

Slim down and get healthy with spices

June 7, 2006

(FAMILY CIRCLE)

Fill up with delicious food while you slim down. It sounds too good to be true, but when you eat a meal that truly tastes good, you're happy having a moderate amount. Your spice rack, which allows you to cook without fatty enhancements like cream and butter, holds the key to success. The secret? You cut calories without losing flavor.

Plus, plant-based seasonings have more benefits than just a thinner body. They've been linked to reduced risks for heart disease, diabetes and cancer.

Pump up the flavor in your dishes with this guide to superstar spices and healthy herbs:

Chili Powder. Capsaicin, found in chile peppers, works as an appetite suppressant. Capsaicin has also been shown to be an effective anti-inflammatory, a potent antioxidant and a promising cancer fighter. Spice up your diet by sprinkling chili powder on tomato soup, macaroni and cheese or corn on the cob, or add hot sauce to eggs and omelets.

Garlic. Garlic has earned fame as a powerful health helper. It's rich in organosulfur compounds with high levels of antioxidant activity and releases the antibiotic allicin when chopped or crushed. Spice up the flavor by sprinkling chopped or crushed garlic on pizza; or roast whole cloves and spread them on a crusty loaf of bread instead of butter.

Rosemary. This herb boasts high levels of antioxidant activity, thanks to two powerful free-radical eliminators, carnosol and rosmarinic acid. Research shows that rosemary may help fight cancers of the breast, lung and skin. Spice up your diet by mixing it in an aromatic marinade for grilled chicken; spruce up stuffing with a couple of teaspoons or use fresh sprigs as skewers for shish kebabs on the grill.

Curry Powder. Turmeric, an ingredient in curry powder, contains curcumin. This phytochemical helps thwart cancer by switching off proteins that cause cells to multiply and by inducing cancer cells to self-destruct. The spice may also reduce risk of Alzheimer's, psoriasis and arthritis. Spice up the taste by adding it to bean-

based soups, stir into plain yogurt for an exotic dip or sprinkle on pineapple slices and grill for a tasty side dish.

Oregano. This aromatic herb, most often associated with Italian and Greek cuisines, contains quercetin and rosmarinic acids, both strong antioxidants. Scientists at the USDA have shown that 1 tablespoon of fresh oregano offers as much antioxidant activity as a medium-size apple. Spice it up by sprinkling fresh or dried oregano on pizza or add to oven-roasted veggies.

Cumin. A main player in Indian, Mexican, Caribbean and North African cuisines, This antioxidant-rich spice has been shown to lower blood glucose levels. Spice up your diet by adding cumin to enchiladas and tacos, rub on meats or sprinkle on scrambled eggs.

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