

Flavor Without Extra Salt, Sugar & Fat

Supports: Building Block 7 — Food: Satisfaction, Seasoning & Preparation

Why It Matters

Flavor is what makes healthy eating something you look forward to, and you can build plenty of it without leaning hard on salt, added sugar, or heavy fats. Herbs, spices, and simple homemade sauces and dressings let you turn everyday ingredients into meals you genuinely enjoy. Making your own also tends to be cheaper and gives you more say over what goes in. Think of your kitchen as a place to play and taste as you go.

What to Know

Reach for herbs and spices first

Herbs and spices add big flavor and variety with little to no sodium, sugar, or fat. A few pairings can get you started, and you can branch out from there.

- Basil, oregano, and thyme brighten tomato dishes, pasta, soups, and roasted vegetables.
- Cumin, chili powder, and cilantro bring warmth to beans, stews, rice, and Mexican-style dishes.
- Cinnamon, ginger, and turmeric add depth to oatmeal, fruit, sweet potatoes, and smoothies.
- Rosemary, sage, paprika, and dill pair well with poultry, fish, potatoes, and eggs.

Make a simple sauce or dressing

A homemade dressing or sauce can wake up salads, grain bowls, roasted vegetables, and proteins. An easy formula keeps it flexible: combine an unsaturated fat, an acid, and something for flavor, then taste and adjust.

- Fat: olive, avocado, or sesame oil, or a base like avocado or Greek yogurt.
- Acid: balsamic, apple cider, or rice vinegar, or lemon or lime juice.
- Flavor: garlic, fresh or dried herbs, mustard, fresh ginger, or a touch of honey or maple.
- A loose starting ratio is about two parts oil to one part acid, plus a little sweetener and seasonings to taste.

Taste and adjust. You are in charge of the flavor. Start light on salt and sweeteners, taste as you go, and add more only if you truly want it.

Try This

Look at a meal you make often and imagine how a new herb, spice, or homemade sauce could freshen it up.

- ? Which herbs or spices do you already enjoy, and which would you like to try next?
- ? What is one meal you could brighten with a simple homemade dressing or sauce?
- ? Where do you tend to reach for extra salt, sugar, or fat that a seasoning could replace?