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## GARDENING IN YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD

# All the Flavors of the Garden

*Time: 70 Minutes*

Join us on a delicious journey through all the flavors of the garden. Learn how to make the most of these flavors in home cooking by seasoning dishes with herbs and spices.

## OBJECTIVES:

- State two strategies for combining food flavors.
- Identify at least two ways to season foods using herbs/spices.
- Describe how to properly store fresh herbs.

## SETUP

- Review resource list and print it out. Purchase all necessary supplies after reviewing the [HFL Cost Calculator](#).
- Set up stations for participants with the necessary activity supplies.
- Provide computer, internet access, and projector, if available.

## INTRO (10 Minutes)

- Welcome participants and introduce yourself.
- Take care of any housekeeping items (closest bathroom, water fountain, etc.).
- Give a brief description of the educational experience.
- Engage in an icebreaker to gauge topic knowledge from the bank of options provided in the [Welcome Toolkit](#).

## DEMO (10 Minutes)

- Demonstrate content (see demo script).

## ACTIVITY (20 Minutes)

- Participants will practice making a nutritious and delicious dish using fresh herbs.

## RECAP (10 Minutes)

- Pass out handout(s) and invite participants to taste their healthy dish while going through the handout(s) together.

## GOAL SETTING/CLOSING (20 Minutes)

- Engage in a goal setting activity from the bank of options provided in the [Welcome Toolkit](#). Pass out the Setting SMART Goals handout to participants.
- Thank participants and encourage them to join the next activity. (Provide date/time/location if known.)



NOTES: Read legal liability disclaimer before activity: [Food Liability Disclaimer](#). Refer to Resource List for all necessary supplies and handouts. This Healthy for Life® Educational Experience was created by Aramark and the American Heart Association as part of our Healthy for Life® 20 By 20 Initiative. We are proud to be working together to help improve the health of all Americans.

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# All the Flavors of the Garden Resource List

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## HANDOUTS/VIDEOS

Find these resources on AHA's YouTube channel or [heart.org/healthyforgood](http://heart.org/healthyforgood)

- Video - [Zucchini Salad](#)
- Video - [How to Add Flavor with Herbs and Spices](#)
- Article - [Understanding Tastes and Food Flavors](#)
- Article - [How to Add Flavor with Herbs and Spices](#)

Find these resources in this lesson

- Recipe - [Zucchini Salad](#)
- Handout - [Understanding Tastes and Food Flavors](#)
- Handout - [Common Herbs and Spices: How to Use Them Deliciously](#)
- Handout - [Setting SMART Goals](#)

## SPACE SETUP

- Chairs and tables for participants
- Demo table
- Pens for participants
- Folders
- Computer, internet access and projector, if available

## DEMO SUPPLIES

- Cooking herbs (basil, chives, dill, oregano, parsley, mint, etc.)
- Jar/glass of water
- Paper towel
- Zip top bag

## ACTIVITY INGREDIENTS\* AND SUPPLIES\*\*

- 1 medium lemon
- 2 teaspoons extra-virgin olive oil\*\*\*
- 1 medium garlic clove, minced, **or** ½ teaspoon bottled, minced garlic
- ¼ teaspoon pepper
- 4 large zucchini, grated (or sliced)
- ¼ cup crumbled, fat-free feta cheese
- 2 tablespoons fresh dillweed, chopped, **or** 2 teaspoons dried dillweed, crumbled
- 2 tablespoons finely chopped red onion
- 1 tablespoon fresh parsley, chopped, **or** 1 teaspoon dried parsley, crumbled
- ¼ cup fat-free plain Greek yogurt (optional)
- Chef's knife
- Cutting board
- Small bowl
- Whisk
- Medium bowl
- Measuring spoons/cups
- Vegetable peeler
- Plates (for tasting)
- Forks (for tasting)

\*Recipe serves 6 people; please multiply ingredients as necessary for your participants.  
\*\*Purchase appropriate number of supplies for your participants. Participants can divide into teams and share supplies and ingredients.  
\*\*\*Extra-virgin olive oil is preferred since its taste is richer but may be more expensive than regular olive oil.

