

# Spices, herbs help with healthy lifestyle

By Kerri-Ann Jennings, *EatingWell*

As a registered dietitian and associate nutrition editor at *EatingWell* magazine, I know that herbs and spices do more than simply add flavor to food. They let you cut down on some less-healthy ingredients, such as salt, added sugars and saturated fat, and some have inherent health benefits, many of which Joyce Hendley reported on for *EatingWell* magazine.

Modern science is beginning to uncover the ultimate power of spices and herbs, as weapons against illnesses from cancer to Alzheimer's disease. "We're now starting to see a scientific basis for why people have been using spices medicinally for thousands of years," says Bharat Aggarwal, professor at the University of Texas M.D. Anderson Cancer Center in Houston and author of *Healing Spices* (Sterling, 2011).

Aggarwal notes that in his native India, where spices tend to be used by the handful, incidence of diet-related diseases like heart disease and cancer have long been low. But when Indians move away and adopt more Westernized eating patterns, their rates of those diseases rise. While researchers usually blame the meatier, fattier nature of Western diets, Aggarwal and other experts believe that herbs and spices—or more precisely, the lack of them—are also an important piece of the dietary puzzle. "When Indians eat more Westernized foods, they're getting much fewer spices than their traditional diet contains," he explains. "They lose the protection those spices are conveying."

While science has yet to show that any spice cures disease, there's compelling evidence that several may help manage some chronic conditions (though it's always smart to talk with your

doctor). What's not to love? Here we've gathered eight of the healthiest spices and herbs enjoyed around the world.

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