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Pinchin' Pennies in the Kitchen

Do-it-Yourself Spice Mixes

Making your own spice blends is a win-win idea that gives your food a pop of flavor while reducing sodium. Herbs come from the leaves of shrubs. Spices come from other parts of plants.



All photos by NDSU

Did you know?

Many store-bought spice blends are high in sodium. For example, 1 teaspoon of garlic salt adds about 970 milligrams (mg) of sodium to a recipe, while 1 teaspoon of garlic powder adds only 2 mg of sodium.

Make it your own

Make changes according to what you and your family enjoy for spice level. Try new flavors or stick with your favorites. Experiment with different amounts and varieties of spices and herbs to find the blend that you enjoy most.

Mix it up

When you have an assortment of herbs and spices on hand, you can be creative in your kitchen. Enhance the flavors of baked chicken breasts, vegetable medleys, popcorn, tacos and even everyday burgers with herbs and spices. Create a new dip for veggies, fruit and crackers by adding your favorite seasoning blend to low-fat sour cream or nonfat yogurt.

Tips

- Maintain the flavor of your spices by storing them in a cool, dry, dark place away from the oven, stovetop, microwave and dishwasher.
- For best quality, use ground spices within six months and whole spices within two years. Use a permanent marker to label the containers with the date of purchase.
- Start with just a small amount of seasoning. Test the recipe to see if it needs additional flavor before adding more seasoning.

Key to abbreviations

c. = cup	oz. = ounce	g = grams
tsp. = teaspoon	lb. = pound	mg = milligrams
Tbsp. = tablespoon		

Mexican Seasoning Blend

- 1½ tsp. parsley, dried
- ½ tsp. garlic powder
- ½ tsp. onion powder
- 1 tsp. oregano, dried
- 1 tsp. black pepper
- 1 Tbsp. chili powder
- 1 tsp. paprika
- 1½ tsp. cumin



Use in soups, ground beef for tacos or in enchiladas.

Ranch Blend

- 2 Tbsp. onion powder
- 2 Tbsp. onion flakes
- 2 Tbsp. parsley, dried
- 1 Tbsp. garlic powder
- 1 Tbsp. dill weed, dried
- ¼ tsp. thyme, dried
- 2 tsp. pepper



Use in stuffed bell peppers or pasta, or on toasted garlic bread.

Italian Spice Blend

- 2 Tbsp. basil, dried
- 2 Tbsp. oregano, dried
- 1 Tbsp. thyme, dried
- 1 Tbsp. rosemary, dried
- 1 Tbsp. garlic powder
- ¼ tsp. onion powder



Use in yogurt as a dip with celery and carrots, or on baked chicken or popcorn.

Ranch Dip

- 1 ¼ c. low-fat or fat-free plain yogurt or sour cream
- 2 Tbsp. Ranch Blend

Combine yogurt or sour cream with the ranch blend. Serve cold.

Slow Cooker Chicken Tortilla Soup

- 1 (16-oz.) jar salsa
 - 3 c. reduced-sodium chicken broth
 - 2 Tbsp. Mexican Seasoning Blend (or substitute low-sodium taco seasoning)
 - 1 (15-oz.) can kidney beans, drained and rinsed
 - 1 (15-oz.) can black beans drained and rinsed
 - 1 (16-oz.) package frozen corn
 - 1 lb. chicken breast raw, boneless and skinless
 - 1 tsp. shredded cheese (as garnish per bowl), optional
 - 1 (6-oz.) container low-fat, plain Greek yogurt, optional
1. Cut chicken breasts in half and place in 3-quart slow cooker.
 2. Place all remaining ingredients in the slow cooker.
 3. Cook on low for 6 to 7 hours or high for 4 hours.
 4. Shred chicken into bite-sized pieces inside the slow cooker.
 5. If desired, top individual servings with a pinch of shredded cheese and a dollop of yogurt.

Makes 10 servings.

Each serving (1 cup) has 210 calories, 2.5 g fat, 19 g protein, 30 g carbohydrate, 8 g fiber and 530 mg sodium.

Stuffed Bell Peppers

- 1 Tbsp. canola oil
 - 1 lb. extra-lean ground beef
 - 1 tsp. garlic, minced
 - ½ small onion, minced
 - 2 Tbsp. fresh cilantro, chopped
 - 2 Tbsp. Italian Spice Blend
 - 1 tsp. cumin powder
 - 3 large bell peppers, red, green or yellow
 - 1 c. low-sodium chicken broth
 - ½ c. tomato paste
 - ¾ c. brown rice (dry) prepared according to package instructions
 - ¼ c. cheddar cheese, shredded
 - 1 (6 oz.) plain Greek yogurt, optional
1. Prepare brown rice according to package instructions.
 2. Preheat oven to 400 F. Heat oil in a pan over medium heat, then add onion, garlic and cilantro. Sauté for about 2 minutes. Add the ground beef and season with cumin and Italian Spice Blend. Cook the meat until the juices run clear and it is no longer pink (internal temperature 160 F).
 3. Add tomato paste and ¼ c. of the chicken broth, mix well and simmer for about 5 minutes. Stir in the cooked rice and cheese.
 4. Cut the bell peppers in half lengthwise and remove all the seeds. Place open side up on a rimmed baking sheet. Completely fill each pepper half with the beef mixture. Pour some of the leftover chicken broth on the bottom of the baking sheet.
 5. Cover the top with aluminum foil and bake for about 35 minutes. If desired, top with a dollop of yogurt and serve.

Makes six servings.

Each serving (½ stuffed pepper) has 260 calories, g fat, 20 g protein, 22 g carbohydrate, 4 g fiber and 220 mg sodium.

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