## All the Flavors of the Garden Demo Script



### SAY:

Let's talk about food flavors and how to balance and combine flavors when preparing food. Whether or not a food tastes delicious in your mouth is the result of many factors. These include the food's flavor, smell, temperature, and texture.



Understanding how different flavors balance and counterbalance each other can help you be more comfortable with cooking because you will have a better idea of what foods go together and what flavor combinations you and your family enjoy.



You might even become comfortable enough to make a few dishes without a formal recipe! This can be very helpful on busy days when you don't have time to plan a meal. Instead of picking up fast food or take-out, use what you have in your kitchen to create something delicious.



There are five basic tastes:



- **Sweet** – Fruit, roasted vegetables, baked grains, and milk have a naturally sweet taste. Added sugars like sugar, honey, and syrups can also give foods a sweet taste, but go easy on these because they are empty calories and have no nutritional value. Try using fruit to sweeten foods instead. The American Heart Association recommends that most women should eat or drink no more than 100 calories per day from added sugars (or 6 teaspoons) and most men should eat or drink no more than 150 calories per day from added sugars (or 9 teaspoons).



- **Sour (acidic)** – grapefruit, lime, lemon, vinegar, yogurt



- **Salty** – ham, bacon, olives, clams, oysters. However, salt can be sneaky! The American Heart Association recommends no more than 2,300 milligrams of sodium a day and an ideal limit of no more than 1,500 milligrams a day for most adults.



- **Bitter** – dark leafy greens, coffee, unsweetened cocoa powder, tonic water



- **Umami** (pronounced “oo-ma-mee”; rhymes with “tsunami”) – this is considered the “fifth taste” and is best described as meaty or savory. Examples are beef, chicken, pork, cheese, tomato sauce, mushrooms, and soy sauce.



Did you know that ingredients can balance each another? By that I mean that you can combine flavors that have similar aromas or textures. For example, pair sour ingredients with other sour ingredients, like lemon and a tangy yogurt.



On the other hand, ingredients may also contrast with each other. Opposite flavors can actually taste great together.

- Sweet counterbalances bitter. Bitter ingredients often give a “cleansing” flavor to dishes.
- Sour counterbalances salty. Keep in mind that salty can also work with sweet.
- Here are some examples that pair ingredients with either a similar or opposite taste or sensation.
- Sweet tomatoes + bitter arugula (a type of green leafy vegetable frequently used in salads)
- Sweet tomatoes + tangy (sour) balsamic vinegar
- Spicy hot pepper + cooling yogurt
- Sour grapefruit + sweet honey
- Bitter collard greens + umami mushrooms



There are other ways to describe food flavors besides using the five basic tastes.

- Bold flavors like fish + mint + lime
- Earthy flavor like kale + lentils + bay leaf

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## All the Flavors of the Garden Demo Script (Continued)



In addition to flavors, think of textures to include in your dishes. Like flavors, textures can balance or counterbalance each other, such as:

- Crunchy – nuts, popcorn, apples, toast, celery
- Smooth/creamy – yogurt, avocado, peanut butter
- Chewy – cooked grains like pasta, rice, barley, oats, and farro; shellfish
- Liquid – fresh fruit juice, oil



Mixing textures is one way to add interest to recipes. For example, you might make a salad with crunchy lettuce and nuts, chewy unsweetened dried fruit like cranberries, and creamy avocado. Or, try a yogurt parfait with creamy yogurt, crunchy nuts, and chewy raisins or soft raspberries.



We will now discuss our final topic for today: seasonings. Seasoning food helps enhance its flavor. Herbs and spices are classic seasonings and are a great way to swap out the salt in recipes.



Herbs are typically more common in home gardens than spices; herbs are easy to grow in pots on a windowsill or in containers on a patio. You can just snip off the amount you need, and it will be much cheaper than buying small quantities of herbs from the store.



Herbs come from the leafy, green part of plants. Spices come from other parts of the plant, such as the roots, stem, bulb, bark, or seeds. We may get an herb and a spice from the same plant, like the cilantro plant. Its seeds are the spice known as coriander while its leaves are the herb cilantro.

