



UNIVERSITY
OF WYOMING

College of Agriculture
and Natural Resources
Extension

SPICE AND HERB TIPS

Spices vs. Herbs: What is the Difference?

Herbs are the leafy part of plants, while spices are the dried seeds, bark, fruit or ground roots of a plant.

Dried herbs are stronger than fresh.

If you are subbing in fresh herbs, you will have to use more. One teaspoon of dried herbs is the equivalent of one tablespoon or three teaspoons of fresh herbs.

You just bought new spices and herbs for your recipes so, now you need to keep them fresh!

1. Spices and herbs will keep for a long time if you store them properly. Whole spices—like nutmeg—maintain their freshness longer than ground spices. Whole spices can last up to four years. Ground spices can last for 2-3 years. Ground herbs can last anywhere from 1-3 years, depending upon the herb. So, buy them in smaller size containers so that they are used up before they lose their power.
2. Keep spices and herbs away from heat, moisture and direct sunlight. Store in a cool, dark, dry storage area. Even a commonly used herb, like dried bay leaves, should be kept away from the stove. The heat from the stove and the moisture from cooking will cause the spices and herbs to deteriorate quicker.

3. They don't spoil, but spices and herbs do lose their strength. Old and weak seasonings will not deliver the taste that they should. Don't end up with flavorless dishes just because your spices and herbs have lost their power!
4. You don't need any special instrument to test whether spices and herbs are fresh. Just use your senses. If the color of the spice has faded, the flavor probably has too. Taste and smell your spices and herbs. If the aroma doesn't tickle your nose and the taste doesn't tantalize your tongue, replace it.
5. Don't sprinkle spices and herbs directly from the bottle over a steaming pot. Steam can sneak into the spice bottle and sap your spices' or herb's power. If you are wondering why ground spices get hard and caked in the bottle, steam may be the culprit.
6. Make sure your measuring spoon is completely dry when you dip it into the bottle. The moisture can quickly ruin the flavor of a spice.
7. Members of the red pepper family, including paprika and chili powder, keep their color and stay fresher longer if stored in the refrigerator.
8. Close bottle lids or tins tightly immediately after use to keep out moisture and lock in the flavor of the spice or herb.
9. An inexpensive coffee grinder can be used to grind whole seeds, cloves and cinnamon sticks. Freshly ground spices are especially flavorful.
10. By using spices and herbs in recipes, you may be able to lower the salt and sugar in the recipe.
11. Homemade spice blends are cheaper to make than packaged spice blends- such as taco seasoning, fajita seasoning etc. Homemade blends are also lower in sodium.

