



By Yanissa Marte

Want to learn how to become a healthier you? Well, March is National Nutrition Month and Dietitians all over the country provide health awareness for families and communities. Some ways to become healthier individuals is by eating lean meats, consuming whole grains, and not forgetting fruits and vegetables; they are very important. They provide vitamins and minerals to help our bodies function properly and are packed with fiber that will fill us up and keep our guts healthy. In addition, physical activity is an excellent way to reduce stress, lose weight, and keep the joints lubricated to reduce stiffness. Remembering to drink loads of water and limit sodas and juices is a great way to stay hydrated and avoid extra sugar and calories in liquid form. Another healthy tip is to eat nutritious snacks like apples with peanut butter, yogurt, and a handful of nuts to avoid getting too hungry between meals, prevent overeating or indulging in fatty, salty, and sugary foods. Wellbeing involves preparation and awareness which can be time consuming but beneficial in the end, especially by preventing the development of diseases and ultimately having better quality of life.

Eating healthy is not only about consuming more vegetables and fruits, it is also about learning how to make these nutritious meals tasty and enjoyable. If healthy food tastes delicious, won't you eat it more often? This year, the theme for National Nutrition Month is "Savor the Flavor of Eating Right." One of the many ways in which taste can be enhanced is by using what nature has given us: herbs and spices. Normally, we settle for seasonings that are very high in salt that can affect our health negatively in the long-run. Nature has its own wholesome seasoning. But do we know the difference between these nutritious plant sources? Well, both come from plant parts -- herbs come from the leaves and spices derive from the seeds, stem, bark, bulb, or roots. Some well known herbs are parsley, mint, basil, oregano, thyme and rosemary. Spices are generally dried and include, pepper, cinnamon, ginger, turmeric and cloves. Some plants provide both herbs and spices (like cilantro and coriander where the former is the leaves of the plant while the latter is the seeds). However, most plants only give us one or the other. Now what is the wonderful thing about these plant parts? Not only are they nutritious and have health benefits, they also add aroma, flavor, texture, and color to your meals that are very low in

calories as well as in salt content. This is a win-win situation where food is made more delicious and better for you too!

But what if you don't know how to use them in your cooking? Below are examples of some foods and the herbs and spices that go well with them.

If you are cooking:	Try flavoring it with:
Beef:	Bay leaf, marjoram, nutmeg, onion, pepper, sage, thyme
Lamb	Curry powder, garlic, rosemary, mint
Pork	Garlic, onion, sage, pepper, oregano
Veal	Bay leaf, curry powder, ginger, marjoram, oregano
Chicken	Ginger, marjoram, oregano, paprika, poultry seasoning, rosemary, sage, tarragon, thyme
Fish	Curry powder, dill, dry mustard, marjoram, paprika, pepper
Carrots	Cinnamon, cloves, dill, ginger, marjoram, nutmeg, rosemary, sage
Corn	Cumin, curry powder, onion, paprika, parsley
Green Beans	Dill, curry powder, marjoram, oregano, tarragon, thyme
Greens	Onion, pepper
Potatoes	Dill, garlic, onion, paprika, parsley, sage
Summer Squash	Cloves, curry powder, marjoram, nutmeg, rosemary, sage
Winter Squash	Cinnamon, ginger, nutmeg, onion
Tomatoes	Basil, bay leaf, dill, marjoram, onion, oregano, parsley, pepper
Cucumbers	chives, dill, garlic, vinegar
Peas	green pepper, mint, fresh mushrooms, onion, parsley
Rice	chives, green pepper, onion, paprika, parsley

(Obtained from Cooking with Herbs and Spices, 2003)*****

Incorporate using these herbs and spices to season your meals and it can make staying healthy fun and delicious. Watch out for any events near you to obtain the education and benefits from National Nutrition Month and remember to “Savor the Flavor!”

References

Cooking with Herbs and Spices. (2003) Accessed from <http://www4.ncsu.edu/~aibrantl/cookingwithherbs.html>

EatRight. Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics. (2016) *National Nutrition Month*. Accessed from <http://www.eatright.org/resource/food/resources/national-nutrition-month/nnm-handouts-and-tipsheets-for-families-and-communities>.

Health (2016) *A Beginner's Guide to Herbs and Spices*. Accessed from <http://www.health.com/health/gallery/0,,20307319,00.html/more>