It’s that time of the year again... laughter is in the air, mistletoe is springing up everywhere, and the hustle and bustle of gift buying and family time is lifting everyone’s spirits into relative good cheer.

It’s also the season of holiday hams and turkey, candied yams, pecan pies, and other traditional Christmas fare. Beyond the threat of expanding your waistline, the season’s culinary delights can be a formidable health nightmare if you’re trying to live a cancer-free lifestyle.

Total abstinence from these delectable delights isn’t really an option for most – who wants to be that garish suppertime Grinch, after all? Also, there’s always the New Year to get back on track and in shape, right?

I’d be lying if I said that there hasn’t been a time when I opted to just gorge on all those Christmas goodies and ask questions later, which is probably something you’ve done as well. But the good news is, there’s a better way to handle these holiday temptations... and it all begins with your spice rack.

Truth be told, you don’t necessarily have to sacrifice all the festive flavors of the holiday season to stay healthy this Christmas. Many of the most common herbs and spices found in your favorite holiday dishes are
packed with unique nutritional and medicinal compounds. Many of these compounds have been scientifically shown to aid your body in balancing blood sugar levels, promote healthy digestion, and even help to lower your overall risk of cancer.

Here are 4 of the best healthy spices and herbs to include in your holiday cooking...

Healthy Holiday Spice #1 – Nutmeg

For many people, all the heavy eating that accompanies the holiday season is a recipe for constant indigestion. But the native southeast Asian spice known as nutmeg might just be the remedy you need to make it through tummy aches and pains with ease and regularity. And since it’s plentiful in holiday eggnogs, cakes, pastries, and teas (as long as they’re made with the real thing!), you shouldn’t have a hard time finding it!

A great way to consume nutmeg daily for therapeutic purposes is to sprinkle a small bit of it in powdered form into your daily cup of tea or coffee. The oil of nutmeg can also be applied topically on the skin as a remedy for muscle and joint pain, or to quell the inflammation and pain associated with conditions such as sciatica, rheumatism, and neuralgia.

However, since nutmeg can be toxic in excessively large doses – more than six grams daily seems to be the consensus – my recommendation is to consume no more than half a teaspoon daily, if well tolerated.

Healthy Holiday Spice #2 – Cinnamon

If Christmas had to choose a flavor mascot, cinnamon would probably be its top pick. But the pleasant aroma of this cherished holiday spice is just the tip of the iceberg as far as its therapeutic potential is concerned. With uses ranging from appetite stimulant and eupeptic (promoter of good digestion) to antibacterial agent and blood sugar regulator, it’s no wonder cinnamon holds a top spot in many of the traditional herbal medicine protocols of old.

Drinking cinnamon tea or even just sprinkling a little powdered cinnamon on your favorite foods can help to treat a variety of health conditions including halitosis (bad breath), nausea, vomiting, and upset stomach.
In terms of cancer protection, cinnamon has been shown to prevent the growth of several human cancer cells including breast, leukemia, ovarian, and lung tumor cells in laboratory studies. Cinnamon also significantly reduced the migration of cancer cells, indicating that it may prove to be very useful as an anticancer therapy.

Not all cinnamon is created equal, though. Most of the cinnamon you’ll find on grocery store shelves and in your favorite sticky buns is of a cheaper variety known as Cassia cinnamon, or Chinese cinnamon (Cinnamomum aromaticum). Cassia cinnamon isn’t as potent or medicinally effective as true cinnamon, which goes by the name of Ceylon cinnamon (Cinnamomum verum).

Healthy Holiday Spice #3 – Cloves

Your grandmother’s classic pumpkin pie recipe wouldn’t even come close to having that unique sweet and spicy kick if it weren’t for her generous use of cloves. Cloves are packed with a host of powerful healing compounds, not the least of which is eugenol oil, a natural sedative often used in holistic dentistry.

Ingesting cloves or clove oil also provides digestive relief from heartburn, gas, and bloating – uncomfortable conditions that are all too familiar this time of year. Cloves work in tandem with the body’s natural digestive juices to not only boost metabolism but also prevent toxic buildup in the digestive tract.

A study published in the Journal of Immunotoxicology affirms what many ancient cultures discovered a long time ago concerning clove’s full medicinal potential – eugenol oil is a potent anti-inflammatory agent. Taking low doses of this oil for short periods of time can help protect against liver disease and premature aging (too much, the same study found, can also be harmful, so beware of this).

