

Cooking with Essential Oils – Part 1

Plants were the original medicine, dating back thousands of years, and pharmaceutical synthetic medications are a recent development. Plants work on a holistic level, are effective, and essential oils cost pennies per drop in comparison.

Essential oils are potent, effective, and fast-acting plant medicine. Please do your own research and work with someone who is knowledgeable because many of the oils are very strong. I personally know them to be safe if used correctly. Peppermint essential oil is extremely beneficial for stomach aches. One drop of peppermint oil is equivalent to approximately 28 cups of peppermint tea! I have no idea what Pepto Bismal or other over-the-counter medicines cost now, though I do know a bottle of Peppermint essential oil lasts me months, does not spoil, and I can take it anywhere. I have not experienced any negative side effects.

Not all essential oils are created equally! Most essential oils that are inexpensive and readily found in supermarkets are not organic, or, if they are, they have fillers in them which is why they are at the price point that they are. Many are not steam distilled or expeller produced. Many oils are expelled using hexane, a chemical which is toxic. I look for the CPTG essential oils because they are the only oils which are regulated and independently tested for purity. Read labels with care because plant medicine is potent and not all the essential oils are meant to be taken internally or topically. I have had incredibly positive reactions.

I use the oils for my own wellness. I use Clary Sage to even out hormonal shifts. I use Peppermint for headaches as well as for digestion issues. I love to use Lemon in my water as it naturally draws out toxins stored in the liver. I use essential oils in my body scrubs and body oils to nourish my skin from head to toe. I use oregano and tea tree for foot care. I use tea tree and clove with baking soda for mouth care. I have used essential oils, through diffusion, in my home and with my children since they were young. I also use essential oils in cooking.

I love cooking with essential oils as I get absolute purity of flavor in such a concentrated form. It cuts way down on waste because I only need to use a drop or two of oil and can have the bottle of essential oil for months! Often, I only need a squeeze of lemon or orange and then are left with rind, pulp, etc. With the oils, especially if an ingredient is not in season, the cost and waste factor are greatly reduced. I use Bergamot essential oil in making sauces and flavoring jams. Bergamot is challenging to find, is not local, and has travelled hundreds if not thousands of miles. When I do find Bergamot, the cost is prohibitive, so using the oil is a great way for me to have a little bit of this whenever I want it!

I make a quick Guacamole recipe using black pepper, coriander, and lime essential oils. I also like to use essential oils in salad dressings—basil, oregano, and thyme oils lend themselves so perfectly for this. Another favorite of mine is to replace vanilla in baking recipes with something different — last year I made lavender cookies and it had just a hint of lavender which was lovely. It is also good on summer days to make lemonade and add something like lemongrass or basil for a more sophisticated twist! Once you start, it is such an addictive process in the best possible ways!

7 helpful tips when cooking with essential oils

1. If you are going to use essential oils for cooking please make sure that they are a food grade essential oil. 95% of essential oils that are available are not ingestible. They are not 100% pure and contain fillers and synthetic components that would be dangerous to ingest. CPTG, stands for Certified Pure Therapeutic Grade. Oils which have a Supplemental Facts area on the bottles are safe to ingest. Many of the blends do not have this on the label and are not safe to take internally.
2. Essential oils have a longer shelf-life than dried herbs or spices. They may seem more costly at initial purchase but will prove to be more cost effective over time.
3. Don't drop the oils directly into the recipe. Use a spoon to drop your oils to add to your recipe. This avoids more drops being added than you intended as some essential oils can come out of the bottle quicker than expected.
4. When cooking with essential oils, start small. Add one drop at a time adding more if necessary, to keep the oil from overpowering the recipe. I tend to like my food with a little bolder flavor. But I recommend starting, especially with hot oils like oregano or black pepper to use a toothpick to add oils to a recipe. Dip the toothpick into the oil then stir the toothpick into the recipe. Taste and add more according to your desired taste.
5. When cooking (not baking) with essential oils, add the oils just before serving. Cooking with essential oils is different than cooking with spices. With spices the longer you simmer the more flavor mingles into the food. Essential oils are much different. If you heat them, they will evaporate in the air through the steam.
6. Heat will also alter the medicinal benefits of an essential oil. You will get the flavor and scent, but the medicinal effects will be greatly diminished.
7. Essential oils are highly concentrated and should always be used with caution. Keep out of reach of children.

I am not a doctor or intending to give any medical advice. This information is for general information and reference only.