**Hold up examples of cooking herbs during the next section.**



Some common cooking herbs are basil, chives, dill, oregano, parsley, mint, cilantro, rosemary, tarragon, and thyme.



There are no wrong combinations – just experiment with one herb and a simple food – sprinkle basil over eggs or fresh cilantro over corn. Here are a few tips:

- Use delicate herbs, which have tender leaves, with delicate veggies, such as basil and mint with zucchini or tomatoes.
- Try heartier herbs, which have thicker, sturdier leaves, with heartier vegetables, such as thyme, rosemary, or sage with potatoes, rutabagas, or carrots.



As you experiment more, you will start to know how to pair different herbs with foods. You will also get to know each herb's flavor. Basil, for example, tastes somewhat sweet and earthy.

- Basil goes well with Italian foods, like pasta with red sauce or turkey lasagna. It can also go with fruit like berries.
- If basil is dried, add it to the dish about 15 minutes before the cooking is done. This will allow time for the basil's full flavor to develop.
- If basil is fresh, add it right before serving so it looks and tastes its best.

**Hold up an example with one of these types of herbs in a jar or glass of water.**



After you've made the effort to grow herbs, you want to get the most out of them. It can be frustrating if you snip fresh herbs from your garden and they go bad before you've used them up. If you store them properly, they can last for at least a few days and up to more than a week. Here are some storage tips to make them last longer:

- Basil, cilantro, mint, and parsley can keep for several days with their stems in water like bouquets of flowers. Trim the bottom of the stems. Fill a jar or water glass with an inch or two of water and place the stem ends of the herbs in the water. Change the water every day or two.

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## All the Flavors of the Garden Demo Script (Continued)

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- Basil may be damaged by the cold and is ideally stored at room temperature.
- Cilantro keeps best in the refrigerator. Parsley and mint can be stored in or out of the fridge. If you are storing leafy herbs in the refrigerator, cover the tops loosely with a plastic bag with some holes punched in it so the moisture can escape. Otherwise, too much moisture can cause the herbs to go bad more quickly.
- To keep fresh, delicate herbs like basil for a long time, freeze them. Put about 1 tablespoon of chopped herbs in each section of an ice cube tray and freeze. When you need the herb, pop it out of the ice cube tray and thaw it.

**Hold up an example with one of these types of herbs in a paper towel and zip top bag.**



**SAY:**

- Woodier herbs such as rosemary, thyme, and sage should be wrapped loosely in paper towels and placed in a zip top bag.



Store your bag of herbs in the refrigerator's "crisper drawer" (also called the produce drawer). Avoid colder spots like the rear of the lower shelf. Woody herbs keep longer than leafy ones.

- If herbs are starting to lose their smell, throw them away. Store them in a dark, dry place away from heat sources like the stove and microwave.



Discover a world of flavor that exists outside the salt shaker. Fresh herbs, spices, vinegars, and other flavorings are a great way to swap out the salt in recipes and jazz up any food.

## All the Flavors of the Garden Activity Script

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Divide participants into teams to practice making an easy and nutritious salad using vegetables and fresh herbs!

Play recipe video.

Invite group members to pick up their resources (recipe, ingredients, and cooking supplies) at the demo station. (Alternatively, if you have set everything up at their stations beforehand, participants can go straight to their cooking stations.)



**SAY:**

Today, we are going to make a Zucchini Salad. We'll be using fresh vegetables paired with herbs to create a tasty and nutritious dish! Let's get started.



Once everyone has finished making the dish, divide it onto plates and share with your team.

Makes 6 servings; ½ cup per serving  
Per serving: 65 Calories; 1.0 g; Saturated Fat; 101 mg Sodium



This Zucchini Salad has a Greek influence. It includes lemon, olive oil, onion, and low-fat feta cheese – all heart-healthy staples found in the typical Greek diet!

