Why cook with essential oils?

One of the greatest benefits of essential oils is their wide variety of uses. With so many different oils that each hold unique benefits and advantages, you can incorporate essential oils into nearly every area of your daily routine and lifestyle. Essential oils can help with things like relaxation and sleep, beautifying the skin and hair, creating a soothing massage, repelling insects naturally, cleansing surfaces around the home—and so on. Because cooking, eating, and drinking are such a natural part of our everyday lives, it is no surprise that essential oils are also useful in the kitchen.

With so many options for spices, seasonings, and extracts on the market that can help enhance our food, you might be wondering, “Why should I cook with essential oils?” While cooking methods often depend on diet and personal preferences, there are several benefits to using essential oils in cooking. Not only will essential oils provide any meal with powerful flavor, but they also allow the user to enjoy any internal health benefits that the essential oil may hold, as well as providing a safe, natural way to flavor your food and offering convenience when fresh ingredients are not available.

Adding flavor

Essential oils are naturally potent and powerful because they are highly concentrated and taken directly from natural sources. The purity and potency of essential oils make them perfect for adding flavor to any dish. Because essential oils are so powerful, it doesn’t take much to add an extra kick of flavor to your favorite entrees, beverages, meats, desserts, and more.
Internal benefits

Frequently used for their internal benefits, essential oils provide a simple way to promote wellness in the body. Depending on the oil, you can use essential oils to promote healthy digestion, cleanse the body, support healthy function of the body’s systems, provide the body with antioxidants, and other internal benefits. When you add an essential oil to your food or beverage, not only will you experience the powerful flavors of the oil, but you can experience any internal benefits the oil has to offer. Cooking with essential oils provides a fun, creative way to use essential oils internally and reap the benefits they have to offer.

*These statements have not been evaluated by the Food and Drug Administration. This product is not intended to diagnose, treat, cure, or prevent any disease.

Safe, natural ingredients

While there are plenty of spices, seasonings, and extracts available that can help flavor your food, many of these options contain highly processed or questionable ingredients. By using essential oils to flavor your food and enhance your cooking, you will not only have endless options for making healthy and creative meals, but you can rest easy knowing exactly what you are putting into your food. As mentioned, essential oils are taken directly from natural sources, and do not include processed or harmful ingredients. Remember that not all essential oils are created equal, and some companies will use fillers or synthetic ingredients in their oils. By using pure, therapeutic-grade essential oils in your cooking, you can enjoy the benefits of natural flavors and ingredients.

Convenience

While some people prefer to use raw or fresh ingredients to flavor their food, these kinds of ingredients aren’t always readily available. Having essential oils on hand makes it easy when you don’t have time to get to the store to buy fresh basil, or just used your last lemon. Plus, it can be difficult to find fresh ingredients throughout the entire year, as some herbs, spices, and fruits are only available during certain seasons.

In addition to providing a convenient way to season your food, essential oils can also be more cost-effective in the long run. As it only takes a tiny amount of essential oil to add flavor to any dish, you can save money by not having to replace your ingredients as often. Because essential oils stay good for so long, you also don’t have to worry about fresh ingredients going bad if you don’t end up using them before their expiration date. While using fresh ingredients is still a wonderful way to enhance your cooking, essential oils provide a convenient way to add flavor when you need it.
Is cooking with essential oils safe?

While some are skeptical about the consumption of essential oils, internal usage of essential oils has actually been in practice for centuries, and is not a mysterious new fad. People have successfully and safely consumed essential oils for many years, and the key to safe use is following proper safety guidelines. Like any substance, essential oils only present risks when used improperly or in incorrect amounts. We will discuss the important safety guidelines for cooking with essential oils in more detail in chapter three.

You likely already consume small amounts of essential oils in your diet

Because essential oils are taken from plants, fruits, and natural substances, the body is well equipped to process them. Fruits, plant parts, and extracts are already a normal part of our diets, which makes it safe for the body to consume essential oils internally and process them properly. Like other things we consume, essential oils are ingested through the digestive system, enter the bloodstream, and can then be metabolized by the organs. Because our body is able to easily process and metabolize essential oils, cooking with oils is a simple way to enrich the food we eat every day.

