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Sodium

Most of us get more sodium than we need. While adding salt to your food is a source of sodium, it may not be the main reason that your sodium intake is high. You can lower the amount of sodium you eat and drink with these tips:

- Use the Nutrition Facts label to compare the sodium in packaged foods and beverages.
- Buy low-sodium, reduced sodium, or no-salt-added products.
- Look for fresh, frozen, or canned vegetables without added sauces or seasonings.
- Choose fresh or frozen poultry, seafood, and lean meats instead of prepared or ready-to-eat products.
- Cook more often at home to control the sodium in your food.
- **Add herbs and spices instead of salt to recipes and dishes.**

<https://www.choosemyplate.gov/eathealthy/sodium>

Herbs

Herbs have been used for cooking, medicine, aromatherapy, religious ceremonies, pest control and decoration since the beginning of civilization.

Plants that are referred to as “herbs” are not used as a food but are grown and consumed as a garnish, for flavor enhancement and aroma.

The aromas, and tastes associated with herbs result from a collection of chemicals in each plant. These chemicals, known as essential or volatile oils, are synthesized in the plant during metabolism.

Depending on the particular plant, the essential oil may be concentrated in the flowers, seeds, leaves or roots, or throughout the entire plant. Selective herbal use in culinary dishes can enhance the flavor of the food greatly, replacing table salt, resulting in a healthier alternative for many people.

Grow Your Own

Some herbs are suitable for container gardening. If you lack garden space, consider your windowsills. Several herbs, including basil, parsley, marjoram, chives, mint and rosemary, are well-suited for growing in pots. Herbs can be started from seed or transplanted from outdoor plantings. Place potted herbs in a sunny window and care for them like houseplants.

Matching Herbs to Dishes

	Ideas for Use
Basil	Tomatoes, in fresh pesto, pasta sauce, peas, zucchini
Mint (including spearmint and peppermint)	Used with carrots, fruit salads, parsley, peas, desserts, spring rolls, salads, or sauces
Oregano	Tomato dishes, beef, spaghetti, clams, soups (bean, minestrone, and tomato), beans, eggplant, and mushrooms
Parsley	Salads, vegetables, pastas
Rosemary	Chicken, fish, lamb, pork, roasted potatoes, soups, stews, tomatoes

*Fresh and dried herbs can often be found at local co-ops.

How do you use herbs in food preparation?

Rinse fresh herbs well under running water, then use a pair of scissors to snip the herbs or a sharp knife to chop them into tiny pieces. For optimal flavor, expose as much surface area as possible. For dried herbs, use a mortar and pestle (available in most kitchen supply stores or catalogs) to grind the herbs into a powder.

Top 10 Herbs

To Consider for Culinary Purposes

- Anise Hyssop
- Basil
- Chamomile
- Chives
- Cilantro/coriander
- Dill
- Garlic
- Lavender
- Oregano
- Tarragon

Here's a tip

2 teaspoons fresh herbs

= $\frac{3}{4}$ teaspoon dried herbs

= $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon powdered herbs

Image by monicore from Pixabay



Cooking for One or Two! Tomato & Garlic Omelet

Ingredients

- | | |
|----------------------------------|---|
| 1/2 slice bread (whole wheat) | 2 Tablespoon mozzarella cheese (grated) |
| 1/2 teaspoon olive oil | 1 tomato (large, chopped) |
| 1 garlic clove (finely chopped) | 1 teaspoon basil (dried) |
| 3/4 cup egg substitute or 3 eggs | cooking spray (as needed, nonstick) |

Directions

Serves 1

<https://www.choosemyplate.gov/recipes/supplemental-nutrition-assistance-program-snap/tomato-and-garlic-omelet>

1. Preheat oven to 300°F.
2. Cut the bread into cubes; toss with oil and garlic in a small bowl. Spread the cubes in a single layer on a baking sheet and toast in the oven for 15 to 25 minutes, or until golden brown, tossing once or twice. Transfer to a plate to cool.
3. Spray a medium pan with nonstick cooking spray and heat over medium-high heat. Pour in egg substitute.
4. When the egg begins to set, spread evenly across the bottom of the pan and reduce the heat to low.
5. Once the top layer of egg is almost cooked, sprinkle the cheese and basil on top and scatter the tomatoes and bread over half of the omelet; fold the unfilled omelet half over the filling. Slide the omelet on a plate and serve. (See Serving Suggestion on Page 4.)

Healthier Cooking, Healthier Snacking

Homemade Fruit and Herb Tea

Prep Time: 1 hour | Steep Time: 5 minutes | Total Time: 1 hour and 5 minutes

- | | |
|--|------------------------------|
| 1 (3 in.) piece of fresh ginger, finely chopped | 1 c. fresh sage |
| 1 c. fresh mint leaves, packed | 1 c. dried apricots, chopped |
| 2 lemons, zest removed with veg. peeler, finely chopped | |
| 2 oranges, zest removed with veg. peeler, finely chopped | |
| Lemon and orange zest from above | |

1. Preheat the oven to 250°F.
2. Toss lemon zest, orange zest, ginger, and sage together and place on a large parchment paper-lined baking sheet. Scatter mint on a second large parchment paper-lined baking sheet.
3. Bake both sheets, stirring occasionally, until mint (10- 15 minutes) and ginger mixture (45 minutes) are both dried out. Set aside to cool completely.
4. Crumble mint into a medium bowl and add ginger mixture and dried apricots. Toss together.
5. To serve, steep 2 Tbsp. of the mixture with 1 c. of hot water for 3-5 minutes. Strain and drink.

<https://www.usda.gov/sites/default/files/documents/vegu-recipe-june-21-homemade-fruit-and-herb-tea.pdf>



Image by orhan ç from Pixabay

New Foods to Choose!

Basil

In the U.S. sweet basil is familiar because it is prevalent in Italian cuisine. Thought to be native to Asia, there is evidence that basil has been cultivated for at least 5,000 years, originally for its medicinal qualities.

Fun & Nutrition Facts:

Basil is an excellent source of vitamin K, manganese, iron, vitamin A, and vitamin C. It's also a good source of calcium, magnesium, and omega-3 fatty acids. Basil isn't simply for internal use. Basil's oils can be extracted to make an essential oil.

Spring Vegetable Soup

Serves: 4

Ingredients:

- 1 Tablespoon extra virgin olive oil
- 1/4 red cabbage (medium head, about 2 cups, finely shredded)
- 2 ripe tomatoes (medium, seeded and chopped)
- 1 cup green peas (frozen or fresh)
- 1/2 cup canned artichoke hearts (drained and chopped)
- 2 1/2 cup tomato juice (low-sodium)
- 1 cup water
- 2 teaspoon dried basil salt and pepper (optional to taste)

Directions:

1. In large soup pot, heat oil over medium heat. Sauté cabbage, tomatoes, artichoke hearts and peas for 10 minutes.
2. Add tomato juice and water. Bring to boil. Reduce heat, add basil and simmer for 10 minutes, or until all vegetables are tender and soup is piping hot.
3. Serve in individual serving bowls. Season to taste with salt and pepper.

<https://www.choosemyplate.gov/recipes/supplemental-nutrition-assistance-program-snap/spring-vegetable-soup>

Serving Suggestion for Omelet Recipe

Toasted garlic bread and mozzarella cheese combine with tomatoes and basil to give this easy omelet delicious, fresh flavor. Add a piece of fruit on the side to for a meal with food from each food group.

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Healthy choices, healthy lives.



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