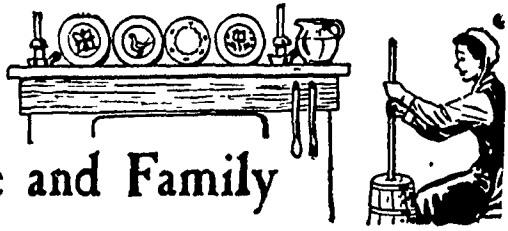


For the Farm Wife and Family



Add A Dash Of Herbs For Taste

By Mrs. Richard C. Spence



SPENCE

Salt and pepper are standard seasonings, but ever since the time of Columbus, men have searched for new ways to enhance the taste of food.

Today gourmet cuisine is set apart by its masterful touches of seasoning. You can duplicate the subtle flavoring of the very finest cuisine right in your own kitchen. It isn't difficult to create new tastes for old favorites such as meats, vegetables, soups and breads, when herbs and spices become a reliable part of your food preparation tools.

Although there are only so many foods around, the number of ways to vary them could keep you busy for a lifetime. Spices and herbs are used to enhance the natural

flavor of the food, never to disguise it.

Start out on your first few ventures with herbs and spices by following recipes which have been well tested. When experimenting, a good rule of thumb is to start with one-quarter teaspoon of a spice or herb. It is easier to add another small

amount than to be faced with the problems of over-seasoning.

FIVE KINDS OF SEASONERS

1 Spices — obtained from the bark, root, fruit or berry of perennial plants. (For example, cinnamon from the bark, ginger from the root, nutmeg from the fruit, pepper from the berry.) Spices are used whole as well as in-ground form.

2 Herbs — These are the

leaves—never the stems—of annual and perennial low-growing shrubs. Chervil, dill weed, marjoram, parsley, rosemary, sage, sweet basil, tarragon, thyme, etc.

3 Aromatic seeds — The seeds of annual plants which may be used either whole or ground: anise, caraway, celery, coriander, cumin, dill, fennel, mustard, poppy and sesame.

4 Seasonings — Generally, the term seasonings covers blends of spices and/or herbs and/or seeds and/or salt. Although they may be blended for one specific purpose, they lend themselves to multiple uses: Poultry seasoning, Spaghetti sauce seasoning, Chili powder, Curry powder; Salad herbs etc.

5 Vegetable spices — Garlic (chips, powder, salt and seasoning powder), bell peppers, paprika, chili peppers or pequins, cayenne; horseradish; onions (powder, salt, instant minced, instant toasted, shredded green); powdered mushrooms.

Almost any of the herbs can be used interchangeably or blended together in recipes. Thyme, savory, marjoram, basil or bay leaf can be used to vary stuffing. Basil, with its delicate flavoring, is often flavored for egg dishes, but there is no reason why you couldn't try it in soups, with lemon on fish, or crumbled and sprinkled on to-

mato slices. Herbs can be blended with butter or bread and biscuit dough when French bread, heated with garlic and butter, has lost its novelty.

Replacing butter on cooked vegetables, herbs have extra dividends for those on low fat and salt-free diets. The psychological need for salt is not as great when other seasoning is there to take its place.

After picking, herbs are perishable and need to be used quickly to be at their aromatic best. Some women who grow plants on kitchen window sills have found it profitable to keep a few pots planted with rosemary, thyme, basil, marjoram, sage and parsley. Need a pinch of something? Pinch it yourself. But don't forget to crush your fresh grown flavoring as you use it, to get its full benefit.

When buying a packaged spice or herb, learn to look for strength and color. A fresh, rich color and pungent aroma that rises to meet you, mark the highest quality. Since they gradually lose color and flavor, you get no bargain when you buy a large quantity in a bag. Smaller, tightly sealed containers are best for the average homemaker. Frequent replenishment assures you of best quality for cooking.

Spices and herbs should be

stored in a cool, dry place, never right over or too near the range. Once containers are opened, herb flavor begins to wane. If they are properly stored, the few ounces of herbs in tightly closed containers retain good flavor and color for several months.

Herbs tend to lose flavor a little faster than most spices, but they are used in greater amounts. If you buy them in leaf form and crush them as you use them, they will keep their flavor longer. Ground spices should be replaced within six months, while whole spices keep their flavor almost indefinitely.

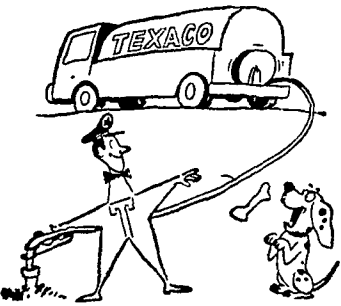
Whole spices are especially useful in dishes which cook a long time, such as stews. They should be added at the beginning of the cooking period to extract their full flavor and aroma. Add ground spices and herbs about 15 minutes before serving. In uncooked dishes, such as salad dressings, fruit juices or cottage cheese, the spice or herb mixture should be left standing for several hours to develop maximum flavor.

No one can say how much of any spice or herb you will prefer to use—no one but you and those who will eat what you prepare. Since the pungency of

(Continued on Page 11)

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