

Spices, Herbs and Blends



Time Needed: 30 minutes

Setting: Kitchen

Activity Overview:

Create the opportunity to discuss, taste, and experiment with herbs, spices, and blends. Promote the use of these to add flavor, color, and aroma.

Materials Needed:

A variety of spices and herbs. Choose at least one from each column:

Bright & Citrusy	Warm & Earthy	Sweet
Sumac Coriander Cardamom Celery Seed Dried Dill	Cumin Dried Parsley Black Pepper Dried Thyme Allspice White Pepper	Dried Basil Cinnamon Dried Mint Nutmeg
Savory	Smoky	Spicy
Dried Chives Sage Dried Oregano Curry Powder Granulated Garlic Onion Powder	Paprika Chipotle Powder	Cayenne Chili Powder Crushed Red Pepper Ground Ginger Mustard Powder

- Oyster crackers: approximately 1 cup per participant
- Butter spray
- Portion cups, plastic spoons, and small disposable bowls for mixing blends
- Copies of Spice and Herb chart
- Bags that seal (i.e. Ziplock) or small bowls for mixing blends with oyster crackers
- Water for participants
- Pen and paper to record flavor and tasting notes



Tasting Experience Prep:

Determine the number of participants who will attend the Flavor Activity training.

- Participants will work in groups of 2-3.

Give each group:

- Spice and Herb chart with portioned spices and herbs
- Bowl with oyster crackers
- Butter spray
- 2-3 Bags that seal (i.e. Ziplock) or small bowls

These will be used to mix blends with oyster crackers.

If using bags that seal (i.e. Ziplock), close the bag and shake the sprayed crackers with the blend.

- 2-3 disposable bowls

These will be used to mix spice and herb blends.

If using small bowls, use a spoon to mix the blend with sprayed crackers.

- Several plastic spoons

Each participant will need spoons to taste individual spices and herbs.

Spoons will also be used to mix blends.

- Provide each participant with paper and a pen to record any notes.
- Provide each participant with water to cleanse their palate during tasting.

Goal: To increase culinary knowledge and confidence surrounding the use of spices, herbs, and blends.

Objectives — Participants will be able to:

- Identify characteristics of different spices and herbs.
- Create blends to enhance flavor, aroma, and presentation.
- Understand how the use of spices, herbs, and blends adds complexity and creates a unique food experience for students.
- Answer questions and share new knowledge about the importance of using spices, herbs, and blends within school nutrition.
- Identify opportunities to add spices, herbs, and blends to elevate the appearance and flavor of current menu items.

Instructions:

Review the activity overview, goal, and objectives.

TIP: Encourage participants to drink water between tastings for best flavor discovery.

Spice and Herb Activity:

- Have participants try the individual spices and herbs, observing their appearance, aroma, and flavor. Ask them to record their thoughts on these characteristics as well as any menu items they pair well with or compliment.
- Once complete, ask participants to share. Discuss the appearance and color, texture, shape, and any unique visual features of each spice.
- Next, guide a discussion on aroma observations. Spices and herbs help make food smell wonderful.
 - *Were any spices or herbs sweet smelling, earthy or woody, citrusy or peppery?*
 - *Did any of the aromas remind you of anything?*
 - *Which ones did you like best?*
- Lastly, guide a discussion on the individual tasting experience.
 - *Which flavors are your favorite? Least appealing?*
 - *Did you think of any menu items that would benefit from one or more of the spices or herbs?*

Blend Activity:

- Give participants time to experiment with creating blends that could be used to enhance your menu items.
 - Encourage creativity and innovation. Unique blends can add new dimensions to traditional items.
- Instruct groups to taste and adjust blends during this activity time.
 - To taste the blends – Use butter spray to coat the oyster crackers, add some the blend, and mix to cover the crackers.
 - *If using bags that seal (i.e. Ziplock), close the bag and shake the sprayed crackers with the blend.*
 - *If using small bowls, use a spoon to mix the blend with sprayed crackers.*
- Once complete, guide a discussion on blends created.
 - How did mixing different spices and herbs create more complex flavors and combinations of flavors?
 - Does it taste how you expected it to taste?
 - Is there anything you would change?
 - How would you use the blend?

Conclude by asking participants to share what they learned about elevating aroma, appearance, and flavor with spices, herbs, and blends.



Additional Resources:

Consider using the Food Literacy resource to help identify descriptive words during tasting experience.

<https://snp.gadoe.org/SCE/Documents/FBL/TasteTestSet.pdf>