

Cooking without Salt

Flavour meals without salt

Your meals can be tasty without using salt. Herbs, spices, and marinades will boost the flavour of your food while reducing the salt you eat. Over time, your taste buds will get used to new flavours.

In the kitchen

Try these tips to decrease salt in cooking:



- Add dry or fresh herbs and spices in place of ingredients high in salt. For example, use garlic, celery, and onion powder instead of garlic salt, celery salt, and onion salt.
- Use ingredients such as homemade stock, low sodium store-bought stock (liquid, cubes, or powder), and salt-free seasonings.
- If you use canned vegetables with salt, drain the liquid, then rinse with water to reduce the salt.
- Cook potatoes, rice, pasta, and hot cereals without adding salt to the water. Use herbs and spices instead.

How to use herbs and spices

Spice it up! Spices and herbs can make the natural flavour of foods even better.

- When you try a new herb, crush a small amount in the palm of your hand to let it warm. Then sniff and taste it. This gives you an idea of whether you will like it in your food.
- Start with $\frac{1}{4}$ tsp (1 mL) dry or $\frac{3}{4}$ tsp (4 mL) of fresh herb or spice for each pound (454 g) of meat, or 2 cups (500 mL) of sauce or soup. Add more herbs for more flavour.
- Use 3 times more fresh herbs in place of dry herbs in a recipe.
- After you add whole spices like peppercorns, cinnamon sticks, or cloves, cook the food for at least 1 hour to bring out the flavours.
- For hot foods, add crushed herbs or spices near the end of cooking to get the most flavour.

- For cold dishes like salads or dressings, add herbs and ground spices at the start. Let the food sit in the fridge for a few hours. This lets flavours from the herbs and spices grow stronger.
- Prepare your own mixture of herbs and spices in a shaker to add flavour to any dish.

Flavour with homemade marinade

Marinades add flavours to meats, fish, and vegetables. Store-bought marinades can be high in salt. Try these ideas:

- Vinegars make tasty marinades. Try balsamic, fruit flavoured, or red wine vinegar mixed with oil and spices.
- The juice and grated rind of lemons, oranges, and limes add zest and intense flavour to any dish.
- Marinate foods for 3–24 hours in the fridge before cooking.
- Throw out any marinade used for raw meat. The bacteria in the raw marinade can make you sick. Make a fresh batch for basting during cooking.

What flavours do you like?

If you like	Try one or more of these
Hot	cayenne pepper, chili (fresh, oil, powder, or low sodium sauce), ginger, hot dry mustard, red pepper flakes, wasabi
Sour	lemon, lime, vinegar (balsamic, cider, rice, white, wine)
Peppery	pepper (black, brown, pink, white), or peppercorns
Sweet	cranberry sauce, fresh fruit, fruit juice, honey, molasses
Citrus	lemon, lemongrass, lime
Tomato	tomato (fresh or low sodium canned)
Other	anise, coriander, cumin, curry powder, dill, dry mustard, garlic, onion, paprika

Other ideas for flavouring

Instead of salt, try adding one or more of the flavourings below.



Vegetables

Asparagus: garlic, lemon juice, onion, vinegar

Cauliflower: cayenne, chili, curry, garlic, nutmeg, onion, paprika, star anise, za'atar

Corn: cilantro, peppers, pimento, tomato

Cucumbers: chives, dill, garlic, pepper, vinegar

Eggplant: garlic, pepper, oregano, sumac, thyme

Green beans: chili oil, dill, lemon juice, marjoram, nutmeg, oregano, pimento, shallot, thyme

Peas: garlic, ginger, mint, mushrooms (fresh or dried), onion, parsley, peppers

Potatoes: chives, dill, garlic, mace, onion, oregano, paprika, parsley, peppers, sour cream, turmeric

Squash: allspice, brown sugar, cardamom, cinnamon, ginger, mace, nutmeg, onion, sage, thyme, za'atar

Tomatoes: basil, marjoram, onion, oregano

Grain foods

Pasta: basil, caraway seeds, dill, garlic, mushrooms, olive oil, onion, peppers, poppy seeds, tomato

Rice: cardamom, cumin, dill, mushrooms, onion, peppers, pimento, saffron, thyme, turmeric

Protein foods

Beans, lentils, or tofu: basil, cayenne, chili, curry, garlic, ginger, lemon juice, lemongrass, mushrooms, onion, oregano, sesame oil, sesame seeds, sumac

Beef: bay leaf, chili, cumin, dry mustard, garlic, green or red peppers, marjoram, mushrooms, nutmeg, onion, paprika, parsley, pepper, sage, sumac, thyme, za'atar

Chicken or turkey: bay leaf, cranberry sauce, garam masala, ginger, Italian herbs, lemon juice, lemongrass, onion, paprika, peppers, sage, thyme

Eggs: basil, chervil, chives, cilantro, curry, green or red peppers, mushrooms, paprika, pepper, thyme, turmeric

Fish: basil, bay leaf, cayenne, curry, dill, dry mustard, fennel, garlic, ginger, green onions, lemon juice, mushrooms, parsley, rosemary, tomato, turmeric

Lamb: allspice, curry, garlic, marjoram, mint, mint sauce, oregano, pineapple, rosemary, sumac, tarragon

Pork: apple, coriander, cumin, curry, garlic, ginger, marjoram, onion, rosemary, sage, thyme, za'atar

For more ideas

Many websites have healthy recipe and menu ideas. Check your library or bookstore for cookbooks with healthy recipes or try these websites:

healthyeatingstartshere.ca has information on nutrition and [Inspiring Recipes](http://inspiringrecipes.ahs.ca/Recipes). (ahs.ca/Recipes)

heartandstroke.com. Select Healthy living to find [recipes](#).

unlockfood.ca has healthy eating content brought to you by Dietitians of Canada. Select Browse by Topic to find [recipes](#).

diabetes.ca. On the home page select Nutrition & fitness to find [recipes](#).

kidneycommunitykitchen.ca. Select Kidney Kitchen cookbook to find [recipes](#) helpful for those eating for kidney disease.



- Talk to your healthcare team.
- Call Health Link at 811 and ask to talk to a dietitian or complete a [self-referral form](#) on ahs.ca/811.
- Visit ahs.ca/nutrition.