Choose essential oils that are safe for internal use

Before adding essential oils to your food, make sure that each oil you intend to use has been approved for safe consumption and internal use. The following essential oils are considered safe for internal use:
Basil
Bergamot
Black Pepper
Cassia
Cilantro
Cinnamon Bark
Clary Sage
Clove
Copaiba

Coriander
Fennel
Frankincense
Geranium
Ginger
Grapefruit
Juniper Berry
Lavender
Lemon

Lemongrass
Lime
Marjoram
Melaleuca
Melissa
Myrrh
Oregano
Patchouli
Peppermint
Petitgrain
Roman Chamomile
Rosemary
Sandalwood
Hawaiian Sandalwood
Siberian Fir
Ylang Ylang

Not all essential oils are safe for consumption

While the list above identifies essential oils that are safe to use internally, not all essential oils are approved for this kind of use. Due to their chemical makeup, some essential oils should never be added to food or used internally in any amount. Here is a list of the essential oils that are not safe to use internally:

Arborvitae
Cedarwood

Cypress
Douglas Fir

Eucalyptus
Spikenard

Wintergreen

High quality, well-tested essential oils are safe to consume

As previously mentioned, not all essential oils are created equal. Some essential oil companies add fillers or substitutions to their essential oils, which lowers the efficacy, potency, and purity of the oil. On the other hand, some essential oil companies use thorough testing methods to ensure that the oils don’t contain any harmful substances or contaminants, and that they are as pure and high quality as possible. Just remember, not all distributors use testing to assure quality. Before you use essential oils in your cooking, it is important to know how they have been produced. Have the oils been carefully harvested and distilled? Have they been tested for possible contaminants or harmful substances? If you plan to use essential oils for cooking, it is best to use high quality, thoroughly tested oils that can provide you with the best results.
Cookware

When cooking with essential oils, it is best to use cookware that is stainless steel, ceramic, or glass, as essential oils can potentially damage some types of plastic. When mixing ingredients that contain oils, avoid plastic mixing bowls or containers, and always try to use glass, ceramic, or stainless steel in order to protect and preserve your cookware.

Measurements

The amount of essential oils you add to any given recipe depends heavily on what kind of oil you are using; your personal taste preferences; whether you are substituting the oil for raw, fresh, or dried ingredients; the amount of servings you are making; and more. While it would be nice to know the exact amount of essential oil to add to a recipe, there are so many variables involved in cooking that it is more a process of experimentation and trial and error. You might need a little practice cooking with essential oils before you get a good idea of how much of an oil to add in order to fit your specific recipes and flavor preferences. While there is no fool-proof measurement guide for cooking with essential oils, there are a few guidelines that will help you as you experiment with essential oils and food.

The toothpick method

Something that makes cooking with essential oils so convenient is that it takes far less of an essential oil to flavor your food than if you were using dry seasonings, spices, or flavoring agents. Because essential oils are so potent, even the tiniest amount can add a serious blast of flavor to your dish. Often, even a single drop of an essential oil can be too overpowering, especially if the oil is particularly strong. When you first start experimenting with essential oils and cooking, it is best to use the toothpick method—dip the tip of a clean toothpick into the essential oil bottle and stir the toothpick into your ingredients. This will allow you to add the smallest possible amount of the oil, so that you don’t risk ruining the dish by adding too much flavor. After you’ve stirred the toothpick around in the dish, do a taste test to see whether you want to add more of the oil or not. This is the safest way to slowly add flavor to your dish without ruining it by using too much oil.
Best practices

Cooking with essential oils is a fun, simple way to make creative meals, or to make your favorite meals a bit more interesting. How you use essential oils for cooking will depend on your own personal taste, what kind of food you are making, and which oil you are using. By following a few simple guidelines, you can easily enjoy the benefits of cooking with essential oils.

