

GETTING CREATIVE WITH CULINARY TECHNIQUES

SEASONINGS & SPICES

Serving more fresh foods rather than processed foods helps to reduce sodium intake because the chef can control the amount of sodium in the food. Serving foods that are lower in sodium helps your customers enjoy the natural taste of food. Using herbs, spices and seasonings can help make vegetables and fruits more appetizing without using sodium.

BOOST FLAVOR & REDUCE SALT USAGE WITH THESE POPULAR SEASONINGS:

- Black Pepper
- Garlic Powder
- Curry Powder
- Cumin
- Dill Seed
- Basil
- Ginger
- Coriander
- Onion
- Lemon
- Vinegar



SPICE MIXES

Spice mixes can be a great way to add flavor to fresh food, either while preparing or allowing customers to add their own. Try some of the following ideas from Team Nutrition Iowa for pre-blended spice mixes.

These quantities are designed to be used in a spice shaker.

POTATO BLEND

- 2 Tablespoons dill
- 1 Tablespoon garlic powder
- 1 Tablespoon onion powder
- 1 Tablespoon paprika
- 1 Tablespoon dried parsley
- 1 Tablespoon dried sage

VEGETABLE BLEND #1

Great for steamed or roasted vegetables

- 2 Tablespoons black pepper
- 1 Tablespoon cayenne pepper
- 1 Tablespoon paprika
- 1 Tablespoon onion powder
- 1 Tablespoon garlic powder

VEGETABLE BLEND #2

Great for steamed or roasted vegetables

- 2 Tablespoons chili powder
- 2 Tablespoons cumin
- 1 Tablespoon crushed red pepper
- 1 Tablespoon onion powder
- 1 Tablespoon granulated garlic

SQUASH AND CARROT BLEND

- 2 Tablespoons cinnamon
- 1 Tablespoon ground cloves
- 1 Tablespoon ground ginger
- 1 Tablespoon nutmeg



ROASTING

- Roasting is a dry heat method of cooking in an oven where the food is not covered, allowing the heat to surround the item.
- Roasting vegetables can enhance the natural sugars in certain vegetables, which often makes them more appetizing for customers, especially children.

To ensure a high quality dish, follow these steps for roasted vegetables:

- Preheat the oven to 325-350 degrees Fahrenheit.
- Cut the vegetables into uniform shape and size.
- Toss vegetables with olive oil.
- Optional: season with pepper, garlic, spices or herbs. Use no more than 1 teaspoon per 50 servings.
- Place vegetables in a single layer on a sheet pan. Do not crowd the vegetables as it will cause them to steam.
- Bake until vegetables are tender.

SOURCE: www.nfsmi.org/documentlibraryfiles/PD-F/20100210102023.pdf





COOKING TECHNIQUES

BLANCHING + FREEZING

- If circumstances allow, one way to extend the amount of time you can use local produce in your meal program is by freezing product while it is in season for use at a later date.
- For many vegetables, blanching is necessary before freezing. Blanching is a process where vegetables are placed in boiling water and cooked for 1 to 2 minutes, then placed in ice water to stop the cooking process. Blanching stops the enzymes from continuing to ripen vegetables in the freezer, which will result in decreased flavor, nutrient loss and compromised texture.
- Vegetables that require blanching include beans, peas, broccoli, cauliflower, asparagus, carrots and Brussels sprouts.
- Blanching tip: Use 1 gallon of water for every pound of vegetables that need to be blanched.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

- Detailed blanching and freezing techniques: nchfp.uga.edu/how/freeze/blanching.html
- Fact sheets on storing and preserving Michigan vegetables: msue.anr.msu.edu/program/mi_fresh/-michigan_fresh_vegetables
- Fact sheets on storing and preserving Michigan fruits: msue.anr.msu.edu/program/mi_fresh/michigan_fresh_fruits
- Detailed guide on how to process, freeze and store vegetables and fruits with a vacuum sealer: www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/Vacuum.pdf



STEAMING

- Steaming is a moist heat cooking technique by which food is cooked by direct contact with steam.
 - Steaming minimizes direct contact with water, which can leach out nutrients.
 - Properly cooked vegetables should be steamed until they have brightened in color and have a little crunch. This generally takes no more than a minute or two. Overcooking vegetables will result in poor appearance and texture.
 - Vegetables can be steamed in a compartment steamer and a conventional oven.
- 📌 See the National Food Service Management Institute's (now the Institute for Child Nutrition) video on steaming vegetables for more detailed considerations: www.nfsmi.org/resourceoverview.aspx?ID=287

SAUTÉING

- Sautéing is a cooking technique where food is cooked quickly in a small amount of fat in a pan over high direct heat.
- Sautéing has the advantage of being a quick cooking method. It does require the use of fat, which contributes to the overall fat content of the meal.

To ensure a high quality dish, follow these steps for sautéing vegetables:

- Prepare the vegetables by cutting them into small, uniform pieces.
- Heat the oil to be used in a large, flat based pan. The pan should be large enough to hold all of the vegetable pieces on one layer. If the vegetables are stacked, it will cause them to steam rather than sauté.
- Vegetables should be continuously moved and flipped to cook all pieces evenly.

EQUIPMENT & OPERATION

FOOD PROCESSORS

- Food processors are an electric appliance with interchangeable blades within a closed container into which food is inserted for slicing, shredding, mincing, chopping, puréeing or other processing at high speeds.
- A commercial food processor can save a significant amount of time in food preparation.
- Most processors come with multiple blades to accomplish a variety of different tasks.

The following are just a few examples of what you can use a food processor for in your meal program:

Here are a few examples:

- Slicing vegetables and fruits like potatoes, carrots, radishes or apples.
 - Grating firm vegetables and fruits for raw consumption or in cooked dishes.
 - Blending or pureeing dishes.
 - Making your own salad dressings and sauces.
- ! Watch Jennifer Cornbleet's video on using a food processor at www.youtube.com/watch?v=QqxL3kVqNJ0.

MANDOLINE

- A mandoline is a hand operated kitchen utensil consisting of a flat frame with adjustable cutting blades for slicing vegetables and fruits.
 - Mandolines have a wide variety of uses and can be a less expensive alternative to food processors.
 - Many mandolines have interchangeable blades that allow you to thinly slice and julienne vegetables and fruits.
 - Care should be used when operating a mandoline as the blades are very sharp. Many models have a hand protector that can be used to keep your fingers away from the blade.
 - When using a mandoline, set it up so it is parallel to you with the blade facing away from your body. This will allow you the most control as you process your produce.
 - If processing a rounded vegetable or fruit, prepare it by cutting the item to have a flat surface. Maintain a firm and consistent downward pressure on the vegetable or fruit as you slice it.
- ! Watch Fine Cooking's video on how to use a mandoline at www.finecooking.com/videos/how-to-use-mandoline.aspx