

The Spice of Life

Herbs and spices are an underused and undervalued commodity. There are too many to mention on one handout so I have divided this topic over 2 sessions. First spices and next session herbs.

Cayenne Pepper: Contains an oily substance called capsaicin, an ingredient in many creams for arthritis and muscle pain. It is also in medications used to treat nerve pains. Cayenne pepper has anti-inflammatory and antioxidant properties. There is scientific evidence that it reduces blood sugars in persons with diabetes after a meal.

Cinnamon: A healing spice that improves blood sugars for those with diabetes. $\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon daily could reduce triglycerides and cholesterol levels significantly. Cinnamon is thought to help reduce the risk of blood clots. It is also anti-inflammatory, and rich in antioxidants.

Coriander: Coriander seeds yield cilantro which is known to be a digestive aid. It can be helpful for some who have IBS and calms intestinal spasms. It is also thought to be an anti-anxiety herb and a powerful antioxidant.

Garlic: The odour comes from a substance called allicin which is a sulphur compound responsible for the smell and has medicinal benefits. Allicin helps to reduce cholesterol levels, has an anticoagulant effect and is a powerful antioxidant. It is thought this sulphur compound, not dissimilar to those found in cruciferous vegetables such as broccoli, cauliflower and sprouts can help to ward off cancer especially stomach and bowel. Garlic also has powerful antibacterial and antifungal properties. It can help with yeast and sinus infections as well as the common cold.

Ginger: A digestive aid, with anti-inflammatory properties. Both ginger and turmeric help to reduce pain and swelling in patients with arthritis. They can also help to block inflammatory prostaglandins that aggravate migraines. Ginger is good for the stomach, boosting digestive juices and neutralising acids. It is also effective against nausea however best taken before you think you will become nauseous.

Mustard: Contains substances that studies suggest may inhibit the growth of cancer cells. A mustard compress may help someone who has Raynauds phenomenon as it brings more blood to the fingers. Mustard can also stimulate an appetite by increasing the flow of saliva and digestive juices. Mustard added to a footbath can kill off fungal infections. Eat too much however and it can have a laxative effect and induce vomiting.

Turmeric: Spice that gives curry powder its yellow colour. It stimulates an appetite and is a digestive aid. It is also a potential cancer fighter. The chemical responsible for the golden colour in turmeric is called curcumin which is a top anticancer agent. It reduces inflammation and tumour growth. Researchers are investigating the role of curcumin and anti-cancer compounds in cruciferous vegetables as possible treatments for prostate cancer. Studies have also linked turmeric to reduced inflammation in psoriasis.

Curry powder is a spice mix containing turmeric, coriander, cumin, cinnamon, mustard powder, cayenne, ginger, garlic, nutmeg and fenugreek. It is an amazing blend of many of the aforementioned spices which provides an array of anti-bacterial, anti-inflammatory, anti-cancer, anti-coagulant, anti-depressant and antioxidant properties. This is before we look at the many powerful flavours that these spices can create in our food! It's a win win!

Herbs

Basil

Has anti-inflammatory and anti viral properties. It is used for digestive complaints and is being studied for anti cancer properties.

Rosemary

High concentration of antioxidant carnosol which may have benefits in cancer treatments, healthy digestion and lowering cholesterol. Water boiled with Rosemary has antiseptic properties.

Thyme

Member of the mint family. Contains thymol, a powerful antioxidant.

Sage

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Potent against certain processes that lead to Alzheimers. In one study, sage oil improved the mood of participants increasing alertness, calmness and contentedness. Sage has anti-inflammatory and antioxidant properties as well as anticancer actions. Sage aids in diabetes management in that it boosts the action of insulin and reduces blood sugars. Sage is nature's metformin.

Mint

Calms digestive problems

Oregano and marjoram belong to the same family however they are usually referred to on their own.

Oregano (and its milder cousin marjoram) has antiviral, antibacterial, anti cancer, antibiotic, antioxidant and antimicrobial properties. A couple of spoonfuls will aid recovery from illness.

Cloves

Anti-inflammatory chemical eugenol and antioxidant. Both help to boost the protection from heart disease and helps to stave off cancer. Cloves are also thought to slow cartilage and bone damage caused by arthritis. The compounds in cloves are like those found in cinnamon and also appears to improve insulin function.

Nutmeg

Contains eugenol a compound beneficial for the heart. Nutmeg has strong antibacterial properties. Research is ongoing into the role of nutmeg as an anti-depressant.