



# Healthy Cooking with Spices and Herbs

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## Orange-Nectarine Sauce

Serves: 4  
 Fruit & Vegetable Servings Per Person: 1

**Nectarines get their name from the word nektar, which means the drink of the gods. This sauce is great with your favorite fruit, like raspberries or pears.**

**Cook's Comment:**\* Double your fruit intake by serving this sauce over fruit. It also tastes good as a topping for frozen yogurt! The nutmeg adds just enough flavoring, there's no need to add sugar. For extra pizzazz, use freshly ground nutmeg; start with slightly less as it may be stronger in flavor than nutmeg purchased already ground.

- 4 medium-sized nectarines
- 1/2 cup orange juice
- 1/8 teaspoon ground nutmeg

### Directions

Pit and slice nectarines and place in blender. Add orange juice and nutmeg and blend until smooth, about 1 minute. Serve over fresh fruit garnished with fresh mint.

### Cook's Tips:

- ☞ Make this sauce shortly before serving for the best color.
- ☞ Start by adding just 1/4 cup of orange juice; add more as needed in relation to the size of your nectarines.

**Source:** Courtesy of National Cancer Institute – Eat 5 A Day for Health: Graham Kerr's "Do Yourself a Flavor" at [www.5aday.gov/index-recipe.shtml](http://www.5aday.gov/index-recipe.shtml)

## Strawberry Smoothie

Serves: 1  
 Fruit & Vegetable Servings Per Person: 2-1/2

**Cook's Comment:**\* The mint leaves add a refreshing flavor note to this smoothie. Top with a sprig of fresh mint for extra eye appeal.

- 1 cup unsweetened frozen or fresh strawberries
- 1 teaspoon coarsely chopped mint leaves
- 1/2 cup 100% orange juice
- 1/2 cup low-fat vanilla yogurt

### Directions

Place the strawberries, mint leaves, orange juice and yogurt in your blender jar. Whiz until thick and smooth.

### Cook's Tips:

- ☞ If you have a larger blender jar that is fairly wide at the bottom, you may find it harder to blend this **single-serving** recipe. However, if you make a **double serving**, there should be enough volume to blend the strawberries until smooth. A blender jar forces food up against the blender walls where it is then redirected back on the blades and blended until the desired consistency. A blender that is wider at the bottom will send smaller volumes of food out toward the sides rather than up and then down toward the center and the blades. The new "smoothie" blenders on the market are narrow on the bottom.
- ☞ I've also poured this recipe into two "fancy" glasses and served it as a dessert for two after a meal.

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\* **Cook's Comment/Cook's Tips** by each recipe include further suggestions from my experiences making these foods and the types of questions I've received. —Alice Henneman

## Tarragon and Turkey Salad

Serves 4

**Cook's Comment:\*** Cook once and eat twice with this salad. Enjoy chicken or turkey with a side of rice one night. Make enough so you can use the extra to create this salad within a day or two. Twice is nice when your meal is different each time!

3 cups cooked brown, white or wild rice  
2 cups cubed (cooked) turkey or chicken breast

1 cup seedless grapes, halved  
1/2 cup chopped red bell pepper  
1/3 cup sliced green onions

### Dressing

2 tablespoons red wine or  
1-1/2 tablespoons balsamic vinegar  
2 tablespoons olive oil  
2 teaspoons dried tarragon leaves  
2 teaspoons spicy mustard  
1 teaspoon sugar

### Directions

Whisk together dressing ingredients. Add the rice and remaining salad ingredients, mixing well. Season with salt, if desired.

### Cook's Tips:\*

☞ When I had all the ingredients except the green onions on hand, I've rehydrated about a tablespoon of minced dried onions and used them in place of the green onions. To rehydrate dried onions, add an equal amount of water or as package directs. Let sit for 5 to 10 minutes, then drain off any excess water.

☞ I also have used the dressing recipe for tossed lettuce salads, using about 6 cups of lettuce.

**Nutrition analysis per serving:** Calories: 360; Total fat: 9 g

**Source:** Courtesy of American Institute for Cancer Research (AICR) Newsletter, Spring 1997; Issue 55. For more recipe ideas check their Web site at: [www.aicr.org](http://www.aicr.org)

**CHECK WEB SITES AT THE  
END OF RECIPES FOR FURTHER  
RECIPE IDEAS.**

## Mighty Caesar

Serves: 4

Fruit & Vegetable Servings Per Person: 2

**Cook's Comment:\*** You don't have to tell people this salad is "good for them" to get them to eat it. Just let the taste do the talking. If you add the chicken, you have 4 of the 5 food groups!