### INGREDIENTS

- Juice of 1 medium lemon
- 2 teaspoons extra-virgin olive oil
- 1 medium garlic clove, minced,  
**or** ½ teaspoon bottled, minced garlic
- ¼ teaspoon pepper
- 4 large zucchini, grated (or sliced into ribbons with a vegetable peeler if desired)
- ¼ cup crumbled, low-fat feta cheese
- 2 tablespoons fresh dillweed, chopped,  
**or** 2 teaspoons dried dillweed, crumbled
- 2 tablespoons finely chopped red onion
- 1 tablespoon fresh parsley, chopped,  
**or** 1 teaspoon dried parsley, crumbled
- ¼ cup fat-free plain Greek yogurt (optional)

### DIRECTIONS

1. In a small bowl, for the dressing, whisk together the lemon juice, oil, garlic, and pepper. Set aside.
2. Put the zucchini in a medium bowl. Stir in the feta, dillweed, onion, and parsley.
3. Pour the dressing over the salad, tossing to coat.
4. Cover and refrigerate for at least 2 hours to overnight before serving.

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# Understanding Tastes and Food Flavors

The delicious—or not-so-delicious—way a food tastes in your mouth is the result of many factors, including flavor, smell, temperature, and texture. Taste buds tell us if a food is sweet, sour, salty, bitter, or umami. The flavor of a particular food is also determined by the aromas you smell. Understanding how different flavors balance and counterbalance each other can help you be more comfortable with cooking.

## The five tastes are:

1. **Sweet** – Fruit, roasted vegetables, baked grains, sugar, honey, agave syrup, pure maple syrup, and milk have a sweet taste. The American Heart Association recommends to go easy on the added sugars. Most women should eat or drink no more than 100 calories per day from added sugars and most men should eat or drink no more than 150 calories per day from added sugars.
2. **Sour/acidic** – Sour fruits like limes and lemons, buttermilk, green tomatoes, vinegar, yogurt, and fermented foods like sauerkraut have a sour or acidic taste.
3. **Salty** – Snacks, seaweed, ham, olives, cheese, and some seafood like oysters and clams have a salty taste. Breads and rolls; cold cuts and cured meats; pizza; poultry; soup; and sandwiches add the most sodium to our diet. Replace salt with herbs and spices and salty foods and ingredients with lower sodium versions. The American Heart Association recommends no more than 2,300 milligrams a day and an ideal limit of no more than 1,500 milligrams per day for most adults.
4. **Bitter** – Dark leafy greens, coffee, grapefruit\*, unsweetened cocoa powder, and tonic water all have a bitter taste.
5. **Umami** – Defined as the “fifth taste,” it is described as meaty or savory. Examples are beef, chicken, pork, tomato sauce, ripe tomatoes, mushrooms, and soy sauce. When eating umami foods, look for lower sodium or no-sodium options.

Balancing the intensity of flavors leads to delicious dishes. Here are some tips on how to make tasty dinners out of pantry staples – or even an unfamiliar ingredient you may have:

**Balance flavors: Combine foods that have similar flavors, intensity, aromas, or textures.**

**Bold flavors:** Fish, mint, lime

- **Dinner in Minutes:** Make a lower sodium canned tuna salad with mint and lime. Top grilled zucchini with a dressing of mint, lime, and chopped low-sodium sardines.

**Earthy flavors:** Mushrooms, lentils, bay leaves

- **Dinner in Minutes:** Cook lentils (or dried beans) and mushrooms in fat-free, low-sodium chicken broth with a bay leaf.

**Crunchy textures:** Apples, celery, nuts

- **Dinner in Minutes:** Serve a salad of chopped apples, celery, and unsalted nuts; combine with a dressing of low-fat, sugar-free vanilla yogurt.

**Sweet aromas:** Roasted beets, orange juice

- **Dinner in Minutes:** Make a dressing of orange juice, grated orange zest, and a little olive oil; use it to top roasted beets.

**Counteracting flavors: Mixing flavors and textures can be delicious and add pizzazz to dishes.**

**Bitter** collard greens vs. umami chopped mushrooms

- **Dinner in Minutes:** Cook greens in a little fat-free, low-sodium chicken broth and add chopped mushrooms.

**Sweet** tomatoes vs. bitter arugula

- **Dinner in Minutes:** Top whole-wheat bread with fresh or no-salt-added canned tomatoes and fresh arugula and add a sprinkle of balsamic vinegar and olive oil; broil in the oven to warm.

