

The York University Staff Association Health & Wellness News & Views

If you're like me, you have an entire cupboard full of spices, and all too often find yourself haphazardly throwing spices in to your culinary creations not realizing the health benefits of specific herbs and spices not to mention the added flavour they can provide. Modern science is beginning to uncover the extreme power of spices as weapons against illnesses from Alzheimer's disease to cancer. It's incredible to think that a simple spice can aid in the battle of cancer. Several spices have shown to stop the growth of cancer cells, and in certain cases even kill them off altogether. Spices contain high antiviral and antibacterial properties and many are high in B vitamins and minerals as well. All spices are derived from plants, flowers, seeds barks, leaves and roots, sounds delicious right? Many think that the phrase "clean eating" means bland, mundane and just flat out boring. That couldn't be further from the truth, and there are still those who believe that everything that tastes good is bad for you. Seasoning your dishes with spices allows you to use less of the other ingredients linked to health problems such as added sugars, table salt and sources of saturated fat. If you're looking to round out your healthy lifestyle, you'll want to stock up on the following spices and use them generously in your cooking, or use them on their own to enhance the absorption and benefits.

Turmeric is often found in kitchens around the world, but is not commonly used in Canada. Science has magnified the medicinal value of this traditional golden spice in recent years, however it has been used in both traditional Indian cuisine and medicine for at least a millennium or two. Not only does this spice add some color to your food, it is also loaded with health benefits. According to the Journal of the American Chemical Society, turmeric contains a wide range of antioxidant, antiviral, antibacterial, antifungal, anticarcinogenic, antimutagenic and anti-inflammatory properties. Add this spice to anything, besides dessert of course, for a unique flavor and a ton of health benefits. You can use turmeric to add some zest to cooked vegetables, eggs, and meat dishes. You can also add it to boiling water you're using to make pasta, rice, and soups. I personally enjoy turmeric on an egg salad sandwich.

Cayenne is a very popular pepper that is used in a variety of dishes and flavourings. You can buy

cayenne pepper at most supermarkets in a variety of forms - the most popular form being the red powder. Talk about RED HOT!!! cayenne pepper doesn't just fire up those taste buds, it also helps crank up your body's thermostat, firing up your metabolism causing you to burn extra fat and calories. According to Men's Fitness magazine, this little red devil is also effective in dulling muscle aches because of a key substance called capsaicin. In fact, it is so effective says the magazine, that some manufacturers are using it in over the counter pain creams. Men's Fitness also notes that cayenne pepper can improve circulation, which benefits heart health and even fights certain cancers. If that's not enough, cayenne pepper has a cleansing effect on the body ridding it of yeast and fungi that just don't belong. This spicy spice also has a calming effect the digestive system even though it seems counterintuitive it actually operates as a soothing agent. Those with sensitive palates may disagree, but most people find that a dash of cayenne can add a little delicious zest to almost any dish.



Ginger has become increasingly popular in recent years and now you can find it in more recipes than ever. Ginger has traditionally been used to relieve colds and as you might be doing all the medically traditional things to fight the cold including taking vitamin C and/or using decongestion meds, the old adage goes you feed a cold, even if you're not hungry. Ginger also aids in stomach troubles. Studies show that ginger in all forms (including the ale) can help reduce nausea caused by morning

sickness, the flu, following anesthetic as well as chemotherapy. Ginger is laden with inflammation fighting compounds which experts believe also assist in fighting some cancers and reducing arthritic inflammation. Ginger pairs well with soy sauce, chile peppers, citrus and garlic. Try making an Asian salad to change up the traditional Summer Caesar. Here is one of my Fav's.

<https://aseasyasapplepie.com/chopped-asian-salad-peanut-dressing/>

Back in the day cinnamon was more valuable than its weight in gold. While these days, most would opt to get their hands on 24 karats instead of 24 ounces. Modern science has now confirmed what people have instinctively known for years. The potential health benefits of cinnamon could be claimed as nothing short of impressive. Cinnamon contains the highest antioxidant value of any spice. Antioxidants protect the body from oxidative damage caused by free radicals. Cinnamon is also rich in, iron, calcium and fiber. It has been used since medieval times to cure diarrhea, indigestion and bloating. Cinnamon has shown to lower blood sugar levels along with bad cholesterol levels (LDL) making it beneficial for both heart disease and type 2 diabetes. Consequently, the lowering of blood sugar levels and improvement in cholesterol ratios helps to reverse insulin resistance for pre-diabetic patients. Because cinnamon is so sweet, it also satisfies the craving for sweet foods that generally afflicts diabetics. If that's still not enough? Cinnamon has most recently been a part of a rising trend in its use as a weight loss catalyst. The spice has the ability to alter the digestion of not only sugar, but of carbohydrates as well. Your body is better able to utilize your carbohydrate storage, so that they do not turn into excess fat cells. Consuming cinnamon itself also causes a cellular reaction comparable to when you eat hot peppers. Cinnamon stimulates your metabolism to speed up because it requires a little extra energy to metabolize. This boost in metabolism allows you to burn more calories and assists with weight loss. Sprinkle a teaspoon on your oatmeal or cereal. A simple mug of hot water vanilla, cinnamon and honey is perfect when you need a hug. Sprinkle on pancakes or french toast. Mix into butters, yogurt or cheese spreads to add sweet flavour or mix into a smoothie or protein shake. Bottom line - Cinnamon is one of the most versatile, beneficial and delicious spices on the planet.

Let's get crazy this summer and live life with a little spice! Say sayonara to boring old salt & pepper and try all the wonderful culinary spiced combinations the world has to offer. Don't be afraid to experiment. A little extra kick is always a good thing. Trust your taste buds and get cooking!

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