### Croutons

2 cups whole wheat bread cubes  
Olive oil cooking spray

### Dressing

3/4 cup plain low-fat yogurt  
2 teaspoons Dijon mustard  
1-1/2 tablespoons balsamic vinegar  
1 to 3 cloves garlic, chopped

### Salad

8 cups cut or torn romaine lettuce  
1/4 cup grated or shaved Parmesan cheese  
1-pound chicken breasts, cooked, skin discarded and sliced (optional)

### Directions

1. Preheat the oven to 350°F. Scatter the bread cubes in a single layer on a baking sheet. Coat lightly with olive oil pan spray and bake 15 minutes.

2. Whisk together the yogurt, mustard, vinegar and garlic. Pour over the romaine lettuce and toss. Scatter the cheese on top. Divide among 4 plates and serve as a side dish or lay chicken breast slices on top to make a full meal.

### Cook's Tips:\*

☞ The first time you try this recipe, start checking your croutons after about 10 minutes. Some ovens bake faster than others. For a different flavor, you might experiment with one of the garlic-flavored cooking sprays.

☞ You can use a vegetable peeler to shave Parmesan cheese.

☞ If you've run out of fresh garlic, try substituting 1/8 teaspoon garlic powder for each 1 clove of garlic. The fresh garlic, however, may offer more health benefits.

**Source:** Courtesy of National Cancer Institute – Eat 5 A Day for Health: Graham Kerr's "Do Yourself a Flavor" at [www.5aday.gov/index-recipe.shtml](http://www.5aday.gov/index-recipe.shtml)

## Yogurt Salad Dressing

Makes 8 servings. Serving size: 2 Tbsp.

**Cook's Comment:\*** Try it, you'll like it! The mayonnaise gives a nice creamy texture to the yogurt. The herbs and lemon juice add a delicious burst of flavor.

8 ounces plain yogurt, fat free  
1/4 cup mayonnaise, fat free  
2 tablespoons chives, dried  
2 tablespoons dill, dried  
2 tablespoons lemon juice

### Directions

Mix all ingredients in bowl and refrigerate.

### Cook's Tips:\*

☞ I think this recipe tastes best if eaten the day it's made. Try to allow it to chill **at least** a half hour in the refrigerator to let the flavors blend. This recipe is easy to modify to make a smaller quantity if you won't eat this much at one time.

☞ Besides using this recipe for a salad dressing, try it for a dip. If your dressing seems a little thick, thin with a tablespoon or so of water.

**Nutrition analysis per serving:** Calories: 23; Sodium: 84 mg; Total fat: 0 g; Calcium: 72 mg; Saturated fat: 0 g; Magnesium: 10 mg; Cholesterol 1 mg; Potassium: 104 mg; Fiber: 0 g

**Source:** Courtesy National Heart, Lung & Blood Institute - DASH Recipes at [http://hin.nhlbi.nih.gov/nhbpep\\_kit/recipes.htm](http://hin.nhlbi.nih.gov/nhbpep_kit/recipes.htm)

### Cook's Tips:\*

☞ Part of the key to a successful salad is using really good-tasting salad ingredients – they add to the flavor as much as the dressing does.

☞ Add dressings to salad greens immediately before serving for best quality and taste.

☞ You'll get more flavor with less dressing throughout your salad if salad greens are thoroughly dried.

☞ Plan on about 1 tablespoon of oil/vinegar dressing per 2 cups of salad greens.  
"Dress" – don't "drown" – your salad to keep the calories lower.

## Oil/Vinegar Salad Dressing

Makes enough for two main dish salads or four side dish salads.

**NOTE:** For safety and freshness, serve homemade dressings the same day you make them.

**Cook's Comments:\*** A classic French vinaigrette is typically three to four parts oil (usually olive oil) and one part acid (frequently red wine vinegar). Seasonings include salt, pepper and often Dijon mustard and/or garlic. You may be able to use less oil and more acid ingredient if you use one of the following in your dressing: rice vinegar; white wine vinegar; raspberry, blueberry or other fruit vinegar; champagne vinegar; lemon, lime or orange juice. Start experimenting by beginning with two parts oil to one part vinegar or citrus juice.

