



CS11

COOKING SKILLS AND FOOD

World of Spices

Time: 70 Minutes

Shaking the salt habit doesn't mean you have to settle for bland food. The world is rich with creative, flavorful alternatives to salt (sodium). Spices are a healthier alternative and add variety and savory flavor to meals. Learn how to store spices to maintain flavor and dig into a dish made with a sodium-free spice blend.

OBJECTIVES:

- Describe common spices from around the world.
- Learn how to store spices to maintain flavor.
- Enjoy a dish made with a sodium-free spice blend.

SETUP

- Review the resource list and print it out. Purchase all necessary supplies after reviewing the [HFL Cost Calculator](#).
- Purchase the five spices to be used in the demonstration.
- Purchase ingredients for the recipe made from the spice blend.
- Set up the demo station with spices, jars and recipe ingredients.

INTRO (10 Minutes)

- Welcome participants and introduce yourself.
- Take care of any housekeeping items (closest bathroom, water fountain, silence cell phones, etc.).
- Give a brief description of the educational experience.
- Engage in an icebreaker to gauge topic knowledge from the bank of options provided in the [Welcome Toolkit](#).

DEMO (10 Minutes)

- Demonstrate content (see demo script). Play video as indicated.

ACTIVITY (30 Minutes)

- Participants will make a sodium-free spice blend and prepare a heart-healthy Vegetarian Gumbo using the blend.

RECAP (10 Minutes)

- Pass out the handout(s) and go through them together. Participants will taste the Vegetarian Gumbo made with spice blend during the recap.

GOAL SETTING/CLOSING (10 Minutes)

- Engage in a goal setting activity from the bank of options provided in the [Welcome Toolkit](#). Pass out the Setting SMART Goals handout to participants.
- Thank participants and encourage them to join the next activity. (Provide date/time/location if known.)



NOTES: Read legal liability disclaimer before activity: [Food Liability Disclaimer](#). Refer to Resource List for all necessary supplies and handouts. This Healthy for Life® Educational Experience was created by Aramark and the American Heart Association as part of our Healthy for Life® Initiative. We are proud to be working together to help improve the health of all Americans.

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World of Spices Resource List

HANDOUTS/VIDEOS

Find these resources on AHA's YouTube channel or heart.org/healthyforgood

- Video – [Vegetarian Gumbo](#)
- Video – [How to Add Flavor Using Herbs and Spices](#)

Find these resources in this lesson

- Recipe – [Creole or Cajun Seasoning Blend](#)
- Recipe – [Vegetarian Gumbo](#)
- Handout – [Common Herbs and Spices: How to Use Them Deliciously](#)
- Handout – [Setting SMART Goals](#)

SPACE SETUP

- Chairs and tables for participants
- Demo table
- Pens for participants
- Folders
- Computer, internet access, and projector, if available

DEMO SUPPLIES

- 5 spices to show during the demo: basil, thyme, rosemary, curry powder, smoked paprika
- Optional – Fresh basil, thyme and/or rosemary to allow participants to smell
- Spice jar for storage demo
- Resealable plastic bags or reusable plastic/glass containers for storage demo

ACTIVITY INGREDIENTS* AND SUPPLIES**

Ingredients for seasoning blend, including:

- 1 teaspoon sodium-free chili powder
- 1 teaspoon paprika
- 1 teaspoon ground cumin
- 1 teaspoon dried thyme, crumbled
- ½ teaspoon garlic powder
- ½ teaspoon onion powder
- ½ teaspoon pepper

Ingredients for Vegetarian Gumbo, including:

- ¼ cup all-purpose flour
- 3 tablespoons canola or corn oil
- 2 medium ribs of celery
- 1 medium onion
- 1 medium carrot
- ½ medium red bell pepper
- ¼ medium green bell pepper
- 4 medium garlic cloves
- 2 medium tomatoes
- 1 cup fat-free, low-sodium vegetable broth
- 2 ½ cups frozen sliced okra, thawed
- 2 cups canned no-salt-added small red beans
- 1 medium zucchini
- ½ cup tomato purée
- 2 medium dried bay leaves
- 1 teaspoon dried thyme, crumbled
- 1 teaspoon sodium-free Creole or Cajun seasoning blend
- ¼ teaspoon cayenne

SUPPLIES FOR ACTIVITY

- Small bowls
- Spoons
- Resealable plastic bags or reusable glass/plastic containers
- Electric burner(s)
- Measuring cups/spoons
- Large skillet with lid
- Wooden spoon
- Ladle
- Bowls (for tasting)
- Spoons (for tasting)

*Recipe serves 5 people; please multiply ingredients as necessary for your participants.

