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# Low Sodium Cooking

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Low sodium cooking does not have to be bland. Here are some tips for adding flavor to your food without adding salt!

## Use Herbs and Spices

Herbs and spices are a great way to add flavor to meals. Here are some tips for using herbs and spices:

- Add fresh herbs towards the end of cooking so they don't overcook.
- Add dried herbs at the beginning of cooking for the most flavor.
- To save money, grow your own herbs and spices.
- Store dried herbs away from heat and light.
- Fresh herbs can be stored in the refrigerator or can be frozen.
- If you buy dried herbs and spices, read the package. It will often tell you how you can cook with the herb or spice.
- If you buy packaged seasoning blends, check the nutrition facts label to for added sodium.

Some common herbs and spices and some foods they go well with:

- Basil – chicken, fish, beef, pork, pastas, tomatoes, salads
- Black pepper – curries, meats, vegetables, beans
- Cinnamon – oatmeal, fruit, tea
- Cumin – soups, stews, chili, lentils
- Curry powder – soups, curries, beef, chicken, eggs, beans
- Garlic – meats, mashed potatoes, soup, pasta, beans
- Ginger – stir-fry, ground meats, soup
- Green onion – soups, chili, salads, fish
- Lemon pepper – fish, chicken, baked potatoes, vegetables
- Mint – fruit, tea, peas, carrots, lamb, water
- Onion – potatoes, meats, rice, stews
- Oregano – tomatoes, mushrooms, lentils, chicken, turkey, lamb, pork loin
- Parsley – shellfish, pasta, chicken, beef, dips
- Rosemary – chicken, fish, pork, beef, sauce, vegetables
- Thyme – chicken, turkey, pork, soups, beans
- Paprika – chicken, eggs, fish, potatoes

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Adding acidity with lemon juice, lime juice, or vinegar along with the use of herbs and spices can help enhance flavors.

You can buy herb and spice blends at the store. Make sure that whichever blend you buy does not have salt listed as an ingredient. You can also make your own blends. Here are some spice blends that go well with many foods and tips for enjoying them:

- **Italian blend:** Mix onion powder, garlic powder, oregano, and basil
- **Stir-fry blend:** Mix onion powder, garlic powder, ground ginger, and black pepper
- **Spice blend to use with fish:** Mix lemon pepper, rosemary, and black pepper.
- **General all-purpose blend:** Mix garlic powder, onion powder, basil, thyme, parsley, sage, and black pepper.
- Sprinkle your favorite herb blend on some air popped popcorn for a tasty snack.
- Mix 2 tablespoons of your favorite herbs with ¼ cup of olive oil for a dip for bread or raw vegetables.

## Tips for Cooking Vegetables

- Try roasting vegetables. This will help enhance the natural flavor of the vegetables. Brush a little olive oil on your vegetables, arrange the vegetables in a single layer of an oven safe-pan, and cook at 350 degrees Fahrenheit until the vegetables are cooked to a texture you enjoy. Some vegetables that do well in the oven: asparagus, kale, beets, peppers, tomatoes, Brussel sprouts.
- Try grilling vegetables. Like roasting, this will help bring out the natural flavor of the vegetables. You can use olive oil, vinegar-based salad dressing, or low-sodium marinade to keep the vegetables from over-cooking. Some vegetables that do well on the grill: potatoes, corn, eggplant, zucchini, onion, peppers.
- When cooking beans or soups, avoid cured meats, such as ham and use liquid smoke flavoring or vinegars instead.
- Cook your favorite green vegetable without salt. Right before eating, sprinkle the green vegetable with a little fresh lemon juice.

## Tips for Salads and Raw Vegetables

- Buy low sodium salad dressing.
- Make your own salad dressing. Mix 1 tablespoon of vinegar and 3 tablespoons of olive oil, then add lemon juice or any herbs and spices that you enjoy.
- Instead of using salad dressing, try sprinkling flavored vinegars on your salads.
- Sprinkle herbs and spices on your favorite fresh vegetables. For example, sprinkle a little oregano and fresh basil on sliced tomatoes for a quick and refreshing side dish or snack.
- Instead of ranch dressing, dip raw vegetables in a homemade yogurt dip. Mix ½ cup plain Greek yogurt with 2-3 tablespoons of your favorite herbs and spices.

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## Tips for Cooking Entrees

- When grilling meat, choose low-sodium marinade or a dry rub made from herbs or spices that you like.
- If the recipe uses garlic, double the garlic and skip the salt.
- If the recipe uses onion, you can skip the salt and still have lots of flavor.
- When cooking eggs, try using pepper or salsa for a kick of flavor. Onions, chives, and parsley also work well with eggs.
- When cooking pork loin, try topping with a low-sugar apple or cranberry sauce. You can also try cooking the pork loin with chopped apples.
- When grilling fish, sprinkle with fresh lemon juice and dried rosemary or thyme.

## Tips for Cooking Grains and Pasta

- When cooking pasta or noodles, do not add salt to the water. Boil the pasta or noodles without salt, then add your favorite herbs/spices after draining.
- Add minced onion, chopped basil, pepper, cumin, chili powder, curry, or crushed garlic to your rice.
- When cooking rice or noodle dishes, skip the seasoning packets that they usually come with. Instead, add lots of fresh vegetables and your favorite no-sodium herb and spice blend.
- Try adding cinnamon, nutmeg or dried fruit to oatmeal.
- Instead of canned tomato or pasta sauce, add fresh chopped tomatoes, basil, and garlic to your pasta dishes.

## Salsa

Salsa is a great topping for just about everything! Try it on top of your eggs, your baked potatoes, fish, grilled meats, grilled vegetables, beans, burgers, and meatloaf. Some tips for using salsa:

- Try making your own low-sodium salsa by mixing chopped tomatoes, chopped onion, chopped garlic, lime juice, and fresh cilantro.
- Instead of buying the salsa that comes in a jar, buy the fresh salsa that is kept in the refrigerated section.
- For a sweet flavor, try a fruit-based salsa. These are great on grilled whitefish such as cod or tilapia or even pork loin. You can make your own by mixing diced pineapple or mango, chopped tomato, chopped onion, and cilantro.