While lime and lemon juice can stand by themselves in salad dressings, you'll get more flavor by combining orange juice with vinegar. *Joy of Cooking* (Simon & Schuster Inc., 1997) recommends distilled white vinegar is best used in pickling, not salad dressings.

For a better flavor, thoroughly mix the oil and vinegar. The standard procedure is to whisk the vinegar with the salt, pepper and any other seasonings. Then add the oil in a slow stream, whisking constantly, until dressing is translucent. Or, shake the ingredients together in a small jar with a tight-fitting lid. If not using dressing right away, whisk or shake again before using.

1 to 2 tablespoon balsamic, red wine vinegar or lemon juice

Salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste  
3 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil

### Possible Add-ins

1/8 teaspoon garlic powder

1/2 to 3/4 teaspoon Dijon-type mustard

### Directions

Whisk together vinegar and any additional seasonings. Slowly add olive oil and whisk in. Or, shake all ingredients together in a small jar with a tight lid.

**"Spice a dish with love and it pleases every palate."**

— Plautus

## Mashed Sweet Potatoes

Serves: 4

Fruit & Vegetable Servings Per Person: 1

**Cook's Comment:\*** If you think you need fat for flavor in your mashed sweet potatoes, this recipe will change your mind. You may choose from either fresh or dried thyme for a flavor accent. As a general rule, use about 3 times as much of a fresh herb as of a dried herb in a recipe.

4 small to medium sweet potatoes  
2 teaspoons fresh thyme leaves or  
3/4 teaspoon dried thyme  
1/4 teaspoon salt  
1/4 teaspoon pepper

### Directions

Scrub and peel the potatoes and cut into 3/4-inch slices. Steam over boiling water for 20 to 25 minutes or until very soft. When they are ready, place them into a bowl and mash with a fork or potato masher. Stir in thyme, salt, and pepper and serve.

### Cook's Tip:\*

☞ You might experiment with leaving the salt out if you're following a sodium-restricted diet. The pepper and thyme add quite a bit of flavor.

**Source:** Courtesy of National Cancer Institute – Eat 5 A Day for Health: Graham Kerr's "Do Yourself a Flavor" at [www.5aday.gov/index-recipe.shtml](http://www.5aday.gov/index-recipe.shtml)

## Spicy Apple-Filled Squash

Makes 4 servings.

**Cook's Comment:\*** Cinnamon, nutmeg and cloves complement the flavors of squash and apple while reducing the sugar and fat. Each serving has only 1/2 teaspoon of sugar and of butter or margarine.

1 acorn squash (about 1 pound)  
1 Golden Delicious apple, peeled, cored & sliced  
2 teaspoons melted butter or margarine  
2 teaspoons brown sugar  
1/8 teaspoon cinnamon  
1/8 teaspoon nutmeg  
Dash ground cloves

### Directions

1. Heat oven to 350°F. Grease a 1-quart baking dish. Halve squash and remove seeds; cut into quarters. Place quarters, skin side up, in dish and cover; bake 30 minutes. Meanwhile, in medium bowl, combine apple, butter, brown sugar, cinnamon, nutmeg, and cloves.  
2. Turn cut sides of acorn squash up; top with apple mixture. Cover and bake 30 minutes longer or until apples are tender.

### Cook's Tips:\*

☞ Before you begin, check that you have a baking dish large enough to hold your squash. You will need to use a lid or cover with foil. Holding in the steam while the squash cooks keeps it from drying out and it cooks faster.  
☞ Test the apples and squash for doneness/tenderness by piercing them with a small knife — they should offer no resistance. Using a knife leaves the squash looking better than when poked with a fork!

**Nutritional analysis per serving:** Calories: 88; Fat: 3 g; Carbohydrate: 17 g; Protein: 1 g; Fiber: 3 g; Sodium: 24 mg; Cholesterol: 0 g

**Source:** Courtesy of Centers for Disease Control and Prevention — 5 A Day Fruits and Vegetables of the Month at [www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpa/5aday/month](http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpa/5aday/month)

## Rub Combos

### Pepper-garlic rub

Combine garlic powder, cracked black pepper, and cayenne pepper.

### Italian rub

Combine fresh or dried oregano, basil, and rosemary with minced Italian parsley and garlic.