**Purchase appropriate number of supplies for your participants. Participants can divide into teams and share supplies and ingredients.

World of Spices Demo Script



SAY:

To get started, I'm going to introduce you to five common spices that you can use instead of salt. Then we'll create a spice blend and a delicious vegetarian gumbo that calls for the flavorful blend.

**Hold up the first spice: Basil
(may also share fresh basil)**



SAY:

Basil tastes sweet and earthy and is delicious in any Italian dish such as lasagna or pasta with red sauce. It pairs well with Thai stir-fry, fish, lamb, lean ground meats, stews, salads, soups, sauces and fish cocktails. Here's an extra tip – Add dried basil to a dish 15 minutes before it is done cooking for full flavor. Add fresh basil right before serving to avoid flavor loss or wilting.

**Hold up the second spice: Thyme
(may also share fresh thyme)**



SAY:

Thyme is particularly popular in French and Italian cooking. It comes in fresh or dried forms and adds flavor to lean meats (especially veal and lean pork), sauces, soups, onions, roasted vegetables, tomatoes and salads. It pairs well with other spices such as oregano and marjoram. Here's an extra tip – Lightly crush dried leaves between your fingers when adding to a dish to release the flavor.

**Hold up the third spice: Rosemary
(may also share fresh rosemary)**



SAY:

Rosemary tastes woody and pairs well with proteins such as roasted chicken, pork, lamb or salmon. It goes well with raw or cooked mushrooms, whole-grain breads, and butternut squash or pumpkin. Here's an extra tip – Use long sticks of fresh rosemary to brush marinades on meat or use it as a skewer for grilled kabobs.

Hold up the fourth spice: Curry Powder



SAY:

Curry powder is actually a blend of spices – usually including coriander, fenugreek, turmeric, cumin and others. It's widely used in Indian and Asian food and can add flavor to a breakfast veggie-and-egg scramble. It also pairs well with whole grains such as brown rice or quinoa. Here's an extra tip – Some curry powder can be hot and spicy. If you prefer a milder one (or a hotter one) look up a curry powder recipe online and make your own mix.

Hold up the fifth spice: Smoked Paprika



SAY:

Smoked paprika tastes smoky and woody. It pairs well with egg dishes, spice rubs for meat and even tofu. It's tasty in fruit salsas and tomato sauce. Here's an extra tip – Use smoked paprika to add the smokiness of bacon to any dish without adding the saturated fat and sodium that bacon contains.



These are just five savory ideas from around the world. There are many more you can explore.



Now we'll talk about storing your spices so they maintain their flavor.

World of Spices Demo Script (continued)

Hold up a spice jar in one hand and a resealable plastic bag in the other hand.



SAY:

Keep herbs and spices in a cool, dry place and not above the stove. Store them in air-tight containers such as glass jars, resealable plastic bags or stainless-steel containers. Keep the containers out of direct sunlight because it will fade the spice's color and reduce its strength.

Once a year check whole spices for freshness by crushing a small amount and smelling it. The aroma should be fresh and strong. Check the aroma of ground spices every six months.

Spices are expensive so refrigerating or freezing them in air-tight containers extends their life and the flavor will last longer.

Now, let's discuss storage tips for some popular herbs such as basil, cilantro, mint and parsley which actually taste better fresh than dried.

They keep well for several days with their stems in water like bouquets of flowers. Trim the stems; fill a jar or water glass with an inch or two of water and place stems in the jar. Change the water every day or two.

Basil ideally is stored at room temperature, while cilantro keeps best in the refrigerator. Parsley and mint can be stored in or out of the refrigerator. If you are storing leafy herbs in the refrigerator, cover the tops loosely with a plastic bag with some holes punched in it. The holes will let moisture out because moisture trapped in a plastic bag can cause herbs to go bad faster.

Woodier herbs such as rosemary, thyme and sage should be wrapped loosely in paper towels and placed in a resealable bag. Store in the refrigerator's "crisper drawer." Avoid colder spots like the rear of the lower shelf. Stored properly, fresh herbs will last from a few days to more than a week.

Woody herbs keep longer than leafy ones. They also hold on to more flavor when dried.

And yes, you can store fresh herbs in the freezer.

The simplest method is to wash the herbs, pat them dry and spread them on a pan which you put in the freezer. Once frozen, put them in labeled, sealed containers in your freezer.

