

Get spicy with homemade no-salt seasonings

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Spices add not only great flavor to foods, but also micronutrients for a healthy diet.

Spice blends can be especially zesty, but many on grocery store shelves are loaded with sodium, which can spike your salt intake and detract from the spices' benefits. Mix your own blends instead.

A very versatile mix is taco seasoning. It's great for marinating meat, adding depth to chili, using as a dry rub on chicken and fish, or instead of salt to flavor a cooked dish.

Dried chili powder is one of the main ingredients in a taco seasoning [blend](#). Chilies give your spice mix a smoky tang. You can pulverize whole dried chilies in a coffee bean grinder or buy them already ground. You'll find many varieties to choose from, including mildly sweet anchos, spicy chipotles and the hotter cayenne and urfa from Turkey. The hotter the chilies, the higher their capsaicin content, a potent anti-inflammatory compound.

Another key ingredient is [cumin](#). Cumin is high in iron and adds an earthy tang, which complements the smoky flavor of chilies. You can buy cumin seeds to grind yourself or buy cumin already ground.

Oregano is a great herb to add to a no-salt blend. It has the highest antioxidant levels of any herb. Use fresh, finely chopped oregano leaves if you plan to use your mix right away or dried if you're making it ahead of time.

A secret ingredient in the following blend is cornstarch. Because it's a thickener, it helps to turn the juices released by foods into a sauce. Leave it out if you'll be using the blend on cooked foods as a salt replacement.

Fast Taco Seasoning

- 2 tablespoons chili powder

- 2 teaspoons ground cumin
- 2 teaspoons dried onion powder
- 2 teaspoons dried garlic
- 1 teaspoon dried oregano or 2 teaspoons fresh
- 1/4 teaspoon ground cayenne or other hot [chili](#)
- 4 teaspoons cornstarch

Mix all ingredients in a small bowl. Transfer to an airtight container and keep in a cool, dark cabinet for up to two weeks.

Yield: About 1/3 cup or enough to season 2 pounds of meat

More information: The Boston Public Health Commission has more [spice blend recipes](#) to make for all types of cuisines.

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