

Seeds and spices



Seeds, herbs and spices are a treasure trove of flavours which can transform a recipe or meal for very little cost.

Seeds, herbs and spices can also offer medicinal properties as well as taste and flavour and have been used since the time of hunters and gathers, over 2.5 million years ago. They are thought to have wrapped meat in leaves and realised they flavoured the meat, as did nuts, seeds, berries and bark.

Spices come from all over the world and trade began over 2,500 years ago. The world's demand for spices grew throughout the Roman era and into the medieval period, shaping economies from India to Europe. The demand for spices created some of the first international trade routes and helped shape the world economy in a way that can still be seen today.

Sometimes when a recipe calls for one spice and you don't have it, it can feel like a disaster - but it doesn't have to be! This guide helps you swap or blend spices to match what you have in your cupboard.

Spice swaps

- Allspice:** ground cinnamon, dash ground nutmeg, or dash ground cloves
- Cardamom:** ground ginger
- Cinnamon:** nutmeg or allspice (use only $\frac{1}{4}$ of the amount)
- Cloves:** allspice, cinnamon, or nutmeg
- Cumin:** chili powder
- Garlic powder:** 1 clove fresh garlic or $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp. of either a jar or tube of minced garlic
- Ginger, ground:** ground allspice, ground cinnamon, ground mace, or ground nutmeg.
- Ginger, fresh:** for 1 tsp., substitute $\frac{1}{4}$ tsp. ground ginger
- Marjoram:** oregano or lemon thyme
- Mustard seeds:** for 1 tsp., substitute 1 tbsp. prepared jar of yellow mustard (for use in cooked mixtures)
- Nutmeg, ground:** ground cinnamon, ground ginger, or ground mace
- Oregano:** thyme or basil
- Rosemary:** thyme or sage
- Saffron, ground:** dash ground turmeric (for colour, not flavour)
- Sage:** marjoram; or rosemary
- Thyme:** basil; marjoram or oregano



Create your own seasonings!

Cajun seasoning: for 1 tbsp., mix $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp. white pepper plus $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp. garlic powder, $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp. onion powder, $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp. cayenne pepper, $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp. paprika, and $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp. black pepper

Curry powder: Spices are the building blocks of curry powder and are used in different proportions depending on the regions of the world where recipes come from. A simple blend is:
1 Tbsp ground coriander seeds, $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp cumin, 1 tsp turmeric, $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp ground black pepper, $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp chili powder and $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp ground ginger. You can keep any leftover spice blend in a sealed container to use another time.

Fajita seasoning: for 1 tbsp. fajita seasoning, mix $1\frac{1}{2}$ tsp. ground cumin plus $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp. dried oregano, crushed; $\frac{1}{4}$ tsp. salt; $\frac{1}{4}$ tsp. cayenne pepper; $\frac{1}{4}$ tsp. black pepper; $\frac{1}{8}$ tsp. garlic powder; and $\frac{1}{8}$ tsp. onion powder

Italian seasoning: blend of any of these: basil, oregano, rosemary, and ground red pepper

Thai seasoning: For 1 tbsp, mix 1 tsp. ground coriander, 1 tsp. crushed red pepper, $\frac{1}{4}$ tsp. salt, $\frac{1}{4}$ tsp. ground ginger, $\frac{1}{4}$ tsp. garlic powder, and $\frac{1}{4}$ tsp. onion powder.

Cooking and sharing together

Do you know the difference between a herb and a spice?

Herbs are the leaves of the plant, while spices come from almost every other part of a plant including bark, seeds or roots.

As a shared activity you could guess what herbs are what. Use your senses to guess what the common herbs are. What are your favourite spices? What are the spices commonly used on a pizza or in an apple pie?

Recipe hints and tips

- If you need to change a recipe to serve more or less people, you don't change the herbs and spices by the same amount. It's usually safe to go ahead and simply multiply by two or halve for base ingredients like vegetables, liquid, and meat, but for flavour elements (like spices) it's better to start by multiplying by 1.5 and then tasting and adjusting from there.
- Dried herbs are more concentrated than fresh, so you need different amounts. The general rule is that you need $\frac{1}{3}$ the amount of dried herbs to fresh. If a recipe says 3tsp of fresh sage, you would use 1tsp of dried
- Taste and adjust – you can add but you can't take away. When tweaking a recipe start small and taste as you go.

Allergy aware: Some spices are allergens – such as mustard seeds



Tomato Kachumber

This dip is a nice change to salsa and perfect to use up a glut of tomatoes that didn't quite ripen or maybe grab some over-ripe or wonky ones reduced in the supermarket, they make an excellent base for this dish.

This traditional Indian side dish of onion and tomato should be made on the day it is to be eaten and served chilled.

Organisation and skill: ★★★ **Cost:** £££ **Equipment:** 

Community involvement: Community involvement: children under supervision, young adults,

Ingredients

- juice of ½ lemon
- ½ teaspoon caster sugar
- 1 medium-sized onion – peeled and finely chopped
- 4 medium-sized tomatoes – finely chopped
- ½ teaspoon cumin seeds
- 1 small bunch fresh coriander or fresh mint leaves – chopped – reserve a few leaves for garnish
- ground black pepper

Equipment

- chopping board
- lemon squeezer
- teaspoon
- fork
- sharp knife
- mixing bowl
- tablespoon
- serving dish

How to make it

- 1 Place the lemon juice and sugar in the mixing bowl and whisk lightly with a fork.
- 2 Add the chopped onions, tomatoes and cumin.
- 3 Stir in the chopped mint or coriander leaves and season with ground black pepper.
- 4 Transfer to a serving dish, cover and refrigerate for 30 minutes before serving.
- 5 Garnish with reserved mint or coriander leaves just before serving.



  30 mins



Cooking and sharing together

It's easy to make this recipe in larger quantities for serving at community events – just be aware of how much can fit in the processor or liquidiser and don't over-fill it.

A responsible adult should operate blenders and food processors.

Involve younger children and older people in squeezing lemon, crushing garlic, weighing & measuring, seasoning & tasting, and presenting and serving.

Recipe hints and tips

Spring onions are a good substitute for the onion

A good recipe to use up very ripe tomatoes from the school or community garden or supermarket

Storage: This dish should be made on the day it is to be eaten and served chilled.

Portion wise: serves four adults, but if served with other dips and wedges a little goes a long way.