**Spicy** hot pepper vs. soothing yogurt

- **Dinner in Minutes:** Bean casserole made with spicy hot peppers and topped with low-fat, sugar-free yogurt

**Sour** grapefruit\* vs. sweet natural sugars

- **Dinner in Minutes:** As a side or snack: Broil half of a fresh grapefruit\* in the oven until golden to release some of the natural sweetness in the grapefruit.

**Crunchy** sweet pineapple vs. creamy avocado

- **Dinner in Minutes:** Top broiled fish with a salsa of canned pineapple, chopped avocado, and chopped green bell peppers.

\*Some cholesterol-lowering medications may interact with grapefruit, grapefruit juice, pomegranate, and pomegranate juice. Please talk to your health care provider about any potential risks.



## Common Herbs and Spices: How to Use Them Deliciously



Your spice cupboard is a treasure chest of zippy, zesty, sweet, savory, and spicy flavors. Use herbs and spices to add a variety of flavors to foods without adding salt.

Here's a how-to guide on the flavor profiles of common spices and how to use them.

### Basil

- Tastes somewhat sweet, earthy
- **Delicious Pairings:** Any Italian food like meatless lasagna or pasta with red sauce; or with berries, peaches, or apricots
- **Extra Tip:** Add dried basil to the dish at least 15 minutes before it finishes cooking for full flavor. Add fresh basil right before serving to avoid flavor loss or wilting.

### Curry Powder

- Is a blend of spices usually including coriander, fenugreek, turmeric, cumin, and others
- **Delicious Pairings:** Indian food like lentil and potato stew; breakfast veggie and egg scramble; whole grains like brown rice or quinoa with cilantro; tuna with celery and low-fat, sugar-free yogurt for a delicious sandwich
- **Extra Tip:** Some curry powder can be hot and spicy. If you prefer a milder one (or a hotter one) look for a recipe online and make your own mix from spices in your spice cupboard.

### Cumin

- Tastes toasty and earthy with a little spice
- **Delicious Pairings:** Mexican food like black bean salsa or refried beans; fish such as tilapia, especially in fish tacos; root vegetables
- **Extra Tip:** Cumin is also part of the Indian spice mix garam masala. It's delicious when paired with coriander in Mexican or Indian food.

### Rosemary

- Tastes woody
- **Delicious Pairings:** Roasted meats like chicken, pork, lamb, or salmon; mushrooms, raw or cooked; whole-grain breads; butternut squash or pumpkin
- **Extra Tip:** Long sticks of fresh rosemary can be used to brush marinades on meat or as a skewer stick for grilled kabobs.

### Smoked Paprika

- Tastes smoky and woody
- **Delicious Pairings:** Egg dishes; spice rubs for meats or even tofu; in a fruit salsa like mango; in tomato sauce
- **Extra Tip:** Use smoked paprika to add the smoky flavor of bacon to any dish without the extra saturated fat or salt.

### Thyme

- Tastes earthy
- **Delicious Pairings:** Any bean dish; blends well with bay leaves, parsley, or lemon zest; on roasted vegetables
- **Extra Tip:** Lightly crush dried thyme leaves between your fingers when adding to a dish to release the flavor.

### Cinnamon

- Tastes sweet and spicy
- **Delicious Pairings:** Whole-grain muffins, waffles, pancakes, or breads; fruit crisps with oatmeal topping; Greek meat dishes like lamb or beef stew with oregano and onions
- **Extra Tip:** The natural sweetness of cinnamon allows you to cut the amount of added sugar in some recipes.

## **SPECIFIC**

- What exactly do you want to accomplish?

## **MEASURABLE**

- How will you track your progress towards your goal?

## **ACHIEVABLE**

- Is reaching your goal possible with your full effort?

## **REALISTIC**

- Do you have the resources and ability to achieve your goal? If not, how can you get them?

## **TIME-BOUND**

- When will your goal be achieved?

## **EXAMPLE OF A SMART GOAL:**

I will increase the number of fruit servings I eat daily by 2 cups within the next 3 months.

Personal SMART goal:

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