

Spicing up food can make up for missing fat

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Adding just a small amount of everyday herbs and spices to vegetables and reduced-calorie meals may make those foods more appetizing to consumers, which could ultimately help Americans cut down on dietary fat and choose more foods in line with the Dietary Guidelines for Americans, according to research presented at the 2013 Institute of Food Technologists (IFT) Annual Meeting & Food Expo.

John Peters, Ph.D., professor of medicine at the University of Colorado and chief of strategy and innovation at the school's Anschutz Health and Wellness Center, presented data from an experiment he conducted using meatloaf, vegetables and creamy pasta. The test group of 150 subjects tasted the meal with full fat (610 calories), reduced fat, and reduced fat with everyday spices added such as onion, oregano, paprika and garlic (both 395 calories). They then rated the meals using a nine-point Likert scale. The meals were randomized so nobody knew which of the three they were eating.

The analysis of the experiment found:

- The full-fat meal and the reduced-fat meal with spices both scored the same (about a 7.0). The reduced-fat meal with no spices scored about a 6.25. Peters noted that simply adding herbs and spices was enough to improve the reduced-fat version enough that it was rated as highly as the full-fat version.
- The reduced-fat meatloaf with spices scored slightly higher than the full-fat version (6.75 vs. 6.50), while the reduced-fat only version was rated just above 6.0.

- The spiced-up reduced-fat vegetables scored slightly above 7.0, while the full-fat version scored just under 7.0. The reduced-fat only [vegetables](#) scored a little below 6.5.
- The full-fat creamy pasta was still more favored, scoring slightly above 7.25 vs. a little above 6.5 for the spicy reduced-fat version, and slightly below 6.0 for the reduced-fat with no spice. Peters says reducing the fat in components like milk and cheese may contribute to an overall less satisfying feel and taste. Still, he noted that adding spices made up some of the ratings deficit between the full-fat version and the non-spicy reduced-fat version.

Peters urged the food industry to continue studying the relationship between herbs and spices and dietary satisfaction.

"Substituting herbs and spices for [fat](#) may be a promising strategy for helping people meet the Dietary Guidelines, especially if it's simple stuff you can buy in the store that doesn't require any exotic training," said Peters, whose research was funded in part by the McCormick Science Institute. The Institute is an independent research organization whose mission is to support scientific research and disseminate information on the health benefits of culinary herbs and [spices](#). Spice manufacturer McCormick & Company, Inc., supports the initiatives of the McCormick Science Institute through funding.

Provided by Institute of Food Technologists

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