Use bags labeled for freezing. They are made of a thicker material and are designed to be moisture and oxygen resistant.

Glass jars with tight-fitting lids also work well for storing herbs in the freezer.

You might try a unique method for freezing herbs in ice cube trays using low-sodium broth, water or oil.

Chop the herbs and place them in an ice cube tray and top with water, canola or light olive oil. Freeze them overnight. Pop out the cubes the next day and place them in a resealable plastic bag and store flat in the freezer for up to a year.

When you're ready, you simply retrieve a cube to add flavor to your dish.

World of Spices Activity Script

Go to the demo table to prepare the sodium-free seasoning blend and ask participants to follow along.



SAY:

Now we're going to create a sodium-free spice blend that you can use in any recipe that calls for Creole or Cajun seasoning blends. You'll want to avoid using prepackaged seasoning mixes because they often contain a lot of sodium.



There's no need to take notes, as I'll hand out the recipes for both the seasoning blend and the sodium-free dish we're making today.



Create the spice blend using measuring spoons. Mix together in a bowl. Store in a plastic resealable bag or reusable container.



SAY:

To make this mix, combine the spices in a bowl as follows.

- 1 teaspoon sodium-free chili powder
- 1 teaspoon paprika
- 1 teaspoon ground cumin
- ½ teaspoon garlic powder
- ½ teaspoon pepper



Stir all the ingredients together and we'll transfer the blend to a resealable plastic bag or reusable container. When you get home, you can transfer it to a jar with a tight-fitting lid. Be sure to store the spice blend in a cool, dark place for up to six months.



SAY:

Now we're going to prepare a Vegetarian Gumbo that includes the spice blend that we just made.



First, let's do the prep work for this healthy gumbo dish.



Dice the following items:

- 2 medium ribs of celery
- 1 medium onion
- 1 medium carrot
- ½ medium red bell pepper

- ¼ medium green bell pepper
- 2 medium tomatoes
- 1 medium zucchini

And mince:

- 4 medium garlic cloves



Now we'll start cooking by stirring together ¼ cup all-purpose flour and 3 tablespoons canola or corn oil in a large skillet. Cook over medium-low heat for 10 minutes or until the mixture is chocolate brown and fragrant. Be sure to stir constantly.



Next we'll add in the celery, onion, carrot, bell peppers, and garlic. We'll cook these vegetables for 3 to 4 minutes, or until they begin to release their liquid. You'll want to stir occasionally.



Now, we'll stir in the tomatoes and 1 cup fat-free, low-sodium vegetable broth.



Increase the heat to medium. We'll cook, covered, for 10 minutes, or until the tomatoes begin to soften and release their liquid. Stir occasionally.



Add the remaining ingredients, including:

- 2 ½ cups frozen sliced okra, thawed
- 2 cups canned no-salt-added small red beans, rinsed and drained
- 1 medium zucchini, diced
- ½ cup tomato purée
- 2 medium dried bay leaves
- 1 teaspoon dried thyme, crumbled
- 1 teaspoon of the Creole or Cajun seasoning blend
- ¼ teaspoon cayenne



Bring to a simmer and simmer, covered, for 15 minutes, or until the vegetables are tender. We'll discard the bay leaves before digging in.



Thank you for coming today. I hope you have enjoyed exploring the World of Spices.

Creole or Cajun Seasoning Blend

Makes 2 tablespoons; ½ teaspoon per serving
Per serving: 3 calories; 0.0 g Saturated Fat; 1 mg Sodium



INGREDIENTS

- 1 teaspoon sodium-free chili powder
- 1 teaspoon paprika
- 1 teaspoon ground cumin
- 1 teaspoon dried thyme, crumbled
- ½ teaspoon garlic powder
- ½ teaspoon onion powder
- ½ teaspoon pepper

DIRECTIONS

In a small bowl, stir together all the ingredients. Transfer to a jar with a tight-fitting lid. Store in a cool, dark, dry place for up to six months.

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Makes 5 servings; 1½ heaping cups per serving
Per Serving: 248 Calories; 0.5 g Saturated Fat; 95 mg Sodium



Serve this gumbo over a whole grain or enjoy a bowl on its own.