### Directions

To apply a rub, Duyff advises you "gently press the mixture onto the surface of the meat prior to cooking."

**Cook's Comment:\*** To add flavor to tender cuts of meat, poultry and fish without adding salt or fat, try a rub. Here are two suggestions from Roberta Duyff in her new book, *American Dietetic Association Complete Food and Nutrition Guide* (2nd Edition), [www.eatright.org/adafood.html](http://www.eatright.org/adafood.html)

### Cook's Tips:\*

☞ If you don't have all the spices for making the Italian rub, you might try Italian seasoning.  
☞ No set proportions are needed for a rub. Just sprinkle each separate seasoning on the food according to personal preference.

# Double-the-Serving Stew

Serves: 6

Fruit & Vegetable Servings Per Person: 2-1/2

This recipe adds richness to your stew while “secretly” boosting the vegetables in it. By removing the first set of vegetables halfway through the cooking process, blending them, pouring them back as sauce, and adding new cut-up vegetables, you’re doubling your vegetable servings and adding lots of flavor and texture to the final stew.

**Cook’s Comment:**\* This stew tastes as good the second day as the first. The preparation method yields a rich, thick gravy-like base without using any fat. Note the fresh parsley is added at the end. When possible, add more delicate fresh herbs – basil, chives, cilantro, dill leaves, parsley, marjoram and mint – a minute or two before the end of cooking or sprinkle them on the food before it’s served. The less delicate fresh herbs, such as dill seeds, oregano, rosemary, tarragon and thyme, can be added about the last 20 minutes of cooking. Dried herbs can be added successfully earlier in the cooking process.

2 tablespoons all-purpose flour	2 medium onions
3/4 teaspoon salt	2 stalks celery
1/2 teaspoon ground black pepper	2 medium potatoes
1 pound lean beef stew meat, cut into 1-inch cubes	2 medium turnips
1 tablespoon vegetable oil	4 carrots
3 cups low fat, low-sodium beef broth, plus more as needed	2 cloves garlic, chopped
	1/2 teaspoon dried thyme
	1/4 cup fresh parsley, chopped

## Directions

In a plastic bag, combine flour, salt and pepper. Add meat and shake to coat. Heat oil in large saucepan or Dutch oven. Add meat and brown. Prepare the vegetables by cutting one onion, one celery stalk, one potato, one turnip and one carrots into large chunks. Add the vegetables to the meat along with the garlic and thyme. Stir in broth and bring to boil. Reduce heat and cover. Simmer for about 40 minutes or until meat is tender. While meat is cooking, prepare remaining vegetables by cutting the onion, celery, potato, turnip and carrot into 1-inch cubes. Remove simmered vegetables (onion, celery, potatoes, turnips, carrots) and whiz in a blender until smooth. Return vegetable puree to pot. Thin with beef broth or water, if necessary. To pot, add remaining un-cooked onions, celery, potato, turnips, and carrots. Bring to simmer and cover. Cook for an additional 30 minutes or until vegetables are tender. Add parsley just before serving.

## Cook’s Tips:

☞ When adding the first batch of vegetables with the meat, do as the recipe says and cut them into LARGE CHUNKS. Otherwise, it’s hard to later fish them out of your stew and blend them (with some of the liquid) until smooth. *Cooking Light* magazine (March 2003) warns when blending hot liquids to “... use caution because steam can increase the pressure inside the blender and blow the lid off.” They advise filling the blender no more than half full and blending in batches, if necessary. And – while blending – hold a potholder or towel over the lid.

☞ Instead of fresh onions, at times I have added about 1/4 cup dried minced onion (2 tablespoons in the first part of the recipe and 2 tablespoons with the remaining vegetables at the end). As a general guideline, substitute 1 tablespoon dried onion for 1/4 cup chopped or 1 small onion. Dried onion may be added directly to moist foods such as soups, gravies, sauces and salad dressings. You may need to rehydrate it with a little water before adding it to drier foods. Check package directions – one brand advises adding an equal amount of water and letting the dried onion stand 5 to 10 minutes. Drain off any extra water after onion has rehydrated.

☞ Round red potatoes and Yukon gold/gold potatoes hold their shape well when cooked in a stew.

☞ This recipe is so flavorful, you may not need the salt if you’re watching sodium closely.