Essential oils and cooking with heat

Because essential oils are easily affected by heat, some worry that cooking with heat may lessen the efficacy of the oil. Cooking with heat can evaporate essential oils due to the steam, so it is best to add the essential oil at the end of the recipe, if possible. The less time the essential oil is exposed to heat, the more flavor it will retain, so if possible, add it in at the very end, or after the dish has been removed from heat and had time to cool.

Of course, it is not always possible to add the essential oil later, especially when it comes to baking or steaming. If your recipe requires that you bake, steam, simmer, or boil, and you cannot add the essential oil at the end, simply add a larger amount of the oil, as some of the oil’s flavor will be baked, steamed, simmered, or boiled out. If you plan to add the essential oil at the very end when your dish has been removed from heat, a much smaller amount will be needed.

When you add strong essential oils like Oregano or Basil, it can be beneficial to let the oil simmer or evaporate, because it provides a milder, more pleasant flavor.
Potent oils

It is important to note that some essential oils that have been approved for internal use are still very potent, and must be altered or modified before internal consumption. The following essential oils are extremely potent, and users should always employ the toothpick method when using these oils for cooking:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cassia</th>
<th>Clove</th>
<th>Thyme</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cinnamon</td>
<td>Cumin</td>
<td>Oregano</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These oils should also be properly diluted when added to beverages. To ensure proper dilution of these oils, use at least four ounces of liquid when adding any of the essential oils listed above to your drinks.

How do I know how much of an essential oil to add?

As mentioned, the amount of essential oil you add to your dishes will depend on many different variables like the particular recipe you are making, how many servings you make, what kind of oil you are using, and your personal taste buds. In most cases, it is best to start by using the toothpick method, and slowly adding more and more oil to the recipe. Once you have a little experience with cooking using essential oils, you can better gauge how much of an oil to add to a recipe, and you won’t have to taste the food each time after adding a toothpick’s worth of oil.

In some cases, it is appropriate to add an entire drop (or several drops) of an essential oil, but just remember: once you’ve added an essential oil to your dish, you cannot take it back. You can always add more oil, but once added, you can’t take the flavor back, so use caution when adding essential oils to your meals, and stick with the toothpick method until you feel more comfortable with cooking using essential oils.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Toothpick Method</th>
<th>One Drop</th>
<th>Several Drops</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Allows you to add the smallest amount of an essential oil. Use for particularly potent essential oils. Taste-test before adding more.</td>
<td>Helpful when cooking large quantities of food. Works for essential oils with a mild chemistry.</td>
<td>Can help preserve flavor when baking or cooking with heat. Best for large quantities of food, or mild essential oils. Pour droplets into a spoon, or use a dropper for exact amounts.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Don’t drop essential oils directly into the dish

Once you’ve decided how much of an essential oil to use in a recipe, it is important that you don’t add the oil directly to the dish, bowl, or pan, but drop the oil onto a spoon first. When pouring essential oils, it is easy for more than one drop to sneak out of the bottle, so if you hold the bottle directly over your dish, you might get more oil than you intended. By pouring the oil into a spoon first, you can ensure that you get exactly one drop (or whatever amount you need), before adding it to the dish.

If you find it difficult to get exact amounts when cooking with essential oils, it can be helpful to use an oil dropper to help give you precise droplets. It is also important to remember to put the lid on essential oil bottles when you are not using them during the cooking process. Cooking can get messy, and ensuring that the lid is on your essential oil bottles will prevent you from accidentally knocking over a bottle and losing precious oil.

Flavor guide for cooking with essential oils

When it comes to flavoring your food using essential oils, the options are limitless. Essential oils can help add potent flavor to nearly any drink, dessert, soup, meat, bread—the list goes on and on. If you are just getting started, the flavor guide below can help give you ideas of how to pair certain essential oils with your favorite foods and beverages.

