

Spices That Protect You From Cancer

By the American Institute for Cancer Research

Like all plant foods, herbs and spices contain phytochemicals – naturally occurring substances that can promote health. Research indicates that even common seasonings add cancer-protective phytochemicals, as well as flavor, to your food.

Because many fresh herbs are delicate, it's important to choose healthy looking leaves and stems and use them as soon as possible after purchase. Store them in perforated plastic bags in the crisper for up to four days. Dried herbs and spices should be used within a year of purchase. Store them in perforated plastic bags in the crisper for up to four days. Try to buy the smallest quantity you can and store them in airtight containers away from heat and light.

Some Seasoning Superstars

The needle-thin leaves of pine-scented *rosemary* contain carnosol, a strong antioxidant. Carnosol may help guard against breast cancer by detoxifying substances that can initiate the cancer process. It also may protect against skin and lung cancers. Rosemary works well with green beans, mushrooms, peas, potatoes, fish, poultry, tomato sauces and soups.

Quercetin, found in *oregano*, may be especially protective against breast, ovarian and endometrial cancers. It has strong antioxidant properties and may also be antiviral and anti-inflammatory. A recent USDA study showed that oregano offered the most antioxidant activity of all herbs examined. Oregano is an important herb in Mediterranean and Mexican cuisines and is particularly good with tomato-based dishes.

Curcumin, the yellow pigment in *turmeric*, may help protect against several cancers, including prostate, colon, skin and oral cavity. It also may be protective against heart disease, Alzheimer's and cataracts. In Indian and Moroccan cuisines, turmeric often seasons rice, vegetable curries, lamb and poultry.

Sample the exotic taste of turmeric with this recipe.



Moroccan Chicken

- 2 Tbsp. extra virgin olive oil, divided
- 1 large onion, finely chopped
- 2 medium boneless, skinless chicken breasts, halved (about 1 lb. total)
- 3 cans (14.5 oz. each) diced tomatoes, drained (see note)
- ¼ tsp. ground turmeric
- 1 tsp. ground cinnamon
- 1 tsp. ground ginger
- 2-3 Tbsp. honey, or to taste

Salt and pepper, to taste

3 cups cooked hot couscous (preferably whole-wheat, if available)

In large Dutch oven or deep pan, heat one tablespoon oil over medium-high heat. Sauté onion until golden, about 6 minutes. Remove with slotted spoon to plate. Add remaining oil and sauté chicken, turning frequently, until browned on all sides, about 8 minutes. Transfer chicken to plate with onions. Add ½ cup water to pan, scraping bottom with wooden spoon to loosen all browned bits. Add tomatoes, turmeric, cinnamon, ginger, honey and salt and pepper to taste. Return chicken and onion to pot. Cover tightly and gently simmer until chicken is tender, 15-20 minutes. Serve ladled over hot couscous.

Note: When available, use 2 ½ lbs. of diced fresh plum tomatoes instead of canned.

Makes 4 servings. Per serving: 393 calories, 8 g total fat (1g saturated fat), 53 g carbohydrates, 28 g protein, 7 g dietary fiber, 448 mg sodium.