☞ Transfer any leftover stew to shallow containers to speed cooling; keep perishable foods (such as this stew) at room temperature no longer than a TOTAL of 2 hours. You can place loosely covered foods in the refrigerator while still warm; cover when food is completely cooled. Plan to eat leftovers within 2 days or freeze for longer storage.

Source: Courtesy of National Cancer Institute – Eat 5 A Day for Health: Graham Kerr’s “Do Yourself a Flavor” at [www.5aday.gov/index-recipe.shtml](http://www.5aday.gov/index-recipe.shtml)

## A Poppin' Good Idea

**Cook's Comment:\*** Perhaps you've tried eating air-popped popcorn to cut back on salt and fat, but thought it tasted pretty bland. These speedy tips will spice it up.

### Directions

Pop desired amount of popcorn. Place in a large bowl where the popcorn is a couple of inches below the rim so you can mix the corn and seasonings (see below) without spills over the side. Spray your corn lightly with a butter-flavored cooking spray. Add seasonings and mix thoroughly until all kernels are coated. NOTE: It's the spray that makes the spices stick to the corn in the absence of fat.

### SOME SEASONING IDEAS

- **Sugar/cinnamon mixture.** Mix sugar and cinnamon together using a ratio of about 2 teaspoons cinnamon per 1/3 cup sugar. Store extra mixture in a covered container such as a spice jar or a covered shaker. This keeps moisture out and prevents the sugar from hardening.
- **Sugar/Chinese 5 spice powder mixture.** Use the same ratio as above.
- **Chili powder.** Note: some chili powders contain salt — check label.
- **Experiment with salt-free seasoning blends.** Check out the various seasoning blends available at your grocery store or favorite Internet spice site.

### Cook's Tip:\*

☞ The National Popcorn Board at [www.popcorn.org](http://www.popcorn.org) recommends AGAINST storing popcorn in the refrigerator. The kernels are more likely to dry out in the refrigerator and do not pop as well. It's the water inside a popcorn kernel that expands when the popcorn is heated, causing the kernel to explode or "pop."

## Homemade Salsa

Makes 8 servings

**Cook's Comment:\*** Enjoy the fresh ingredients in this homemade salsa. It's lower in sodium than many commercial salsas, especially if made with a no-salt-added tomato sauce. Let the salsa refrigerate for an hour or so before serving to allow flavors to blend.

- 1 cup finely chopped, peeled tomato
- 1/2 cup tomato sauce
- 1/4 cup yellow or red onion
- 1/4 cup finely chopped green pepper
- 2 tablespoons vinegar
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 1–3 jalapeno peppers, seeded and chopped  
(use caution; wear rubber gloves and do not rub your eyes when chopping peppers)
- 1/2 cup fresh cilantro, chopped (optional)

### Directions

Mix all ingredients in a glass bowl. Refrigerate until ready to serve.

### Cook's Tips:\*

- ☞ You might consider using lemon or lime juice in place of vinegar.
- ☞ To reduce the sodium content further, use a no-salt-added tomato sauce. These frequently are available in the canned tomato section of your grocery store or in a health food store. Serve with unsalted tortilla chips.
- ☞ If you'd like to freeze the extra green pepper for future use, here's how: Wash peppers and freeze sliced or diced peppers in a single layer on a cookie sheet with sides. Transfer to a "freezer" bag when frozen (in a few hours) excluding as much air as possible from the bag. This method of freezing green peppers lets you easily pour out as much as you need at a time. It's generally recommended frozen vegetables be eaten within about 8 months for best quality.

**Nutritional analysis per serving:** Calories: 14; Total Fat: 0.12 g; Saturated Fat: 0 g; Carbohydrates: 3.3 g; Protein: 0.5 g; Cholesterol: 0 mg; Fiber: 0.7 g; Sodium: 95 mg; Carbohydrates: 80%; Protein: 13%; Fat: 7%

**Source:** Courtesy of Centers for Disease Control and Prevention — 5 A Day Fruits and Vegetables of the Month at [www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpa/5aday/month](http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpa/5aday/month)

### ADDITIONAL RESOURCE

The *American Heart Association Low-Salt Cookbook, 2nd edition*, copyright 2001, is a very extensive source of recipes that use spices and herbs to add back flavor when reducing salt, fat and sugar in foods. When purchasing this cookbook, be sure to ask for the 2nd edition. It is available in both hardcover and paperback versions.