iodine & sea minerals: soups, veg dishes, smoothies
Celery	leafstalks and roots give flavor as well as food value to soups, stews, and salads.	Parsley	fresh leaves may be used for flavor and for garnish in soups, vegetables, salads
Chives	fresh tubular leaves excellent in salads, sandwiches, bean spreads	<u>Fennel</u>	fresh leaves for sauces, salads; Young tender stems of sweet fennel, blanched, eaten raw like celery or added to salads; Enlarged leaf base cut & cook in water or soup stock as a vegetable; seeds in breads, pastries, & drinks.
Garlic	soups, stews, salads, and various kinds of pickles.	Marjoram	sandwiches, soups, potatoes and potato salad, string beans. Chopped leaves are good added to cooked spinach before serving
Mint	peas, pea soup, tea, fruit and fruit drinks	Rosemary	soups made of leafy greens, stews, and sauces
Sage	sparingly with onion for stews, stuffings, soup garnish	Onions, Leeks	soup, salad, broth, stew, spreads, sandwiches, salsa, sauces
Thyme	blended with other herbs, stuffings, gravies, soups, potato chowders, cookies	Oregano	soups, spreads, salads, salad dressing, stews, broth, stuffings

*Blends: Italian Seasonings, Herbs de Provence, Chili Blend, Chinese 5 Spice, Garam Masala, Pumpkin Pie Spice, etc.

Find fantastic bulk herb and spice selections in Santa Cruz at *The Staff of Life*, 1305 Water Street or *The Herb Room*, 1130 Mission Street.

Guidelines For Using Herbs Effectively

Use with a light hand. Too much of any flavor is objectionable. Start with a small amount and add more if needs be (and/or as you become familiar with the recipe). It's impossible to *add less!*

Typically, I find that most recipes are very light on herb/spice additions. So don't be afraid to increase amounts as you get familiar with a recipe. Use fresh herbs or spices in season, or add dried versions (1/3 as much) year round. (Dried herbs are three or four times stronger than fresh herbs.)

Blend judiciously. Have a leading flavor and combine two (to four) less-pronounced flavors with it. Blends should be subtle. Never emphasize more than one of the very strong herbs in a blend.

Cut or chop the leaves of fresh herbs very fine. For some purposes they should be ground (or blended). The more of the cut surface exposed, the more completely the aromatic oil can be absorbed.

The delicate aroma and flavor of *savory* herbs may easily be lost by extended cooking. For soups add them about half an hour before the cooking is finished.

Pumpkin Sweet and Pumpkin Savory

I've provided some sweet to savory recipes for pumpkins (or substitute any winter/hard-shelled squash) that are easy to follow. Note here that these recipes have passed the picky-eaters' tests (teenage males), so rest assured that you are in for some yummy mouth parties!

Pumpkin Smoothie – yields 1 quart

Place the following ingredients in a mixing bowl or blender. Blend until smooth.

- 1 teaspoon salt
- 2 teaspoons ground cinnamon
- 1 teaspoon ground ginger
- 1/2 teaspoon ground cloves
- 10-12 drops of liquid Stevia (plain)
- 3-4 cups soy or almond milk

Add pumpkin and blend until mixed.
1 can of 100% pumpkin (29 oz)

Chill and serve cold with a sprinkling of ground cinnamon or nutmeg on top.

Options: add a banana, use 1/3 teaspoon fresh ground ginger, and /or add a handful of raisins or currants if you want a 'lumpy' smoothie to eat with a spoon!

Pick up a DVD of ***Pumpkin Circle*** from the Grey Bears office. *Pumpkin Circle* is the sweetest pumpkin story. 20 minute DVD, for ages 4 – 104 years. .

Mexican Pumpkin Chili – serves 6

Simmer or steam the pumpkin or squash in the vegetable stock/water until tender.

3-4 cups of small chunk (1/2 inch) raw pumpkin, butternut, or other winter squash. Use vegetable peeler to remove tough skin.

1 cup vegetable stock or water

Add the following ingredients and simmer uncovered over low heat for 10-20 minutes.

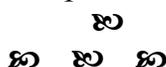
- 1 medium onion, thinly sliced
- 1 cup tomato sauce (Marinara sauce is fine)
- 1/2 cup salsa
- 1 16-ounce can, corn kernels, (including liquid)
- 1 teaspoon chili powder
- 1/2 teaspoon cumin
- 1 teaspoon minced garlic
- 3-4 drops of Tabasco (optional)
- 1/2 teaspoon hot red pepper flakes
- 1- 2 Tablespoon Italian Seasonings (start with 1 Tbsp)
- 1 15-ounce can red kidney beans (including liquid)
- 1 15-ounce can pinto beans (including liquid)

Salt** and pepper to taste.

** (or 1-2 teaspoons of Bragg's Liquid Aminos.)

Please send questions, suggestions, tips, or topics that you would like explored.

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