

THE SPICE OF LIFE!

Herbs and spices have played a major role in our lives and the economic development of many countries for thousands of years. These exotic and aromatic treasures bring us pleasure and satisfy us on so many levels, from flavoring our foods, healing sickness, and filling our homes with intoxicating aromas. Whatever the use is, there is no doubt that certain combinations of herbs and spices can bring one the core essence of authentic cultural cuisine.

What defines an herb from a spice? It's simple; we use herbs for their green parts, the leaves and the stalks while we cultivate spices for their roots, bark, seeds, fruits and flowers. Generally, we use herbs fresh and spices dried. So, we would classify basil and dill as herbs, while cinnamon (the bark from a bushy evergreen tree) and black pepper (the dried berry from a vine) are both spices. Both herbs and spices play a key role in all cuisine from around the world, combining to bring euphoric flavors and seductive flavor-packed dishes.

When choosing herbs, I cannot stress more the importance and superiority of fresh vs. dried. The same goes with choosing your dried spices; when ground from its whole form in a small common coffee or spice grinder, the flavor, aroma and appearance of the spice is completely superior. Take turmeric powder for example, a common eastern spice used mostly for its yellow color in curry blends. When purchased in its powder form it is a pale yellow-orangish color, but when ground from its whole form, dried Haldi root, the color is an electric orange and carries a very potent flavor. The same goes for freshly ground cinnamon stick opposed to powder. Try it to see; the flavor and aroma is so strong it's almost peppery with spicy sweetness.

One of the most challenging aspects of getting in the kitchen is proper combining methods of herbs and spices. Anyone can follow a recipe, but it truly takes plenty of experience to create authentic cultural cuisine from scratch.

Let's check out the quick glance chart, *A Global Taste*, on the following page. The chart is separated into seven of the most common worldly cuisines. Some cuisines have been paired up due to overlapping ingredient usage. In each of these cultural columns is a list of herb and spices followed by produce, beans and grains, and nuts and seeds. Every herb and spice within each column blends flavor-wise together and is traditionally used in that/those country(s). When you have the understanding of building base recipes, you can then glance at this chart to create delicious menus with a cultural twist using ingredients all within the same column.

Many of the listed herbs and spices can really overpower a dish if too much is added. For example, cardamom will dominate the flavor of the whole dish if not used sparingly, nutmeg will overpower cinnamon and carry a slight bitterness to the dish if too much is added, as will fenugreek if too much is used in a curry blend. Spices carry a lot of kick, which when used properly can electrify a dish and please the palette. Within the chart, I have marked the herbs and spices to use more sparingly with a ">."

This simple, informative chart is a great tool to wow your guests, and to take your dinner part to the next level. Please note that these are not fully exhausted lists, and the lists could expand quite a bit. For more herb and spice inspiration, check out *The Flavor Bible* by Karen Paige and Andrew Dornenburg.

So, grab your cutting boards and spice grinders, fire up that stove, or dehydrator and lets get cookin'!

Cheers to your health!

Chad



A GLOBAL TASTE: CULTURAL SPICE COMBINING

A very useful chart to expand and create dishes from working with a base recipe

* = Most commonly used > = use sparingly, so it does not overpower the dish

ITALIAN & SICILIAN	THAI & BALINESE	MEXICAN & SPANISH	MOROCCAN & AFRICAN	JAPANESE & CHINESE	TURKISH & GREEK	INDIAN
HERBS & SPICES						
Garlic* Basil* Olive Oil* Oregano >Rosemary Thyme >White- Pepper Onions Parsley >Sage Marjoram Leek	Basil* Lemongrass* Tamarind* Curry* Ginger Galangal Root > Kefir Lime Leaves Cilantro Mint Turmeric Coriander Cumin >Sesame Chiles	Cilantro* Cumin* Garlic* Olive Oil* Coriander Onions Parsley Paprika Chiles Cinnamon >Saffron	Cilantro* Cinnamon* Ginger* Cumin* Garlic Onions Coriander Cloves Cardamom Sage Mint >Saffron Chives >Fenugreek >Rose	Ginger* Garlic* >Sesame* Miso* Soy Sauce* Basil >Cardamom Coriander Scallions >Star Anise >Vinegar >Wasabi Chiles	Garlic* Mint* Oregano* Dill* Cinnamon* Parsley* >Anise Chiles Cilantro >Saffron >Sesame Thyme Marjoram >Clove >Poppy Seed >Fenugreek Onion Sumac	Garlic* Ginger* Cardamom* Curry* Cumin* Garam - Masala* Cinnamon >Clove Chiles >Anise >Fenugreek Fennel - Seed Mint >Mustard >B. Pepper Tamarind >Sesame Turmeric Onions >Saffron >Rose
PRODUCE						
Lemon* Olives* Tomatoes* Spinach* Avocado Cucumber Broccoli Bell -Peppers Capers	Lime* Coconut* Zucchini Peas Carrots Cauliflower Tomato Potatoes Baby Corn	Lime* Tomato* Avocado* Olives Corn Peppers Zucchini Jicama	Olives* Orange* Lemon* Tomato* Eggplant* Cauliflower Corn Melon Peppers Potatoes	Lime* Mung Bean - Sprouts* Bok Choy* Sea Veggies* Snow Peas* Lemon Shitakes Cucumber Broccoli	Lemon* Eggplant* Tomato* Cucumber* Tomato* Spinach Olives Pomegranate Rocket	Cauliflower* Spinach* Peas* Lemon* Pomegranate Bell-Peppers Eggplant Tomato Coconut
BEANS & GRAINS						
Cannellini Garbanzo Corona Beans Fava Beans Borlotti Beans Farro Corn Arborio Rice Barley	Soybeans Jasmine Rice Long Grain Rice Black Short Grain	Black Beans, Pinto Beans White Beans Lentils Brown Rice White Rice Corn	Garbanzo, Lentils Split Peas, Garbanzo Teff Wheat Millet Basmati Rice	Azuki Beans Soy Barley Mung Red Beans Black Beans Black Rice Basmati Brown Rice Bhutanese Rice	Bulgar Wheat White Beans Gigante Beans Limas Garbanzo Lentils Basmati	Garbanzo Lentils, All Soy Mung Beans Pigeon Beans Basmati
NUTS & SEEDS						
Pine Nuts Hazelnuts Pistachio Walnuts	Cashews Sesame Seeds Peanuts Almonds	Pumpkin Sesame Seeds	Peanuts Sesame Sunflower	Sesame Seeds Peanuts Cashews Pine Nuts	Pistachio Hazelnut Walnuts Almonds	Sesame Cashews Pistachio Almonds