MAKING HEALTHY CHOICES: WEEK 19

Spice things up

Many people rely on salt and sugar to flavor their food, which isn’t the most nutritious option. The wide variety of herbs and spices available to us are great for adding extra flavor to food without relying on salt, sugar, and store-bought marinades and condiments. By cooking at home, you have more control over what is in your food.

What are herbs and spices?

Both herbs and spices come from parts of plants and are used to enhance the flavor and smell of food. The difference is the part of the plant they come from. Herbs are plant leaves and are used fresh or dried. Common herbs include basil, oregano and rosemary. Spices are usually dried and come from other parts of the plant (such as bark, seeds, roots and bulbs). Common spices include cinnamon, ginger and cloves.

Are they expensive?

Herbs and spices might seem expensive at first. But dried herbs and spices won’t go bad as quickly as many fresh food products, and even a small amount of these seasonings can add a lot of flavor. You can also dry any fresh herbs that you don’t use right away.

You can grow many herbs in your garden, on a windowsill or in another sunny spot in your home. You can buy food-producing plants and seeds with your Bridge Card. Remember to have your kids help choose which herbs to grow, and then have them help take care of the plants.

Endless combinations

Many combinations of herbs and spices create delightful flavors. Fresh or dried basil and oregano add flavor to homemade pasta sauce. Fresh or dried thyme combines well with the flavors of poultry and fish. Add paprika, turmeric and cumin to chopped sweet potato before roasting in the oven. Use cinnamon and nutmeg to enhance sweet or savory dishes. Try cinnamon and nutmeg with yogurt, fresh fruit and nuts, or add these spices to oatmeal.

Endless combinations with your family and try making your own combinations at home.

When you’re choosing premixed herbs and spices, remember to check the Nutrition Facts label and ingredients list to make sure you’re only getting the herbs and spices you want.

Did you know?

Dried herbs are twice as strong as fresh. Store herbs away from direct light in a cool, dry place for maximum shelf life.

WEEKLY RECIPE

Remember to wash your hands and prepare food safely.

Taco Seasoning

1. In a small bowl, mix together 2 tablespoons chili powder, 1 tablespoon cumin, ½ teaspoon garlic powder, ½ teaspoon onion powder, ½ teaspoon cayenne pepper, ½ teaspoon dry mustard and 1 teaspoon cornstarch.
   (Note: The cornstarch, which acts as a thickener, is optional.)
2. Store in an airtight container.
3. Try combining with the Fun Family Corn Tortillas recipe from Week 16.
MSU Extension programming has something to offer every member of your family

Michigan State University Extension helps people improve their lives by bringing the vast knowledge and resources of MSU directly to individuals, communities and businesses.

To help you be healthy at every stage of life, MSU Extension delivers affordable, relevant, evidence-based education to serve the needs of adults, youth and families in urban and rural communities. Programs focus on helping you gain the skills you need to buy and prepare nutritious, budget-friendly foods, increase your physical activity and stretch your food dollars.

MSU Extension’s children and youth programs address needs and issues from birth through age 19, providing parents with educational resources related to your child’s development and giving youth the opportunity through 4-H programs to build leadership and teach practical life skills.

For more information or to join a class, contact your local MSU Extension county office or visit www.msue.msu.edu.

FIND YOUR LOCAL MSU EXTENSION COUNTY OFFICE

With a presence in every Michigan county, Extension faculty and staff members provide tools to live and work better. From a personal meeting to information online, MSU Extension educators work every day to provide the most current information when people need it to ensure success – in the workplace, at home and in the community.

To find your local county office visit msue.msu.edu/county.

Acknowledgements
Developed by Erin E. Powell, MS, RDN; Tom Cummins; Elizabeth Dorman and Denise Aungst, MS; for MSU Extension. Based on a concept created by Denise Aungst and Layne Schlicher for MSU Extension. Produced by ANR Creative for MSU Extension.

In accordance with Federal law and U.S. Department of Agriculture policy, this institution is prohibited from discriminating on the basis of race, color, national origin, gender, gender identity, religion, age, height, weight, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, marital status, family status or veteran status. To file a complaint of discrimination, write USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights, 1400 Independence Avenue, S.W., Washington, D.C. 20250-9410 or call (800) 795-3272 (voice) or (202) 720-6382 (TTY). USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer. This material was funded by USDA’s Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program. The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program provides nutrition assistance to people with low income. It can help you buy nutrition foods for a better diet. To find out more, contact your local MSU Extension office.

MSU is an affirmative-action, equal-opportunity employer, committed to achieving excellence through a diverse workforce and inclusive culture that encourages all people to reach their full potential. Michigan State University Extension programs and materials are open to all without regard to race, color, national origin, gender, gender identity, religion, age, height, weight, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, marital status, family status or veteran status. Issued in furtherance of MSU Extension work, acts of May 8 and June 30, 1914, in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Jeffrey W. Dwyer, Director, MSU Extension, East Lansing, MI 48824. This information is for educational purposes only. Reference to commercial products or trade names does not imply endorsement by MSU Extension or bias against those not mentioned. IP-WEB-1.2017–TC/MR