

THINK SPICE



CURRY POWDER

Health perks: The starring role in this blend of herbs and spices belongs to turmeric, which contains curcumin—a powerful anti-inflammatory that's 50 times more potent than Vitamin C or E. In fact, one study shows that curcumin inhibits growth of certain breast cancer cells and other research suggests that it may also protect against stomach and colon cancer.

How to use it: Rub curry powder on halibut, tilapia or pork loin before roasting.

CINNAMON

Health perks: Blood sugar levels rising and falling dramatically can drive hunger and cravings. The antioxidant compound in cinnamon helps to prevent those spikes and dips by improving the way your cells metabolize glucose. What's more, research shows that eating 1/2 teaspoon of cinnamon daily reduces risk factors for diabetes and heart disease within six weeks.

How to use it: Top baked sweet potatoes with a dash of cinnamon and nutmeg. Add to your morning smoothie. Sprinkle on your morning oatmeal. Fold it into healthy breakfast breads like the Sunshine Muffins that are posted on my blog.



ROSEMARY

Health perks: While grilling and sautéing require little to no added fat, cooking at high temperatures produces compounds called heterocyclic amines, which are harmful free radicals that may cause cancer. Luckily, marinating meat with a mixture made with rosemary before firing it up prevents the formation of that compound by as much as 84% according to a *Kansas State University* study.

How to use it: Combine 2 tablespoons of olive oil, 1/2 cup of lemon juice, half a minced garlic clove, 1 tablespoon rosemary to make a marinade for chicken or steak. Or, mix together equal parts rosemary, thyme and oregano and rub the mixture directly on to chicken breasts.

OREGANO

Health perks: One teaspoon contains not only six micrograms of bone-building Vitamin K, but also the same amount of antioxidants as three cups of spinach.

How to use it: Make a salad dressing by heating 1 tablespoon olive oil, a pinch of red pepper flakes and 1/2 teaspoon oregano in a small pan over medium heat for two minutes or until the mixture smells fragrant. Drizzle over spinach with a splash of red wine vinegar.





CAYENNE PEPPER

Health perks: Talk about red hot! Capsaicin, the compound that gives cayenne its burn, also helps crank up your body's thermostat, firing up your metabolism and helping you burn extra calories and fat. In a study at *Purdue University*, people who added ½ teaspoon to their meal ate 70 fewer calories at their meal and craved fatty, salty foods less.

How to use it: Stir a dash of cayenne into a tub of store-bought hummus, sprinkle the spice over whole grain toast topped with mashed avocado or add ¼ teaspoon of paprika (another capsaicin-containing spice) and a few shakes of cayenne to air-popped popcorn.

GINGER

Health perks: Besides helping to settle an upset stomach, this peppery spice can also lessen workout-induced soreness. Gingerol, a chemical in ginger, is thought to reduce inflammation and block nerve pathways that process pain. And Thai researchers recently found that middle-aged women who took a daily ginger supplement for two months exhibited a greater attention span and scored higher on memory tests than women who took a placebo.

How to use it: Add 1/8 teaspoon of ground ginger to pancake, waffle or muffin batter (try doing this in the protein pancake recipe!). Sprinkle over applesauce or toast with almond butter. For a light dessert, sprinkle ground ginger over ½ cup frozen vanilla yogurt topped with a half a sliced small pear.



CUMIN

Health perks: One tablespoon of these aromatic seeds fulfills 22% of your daily requirement for iron, a mineral that keeps your energy level high and your immune system in flu-fighting shape. And according to preliminary research, cumin may also boost your brainpower.

How to use it: Toss 10 medium carrots, sliced, with two tablespoons of olive oil, 2 ½ teaspoons of kosher salt and 2 teaspoons cumin seeds—roast at 400 degrees for about 20 minutes. Or, toss ½ teaspoon cumin seeds in a pan for about 5 minutes over medium-high heat and then add to a pot of brown rice or quinoa before cooking.

NUTMEG

Health perks: Despite having a hint of sweetness, this spice may help prevent cavities. Nutmeg fights the germs that lives in your mouth with antibacterial compounds like macelignan which reduces plaque formation by 50% and eradicates cavity-producing microbes, according to Italian researchers. Plus, nutmeg is rich in protective anti-inflammatory compounds that can lower your risk of cancer by stifling tumor growth.

How to use it: Sprinkle ¼ teaspoon of ground nutmeg to ground coffee and brew (or dust your morning non-fat latte). Add to your protein pancake batter. Or, blend into your smoothie.

