



# spice up your life

## FOOD AS MEDICINE

Can you imagine eating a bowl of beans without having chili peppers to spice up the beans? An often neglected yet important aspect of our diet is the spices that we can use to enhance the flavors of our food.

It isn't just the taste that spices provide, but potent health benefits as well.

Technically, spices are usually plants that have "aromatic" properties and are used to season foods. Thus, the term "**seasoning**" is applied to these plants as well.

**Spices can come from seeds, leaves, tree bark, and roots or bulbs:**

**Seeds:** Mustard, poppy, sesame, cumin, anise, fennel, cardamom, dill, nutmeg

**Leaves:** Basil, oregano, sage, bay, rosemary, thyme, parsley, mint, coriander, tarragon

**Tree bark:** Cinnamon

**Berries:** Cayenne, black pepper

**Roots:** Ginger, licorice, turmeric, horseradish

**Bulbs:** Onion, garlic



Some spices are actually herbs as well. Herbs are traditionally plants and plant parts that are used for medicinal purposes. In fact, the “World Health Organization has estimated that perhaps 80 percent of the world’s population relies on traditional therapies for their primary health care needs.”<sup>1</sup>

In fact, many populations of the world **only** have plants available to use as medicine. Here in the U.S. we have become more aware of using herbs and spices for medicinal purposes.

Walk into any grocery or health food store and there will be rows upon rows of herbal teas and spices:

- **GINGER TEA:**  
Nausea, digestion, as an anti-inflammatory
- **FENNEL TEA:**  
Digestion, blood sugar stability
- **LICORICE TEA:**  
Digestion, adrenal support
- **ROSEMARY:**  
Parasites, antioxidant
- **TURMERIC:**  
Anti-inflammatory, anti-cancer properties
- **GARLIC:**  
Bacterial and fungal infections, anti-inflammatory, lowers cholesterol

It is best to use the herbs and spices in their natural state and as fresh as possible. The fresher the plants the more flavor and healing constituents they will maintain. There is nothing like the taste of fresh rosemary, basil and garlic.

Something as simple as adding these spices to fresh tomatoes and olive oil is definitely a taste sensation!

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Reference:

1. Murray M., Dizzorno, L., *The Encyclopedia of healing foods*, 2005: Atria Books, NY