

Add Flavor to Food

If you routinely eat meals out, eat processed foods, or pick up the salt shaker before you taste, you could be missing out on a lot of flavor. By gradually reducing sodium, you can adjust your salt expectation, and a variety of other flavors can stand out. There are many ways to bring out the flavor in food. Here are several to try.

Vinegar. Fat free and low in calories, this is one of the most versatile condiments available. While apple cider vinegar is common, step out of your box and explore the world of balsamic and rice vinegars for a new flavor experience. Add balsamic vinegar to low-sodium soups and chili and to vegetables. It's a natural flavor enhancer.

Salt-free herb mixes. Purchase mixtures from the store or make your own. Recipes for seasoning mixes are easy to find, including this section on the Walk Kansas website <http://www.walkkansas.org/p.aspx?tabid=76>.

Onion and garlic. Use these generously! Fresh, dried, or ground varieties work. Tailor the amount used to your family's tastes.

Fresh ground black pepper. In recipes that call for both salt and pepper, try eliminating the salt and doubling the pepper. Increase pepper little by little; use freshly ground pepper if you have a pepper grinder.

Mustards. You have a number of choices here, so branch out from traditional yellow or brown mustard and explore the world of cranberry, Dijon, champagne, creole, and wasabi mustards. They are low in calories, too, and can be stirred into vegetables, soups, and salads.

Lemon and lime juice. These add a zesty taste to meat and vegetable dishes. While freshly squeezed juice is best, keep bottled juice on hand.

Balsamic Roasted Asparagus

Makes 6 servings

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| 1 ½ lb. asparagus,
woody ends broken off | 2 tablespoons balsamic
vinegar |
| 1 red or yellow bell pepper,
cut into ½-inch strips | 2 teaspoons olive oil |
| 1 small red onion, sliced | Optional: salt and pepper to
taste |
| 2 cloves garlic, minced | |

Directions:

- 1) Preheat oven to 400° F.
- 2) Place asparagus, bell pepper, onion, garlic, balsamic vinegar and olive oil on a sheet pan. Toss to coat vegetables with oil mixture.
- 3) Roast in oven about 20 minutes or until vegetables reach desired tenderness. Taste and then season with salt and pepper, if needed. Serve immediately.

Nutrition information per serving: Calories — 60; fat — 1 g; carbohydrate — 8 g; Fiber — 3 g; sodium — 0 mg. This recipe also provides 60 percent daily recommended value (DRV) for vitamin C and 25 percent DRV for vitamin A.

*Summer variation: Substitute raw green beans for asparagus.

Correction to nutrition information for Fish en Papillote recipe in newsletter 2: Calories — 210; fat — 5 g; carbohydrate — 5 g; fiber — 2 g; protein — 35 g; sodium — 95 mg.