If you choose to apply clove oil topically as a remedy for localized inflammation or pain, be sure to mix it with a carrier oil like jojoba or coconut. Clove oil is exceptionally strong on its own, and should always be diluted, and only applied or ingested for short periods of time. Dr. Josh Axe, a well-respected physician in natural health circles (and expert in our Truth About Cancer docu-series), recommends taking clove oil internally at therapeutic doses for no longer than about two weeks at a time.
Healthy Holiday Herb #4 – Peppermint

No holiday celebration would be complete without it, but peppermint’s use in holiday fare extends far beyond just its distinctive flavor and aromatic bouquet. Long utilized in traditional healing medicine, peppermint’s use in the natural healing arts dates back so far that many consider it the world’s oldest natural medicine.

Known botanically as *mentha piperita*, peppermint is a scientifically-proven remedy for conditions as diverse as indigestion, irritable bowel syndrome (IBS), halitosis (bad breath), toothaches, headaches, and pregnancy-associated nausea as well as respiratory infections, depression, chronic pain, and poor circulation.

If all those Christmas meats, casseroles, and pies are difficult for you to digest, peppermint is here to help! Research suggests that [peppermint oil](#) helps relax intestinal muscle tissue while increasing the flow and release of digestive bile. This process ensures that food nutrients get where they need to go while reducing or eliminating digestive blockages that can lead to pain, bloating, gas, or diarrhea.

Peppermint also helps break up congestion from colds and flu. Due to its powerful expectorant properties, peppermint helps loosen up phlegm, reduce coughs, and thin mucus, allowing you and your loved ones the freedom to enjoy a healthy holiday season without all the hacking and hunkering down in bed due to seasonal illness.
4 Healthy Holiday Spices

Nutmeg  The native Southeast Asian spice might just be the remedy you need to make it through tummy aches and pains with ease and regularity. Since nutmeg can be toxic in excessively large doses – we recommend consuming no more than 1/2 tsp per day.

Cinnamon  Its uses range from appetite stimulant and euphetic (promoter of good digestion) to antibacterial agent and blood sugar regulator. It's no wonder cinnamon holds a top spot in many of the traditional herbal medicine protocols of old.

Cloves  Are packed with a host of powerful healing compounds, not the least of which is eugenol oil, a natural sedative often used in holistic dentistry.

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Two Tips for Choosing the Best and Most Effective Herbs & Spices

Common sense dictates that the best ways to incorporate more of these and other holiday herbs and spices (and essential oils made from them) into your daily regimen isn’t through candy canes and processed eggnog.

To receive the most benefits from what nature has to offer, follow these two guidelines when selecting your healthy spices & herbs:

1. **Choose only organic, non-irradiated herbs and spices.** Many commercial brands available at your local grocery store pre-treat their herbs and spices with irradiation, a process that is meant to kill off any lingering bacteria or other contaminants that might be lingering inside the containers. But irradiation also kills off much or all of their nutrient content, while also leaving behind toxic byproducts like formaldehyde, formic acid, and benzene! Your best bet is to choose only organic, non-irradiated herbs and spice sold by reputable brands.

   The same advice goes for essential oils made from herbs and spices. Seek the highest quality organic oils – especially if you are ingesting them or using them on your body.

2. **Make your own holiday treats, cocktails, and meals using only real herbs.** Convenience has its place. But when it comes to your health, spending the extra time required to make your own holiday meals and sweets using only real organic herbs and spices can make all the difference in whether or not they’re helping your body or hurting it.

   My advice is to avoid all artificially-flavored liquors, beverages, and foods that contain synthetic herb and spice flavorings. While it might be more work, crafting your own sweets, baked goods, cocktails, and other foods using real, non-irradiated herbs and spices and real (whole food), organic & non-GMO ingredients, will not only produce better-tasting offerings... but also allow you and your family to get the most out of what you eat and drink this Christmas.
Article Summary

- Beyond the threat of expanding your waistline, the season’s culinary delights can be a formidable health nightmare if you’re trying to live a cancer-free lifestyle.

- The good news is, many of the most common herbs and spices found in your favorite holiday dishes are packed with unique nutritional and medicinal compounds that have been scientifically shown to help: balance blood sugar levels, promote healthy digestion, and even lower your overall risk of cancer.

- 4 of the best healthy spices and herbs to include in your holiday cooking are:
  1. Nutmeg
  2. Cinnamon
  3. Cloves
  4. Peppermint

- To receive the most benefits from what nature has to offer, follow these two guidelines when selecting your healthy spices & herbs:
  1. Choose only organic, non-irradiated herbs and spices
  2. Make your own holiday treats, cocktails, and meals using only real herbs

Source file: https://thetruthaboutcancer.com/4-healthy-spices/