



Herbs and Spices as Functional Foods

There are various herbs and spices throughout the world that have been studied for their effectiveness in combating or managing certain health conditions, often referred to as functional foods. Read on to learn more about what makes these foods special and how to incorporate them into a balanced diet.



What is a functional food?



While there is no standard definition, it is generally accepted that a functional food provides some sort of health benefit beyond meeting basic nutrition needs.

It contains a specific component that can help to manage and/or prevent chronic disease, or reduce disease risk.



Many herbs and spices contain antioxidant or anti-inflammatory compounds



To be clear, the evidence to support these claims is limited and more research is necessary to prove them



Cinnamon

- ⇒ Limited evidence has shown it can help to lower blood sugar, however this has NOT been proven
- ⇒ It has been used in traditional/Eastern medicine for centuries as it is thought to be helpful in relieving nerve pain, inflammation, and cough



Turmeric



- ⇒ Contains anti-inflammatory, antioxidant, antibacterial, antiviral, and antifungal properties
- ⇒ May be helpful for people with cancer, diabetes, arthritis and Alzheimer's, but more research is needed

Cayenne Pepper

Contains Vitamins A and C (both antioxidants) and capsaicin, an anti-inflammatory, which may help with pain relief



Ginger

- ⇒ Has been used for centuries to help alleviate nausea, vomiting and indigestion
- ⇒ May be helpful for people with morning sickness, seasickness and those experiencing stomach issues from chemotherapy

Garlic

Contains antioxidant and anti-inflammatory properties, and may help to lower cholesterol



Peppermint

May help with nausea, headaches, sinus infections, and other gastrointestinal symptoms due to antiviral and antimicrobial properties



Oregano

- ⇒ high in flavonoids and phenolic compounds, both antioxidants
- ⇒ May help with inflammation, respiratory and digestive disorders, headaches and rheumatism



Rosemary

- ⇒ Used in folk medicine for centuries
- ⇒ May be useful in treating mood disorders, insomnia, headaches, migraine, and epilepsy



Minty Cucumber Watermelon Salad

Recipe from Taste of Home

Makes 16 servings (3/4 cup each)

Ingredients:

8 cups cubed seedless watermelon
2 English cucumbers, halved length-wise and sliced
6 green onions, chopped
1/4 cup fresh mint
1/4 cup balsamic vinegar
1/4 cup olive oil
1/2 teaspoon salt
1/2 teaspoon pepper



Directions:

1. In a large bowl, combine watermelon, cucumbers, green onions and mint.
2. In a small bowl, whisk remaining ingredients. Pour over salad and toss to coat. Serve immediately or refrigerate, covered, up to 2 hours before serving.

Nutrition Facts (per serving): 60 calories, 1g protein, 9g carbohydrate, 3g fat, 78mg sodium

Resources: <https://extension.colostate.edu/topic-areas/nutrition-food-safety-health/functional-foods-for-health-9-391/>

<https://health.umms.org/2023/01/03/cooking-with-spices/>

<https://www.nccih.nih.gov/health/cinnamon>

<https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC5874591/#sec4-plants-07-00002>

<https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC7491497/>

**Consumer-centered access for
long-term care information,
referrals and assessments.**

**For information,
call 518-382-8481, #9, ext. 304**



Do you have questions or concerns about what to eat?

If you are participating in services offered by Schenectady County's Senior and Long Term Care services, you are eligible for a free consultation with Debbie Griswold, Registered Dietitian.

Call Cornell Cooperative Extension, Schenectady County at 518-372-1622, ext. 269 to contact or leave a message.

Check out our website for nutrition resources: <http://ccschenectady.org/nutrition-for-seniors>

Schenectady County Department of Senior and Long Term Care Services denies no person services or access to service based upon race, color, sex, religion, national origin, marital status and/or handicapping conditions. Schenectady County Department of Senior and Long Term Care Services is primarily funded with County tax dollars. Supplemental funding is through the New York State Office for the Aging under Title III-B/D, III-C-1, III-C-2, III-F of the Federal Older Americans Act, and New York State Expanded In-Home Services for the Elderly (EISEP), Community Services for the Elderly Act (CSE), Congregate Services Initiative (CSI), and the Wellness In Nutrition (WIN).

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