How to Spice Things Up in the Kitchen

Spices and herbs in cooking should be used to enhance the flavor of food. Therefore you'll want to pick flavors that complement each other. The key to spicing things up is that less is more. Avoid adding too much all at once. Instead, add a little at a time and add more to taste. Here’s a good way to start using some common spices, and when to add them to your cooking.

Basil

This is a popular Italian seasoning. Use in pesto, on white meat, or with fruits and vegetables – tomato and basil are a classic. The key is to add it at the end. Basil has a lot of flavor which is released quickly in cooking, so add it towards the end of your cooking to avoid cooking off all of the flavor.

Cayenne Pepper

This is no joke so really use this sparingly because it gives off a lot of heat. This is definitely a spice that you want to start out with a little and slowly add more to taste. Cayenne pepper works well with all types of meat, so don’t be afraid to experiment. Add it to vinegar-based sauces or combined with lemon in marinades.

Dill

This is an herb that goes very well with salmon. It also goes well in stews and even yogurt. Pair it up with vegetables like cucumber and carrots.

Cilantro

There is a slightly citrusy taste to cilantro. That means it goes well in salsas and guacamole. Put it with lemon and lime in different marinades.

Coriander Seeds

Add these seeds to soups and fish. It also goes well on smoked meats like turkey. Use this with spices like cumin. They blend well together.

Rosemary

There is a woodsy flavor to this herb which works well with roasted meats like pork, chicken, or even on salmon. If you want a more subtle taste, then add it to sauces and marinades. It blends well with mushrooms, tomatoes, and spinach.

Sage

There is a slight peppery flavor to sage, so this goes well with sweet fruits and vegetables like apples and squash. But it can also help kick things like sausage up a notch. This can be added to slow cooking things like stews and sauces, and added from the start without worry about it losing its flavor. It’s a powerful spice and will hold up to long cooking times.

Thyme

This seasoning goes well with parsley and bay seasoning. So don’t be afraid to use it in recipes that require those two seasonings to give it a little extra kick. Try it out in bean dishes, vegetable dishes, or with eggs.

Turmeric

This colorful spice is most often used in curries. It can also be added to stir fries and rice to enhance their flavor.

Parsley

This is most often added to pasta dishes. Don’t be afraid to sprinkle it over chicken or fish. Add a little parsley for not only color but also flavor at the end of cooking mashed potatoes.

It’s important to taste your food throughout cooking to determine if it needs more of something. But remember that you’re not trying to mask flavors with spices and herbs - you are most definitely looking to enhance the flavors. Don’t start adding every spice in your spice cupboard just because you think it’s going to make it taste better.