Citrus

Common oils: Bergamot, Grapefruit, Lemon, Lime, Tangerine, Wild Orange
Useful for: beverages, baked goods, yogurt, dip, salsa, and zest
Flavor description: bright, sweet, tangy, refreshing

Citrus oils can add a sweet, refreshing flavor to beverages like tea, water, or smoothies, and can brighten up any recipe for baked goods like scones, muffins, or cookies. Citrus oils can also be useful for adding flavor to yogurt, or your favorite dips and salsa recipes. Consider using citrus oils in recipes that call for lemon, lime, orange, or tangerine zest. If the recipe calls for the zest of the entire fruit, it will likely take a few drops of essential oil to match the amount of flavor needed. Remember, citrus essential oils are taken from the peel of the fruit—not the juice. For this reason, it is easy to substitute citrus oils for recipes that call for fruit zest, but not necessarily for recipes that call for fruit juice.

Remember: You can always add more oil, but once you’ve added a drop of essential oil to your food, you cannot take it back.
Spices

Common oils: Black Pepper, Cassia, Cinnamon, Coriander, Ginger, Fennel
Useful for: enhancing natural flavors, vegetables, meat marinade, sweet and savory dishes
Flavor description: hot, sharp, spicy, sweet, warm

Spicy oils are useful when you want to add an extra boost of flavor to your dish. Essential oils like Black Pepper and Ginger can help enhance natural flavors when cooking, and oils like Fennel and Coriander can help add extra flavor to both sweet and savory recipes. Cinnamon and Cassia oils are strong and spicy, and make a great addition to sweet recipes for baked goods or breakfast foods. Keep in mind that all of these spicy essential oils are extremely potent, so only a tiny bit of oil will be needed to add powerful flavor to your dish. For this reason, it is best to always start by using the toothpick method when adding any of these oils, and taste-test as you go.

Herbs

Common oils: Basil, Cilantro, Marjoram, Oregano, Rosemary, Thyme
Useful for: substituting dry or fresh herbs, Italian dishes, meat marinade, soup, bread, pasta, potatoes
Flavor description: herbal, fresh, sharp, warm

Using fresh or dried herbs has been a popular method for adding flavor to food for centuries. While this is an effective way to achieve certain flavors when cooking, it can be fun to substitute your regular herbs for essential oils every once in a while. Not only do essential oils come in handy when you don’t have access to fresh herbs or if you run out of dry seasonings, but they can help deliver serious flavor. In addition to using herbal essential oils to substitute dry or fresh herbs in a recipe, these oils can make a wonderful contribution to your favorite Italian dishes, soups, breads, pasta dishes, potatoes, meat marinades, and more. Like dry or fresh herbs, you can also use several of these herbal essential oils in a single dish to make a lovely bouquet of flavors. Remember, many of these oils are extremely potent, and should be added to food via the toothpick method to ensure that you do not overpower or ruin the dish by using too much oil.
Florals

Common oils: Lavender, Geranium
Useful for: softening citrus flavors, adding a twist to plain recipes, desserts, tea
Flavor description: light, powdery, sweet

Although floral oils are more commonly used for beauty products and fragrances, and less often in cooking, there are certain floral essential oils that can help to add an unexpected twist of flavor to light desserts like cookies and cakes, jellies, and tea. Because of their sweet, powdery nature, floral oils can also be useful for softening powerful citrus flavors in a recipe in order to achieve balance. Floral essential oils are extremely potent, and therefore only tiny amounts should be added when cooking, using the toothpick method.

Mint

Common oils: Peppermint, Spearmint
Useful for: beverages, desserts, salads, certain meats
Flavor description: minty, cool, refreshing, sweet

Mint is a popular flavoring agent in the cooking world, and mint essential oils can be extremely useful when making mint-flavored desserts and candies, or for any time you want to add a cool, refreshing element to your recipe. Many recipes that include lamb or chicken often use mint flavoring to compliment the flavors of the meat, or even to compliment spicy or savory flavors. Mint is also often used in conjunction with other herbs, as it has a fresh, herbaceous flavor. Because mint essential oils are so potent, only a small amount of oil is needed to achieve a powerful flavor. Always use a toothpick when adding mint oils to an entrée or dish. An entire drop of a mint oil can be used when being added to beverages like teas and smoothies.