INGREDIENTS

- ¼ cup all-purpose flour
- 3 tablespoons canola or corn oil
- 2 medium ribs of celery, diced
- 1 medium onion, diced
- 1 medium carrot, diced
- ½ medium red bell pepper, diced
- ¼ medium green bell pepper, diced
- 4 medium garlic cloves, minced
- 2 medium tomatoes, diced
- 1 cup fat-free, low-sodium vegetable broth
- 2 ½ cups frozen sliced okra, thawed
- 2 cups canned no-salt-added small red beans, rinsed and drained
- 1 medium zucchini, diced
- ½ cup tomato purée
- 2 medium dried bay leaves
- 1 teaspoon dried thyme, crumbled
- 1 teaspoon sodium-free Creole or Cajun seasoning blend
(See **Creole or Cajun Seasoning Blend Recipe** and **Cook's Tip**)
- ¼ teaspoon cayenne

DIRECTIONS

1. In a large skillet, stir together the flour and oil. Cook over medium-low heat for 10 minutes, or until the mixture is chocolate brown and fragrant, stirring constantly. Stir in the celery, onion, carrot, bell peppers, and garlic. Cook for 3 to 4 minutes, or until the vegetables begin to release their liquid, stirring occasionally.
2. Stir in the tomatoes and broth. Increase the heat to medium. Cook, covered, for 10 minutes, or until the tomatoes begin to soften and release their liquid, stirring occasionally.
3. Stir in the remaining ingredients. Bring to a simmer and simmer, covered, for 15 minutes, or until the vegetables are tender. Discard the bay leaves before serving the gumbo.

Cook's Tip: Double or triple the amounts of Creole or Cajun seasoning blend you make. Keep the extra in a storage container to use in other seafood, poultry, meat, and vegetable dishes.

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Your spice drawer is a treasure chest of zippy, zesty, sweet, savory and spicy flavors; and one of the best qualities of herbs and spices is the variety of flavors you can add to foods without adding salt.

Here's a guide for the flavor profiles of common spices and how to season with them.

BASIL

Tastes somewhat sweet, earthy.

Delicious Pairings: Any Italian food like meatless lasagna or pasta with red sauce, Thai food like a stir-fry with lots of veggies and sprinkled with peanuts, fruit like berries, peaches or apricots

Extra Tip: Add dried to dish at least 15 minutes before it is finished cooking for full flavor. Add fresh right before serving to avoid flavor loss or wilting.

CURRY POWDER

Is a blend of spices usually including coriander, fenugreek, turmeric, cumin and others.

Delicious Pairings: Indian food like lentil-potato stew, breakfast veggie-and-egg scramble, whole grains like brown rice or quinoa with cilantro, and tuna with celery and no-added-sugar, low-fat yogurt for a delicious sandwich

Extra Tip: Some curry powder can be hot and spicy. If you prefer a milder one (or a hotter one) look up a recipe online and make your own mix from spices in your spice drawer.

CUMIN

Tastes toasty and earthy with a little spice.

Delicious Pairings: Mexican food like black bean salsa or refried beans, fish such as tilapia, especially in fish tacos and root vegetables

Extra Tip: Cumin is also part of the Indian spice mix garam masala. Delicious when paired with coriander in Mexican or Indian food.

ROSEMARY

Tastes woody.

Delicious Pairings: Roasted meats like chicken, pork or lamb; salmon, mushrooms (raw or cooked), whole-grain breads and butternut squash or pumpkin

Extra Tip: Long sticks of fresh rosemary can be used to brush marinades on meat or as a skewer stick for grilled kabobs.

SMOKED PAPRIKA

Tastes smoky and woody.

Delicious Pairings: Egg dishes, spice rubs for meats or even tofu, in fruit salsas like mango and in tomato sauce

Extra Tip: Use it to add the smokiness of bacon to any dish without the saturated fat or sodium.

THYME

Tastes earthy.

Delicious Pairings: Any bean dish, blends well with bay leaves, parsley, or lemon zest and roasted vegetables

Extra Tip: Lightly crush dried leaves between your fingers when adding to a dish to release the flavor.

CINNAMON

Tastes sweet and spicy.

Delicious Pairings: Whole-grain muffins, waffles, pancakes or breads, fruit crisps with oatmeal topping and Greek meat dishes like lamb or beef stew with oregano and onions

Extra Tip: The natural sweetness means you can cut the amount of sugar in some recipes.

SPECIFIC

- What exactly do you want to accomplish?

MEASURABLE

- How will you track your progress towards your goal?

ACHIEVABLE

- Is reaching your goal possible with your full effort?

REALISTIC

- Do you have the resources and ability to achieve your goal?
If not, how can you get them?

TIME-BOUND

- When will your goal be achieved?

EXAMPLE OF A SMART GOAL:

I will increase the number of fruit servings I eat daily by 2 cups within the next 3 months.

Personal SMART goal:
