



Master the Art of Seasoning

A complete step-by-step guide to
enhancing the flavour of any recipe

THE Spice
People



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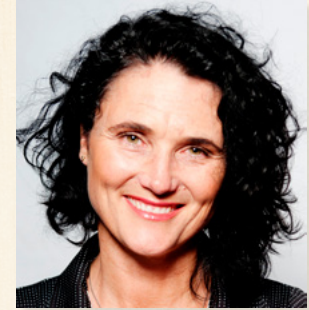
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Introduction

Welcome, and congratulations! You've taken the first step in your new culinary adventure.

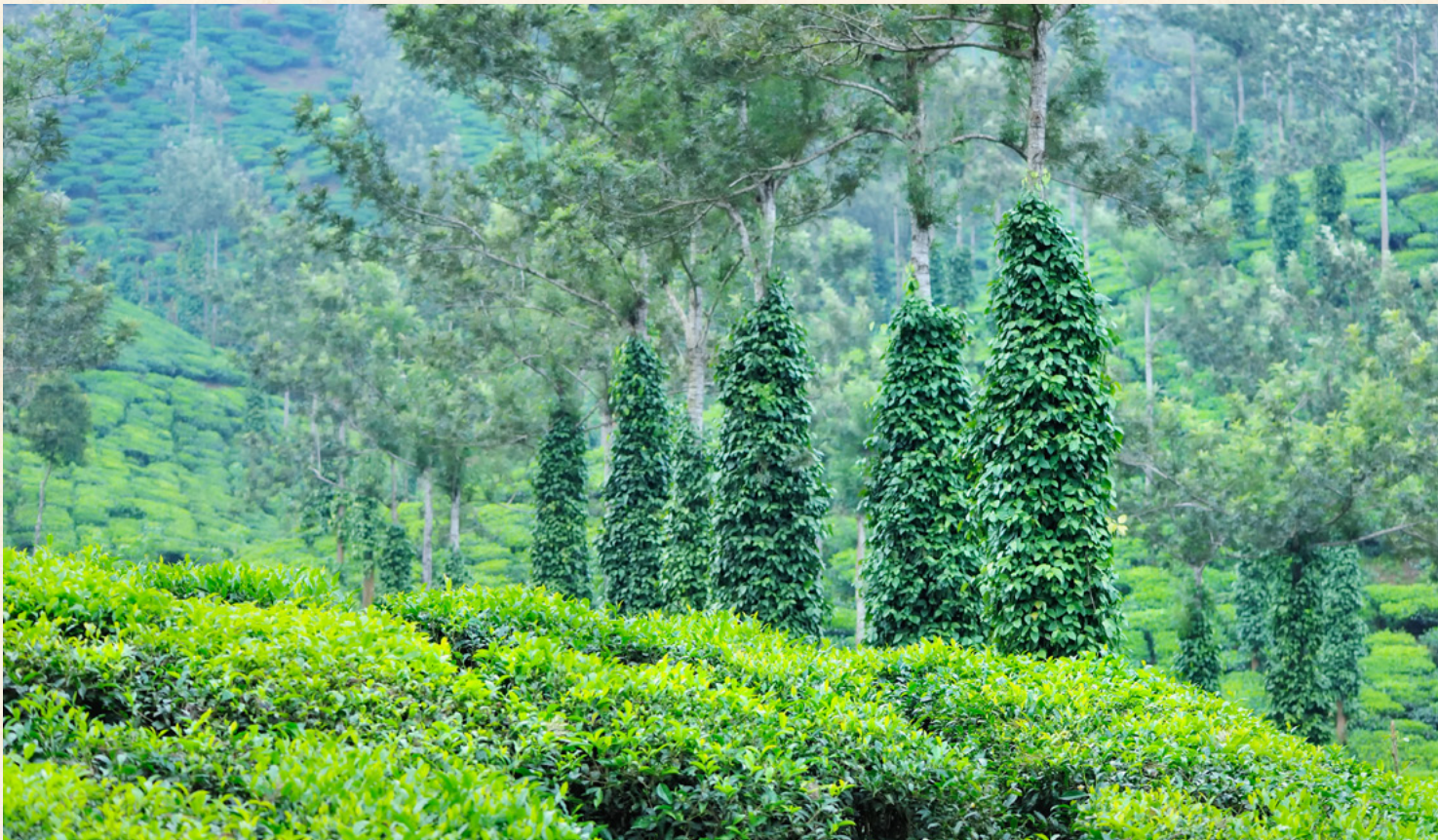
I'm Liz, founder of The Spice People in Melbourne, Australia. I'm a passionate spice evangelist, and my mission is to connect people with spices in an enriching culinary adventure that makes eating fun, interesting and wholesome.



At an early age, I learned the lessons of the land, and how to do things from scratch – the organic way, from the farm to the table. In my late teens, I studied Agricultural Science, before moving to the city and beginning my business adventure.

When I am not hard at work at our spicery, creating new and exciting spice blends, I am traveling to exotic places to source herbs and spices that enhance the flavours of the food we love.

I love to help people enjoy authentic dishes from their travels, then create them easily in their own kitchens. The phrase “Enrich your life” is not just our motto...It is infused into everything we do.



Why do we often overlook seasoning our dishes ?

In today's busy world, we are time poor and health aware. Many of us believe that everything has too much salt or sugar in it already, and we shouldn't add any more salt as we're cooking.

However, this type of caution is only necessary if you are buying processed or prepared foods. If you are buying fresh whole foods, you do need to season your food to enhance the flavour of your dishes.

We have all tasted dishes that are underwhelming, but a squeeze of lemon or a dash of salt may be all that is needed to elevate a particular dish from bland to shazam.

Too much heat? Adding a little sugar or coconut milk may do the trick. If you're trying to reduce salt intake, using a seasoned salt may be a healthier alternative.

These are just some of the clever tips and tricks you'll learn in this e-book as you learn how to improve your seasoning skills.

This ebook will help you to gain the confidence to turn recipes that seem dull and uninspired into culinary delights the whole family will enjoy.

Get ready to embark on your culinary spice journey!

With love,

Liz





“The key to a good meal is simplicity and the right seasoning.”





Why should you season your food?

“Season to taste” is one of the most commonly used phrases in recipes – but even though seasoning is one of the most important aspects of cooking, do we really understand what it means, or why we need to do it?

All great meals are about balance. The five tastes – sweet, salty, sour, bitter and umami – should all complement one another, without any one taste hogging the limelight. If one of these tastes is too strong, the dish tastes off. Obviously, depending on the recipe, certain tastes will be more dominant – but they must be kept in check so they don’t take over the whole dish.

The good news is that there’s often a simple solution for fixing a dish when it goes awry – but first you need to understand what went wrong in the first place.

Why should you season your food?

For example, I recently stayed at a girlfriend's house, and while I was there I cooked our South Indian dahl recipe for dinner. Finding my way around someone else's pantry was a real eye-opener. I couldn't just reach for my trusted spices and condiments – I had to interpret and adjust the recipe based on what I could find. That including squeezing the juice from frozen whole lemons, instead of fresh lemons.

My instincts suggested the frozen lemons wouldn't retain their acidity or flavour, but my friend insisted they were fine when she used them to cook cakes. I was skeptical, because when you're baking cakes with lemon, the flavour comes more from the rind than the juice.

When the dish was cooked, I tasted it but was unimpressed. What had gone wrong? It seemed to have no depth of flavour. I'd used the right ingredients-to-spice ratio, but the dish still wasn't as good as the dahl I make regularly at home.

I added more salt, which made it was a little better, but it definitely still needed brightening.

Then I thought about the raw ingredients. The recipe had called for 3 tablespoons of lemon juice to 500 grams of lentils, so in addition to our frozen lemon juice we added fresh lemon juice 1 tablespoon at a time. We tasted as we went, and gradually added more until it seemed just right.

As we added fresh lemon juice, the dish came alive, tasting not salty or sour, but fresh, vibrant, and rich in flavour.



I like to think of seasoning as an art that continues to improve with practice.





The Art of Seasoning:

How to go about seasoning your dish

Seasoning is about improving the flavour of your food by adding things like salt, chilli, herbs and pepper.

Using good seasoning techniques means you need fewer expensive sauces or liquid stocks to make your food taste interesting.

Have you ever wondered why you loved Grandma's food so much, and why you can't seem to recreate her favorite dishes?

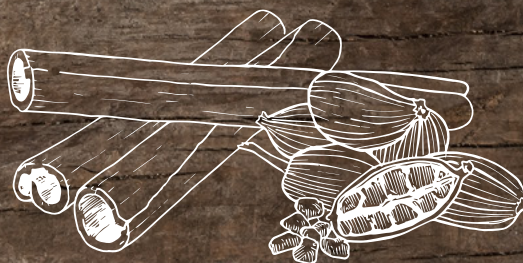
Or have you ever tasted an amazing dish at a friend's house, then wondered why it just didn't taste as good when you made it at home? It might be because of your seasoning skills.

I know my family prefers my scrambled eggs (which may be because of family loyalty), but they still insist most cafés don't get scrambled eggs right.

Our family's secret ingredient, by the way, is our [celery salt seasoning](#) – it works like magic with eggs, potatoes and steak.



“Using good seasoning techniques means you need fewer expensive sauces or liquid stocks to make your food taste interesting.”



My best tips for seasoning your food

Tip 1

There are two main times to think about seasoning – at the beginning (foundation flavours) at the end (finishing seasonings). For slow-cooked dishes, it's a good idea to add some seasoning in early, so it can get absorbed into all the ingredients. For most other recipe types, seasoning at the end is the best way to go.

Tip 2

Reduce salt for health and well-being. The simplest way to do this is to get back to basics. Use whole fresh ingredients and season your own food.

Tip 3

Think about the saltiness of your ingredients before you add extra salt. One of the best ways to anticipate whether you're going to need any extra seasoning is to think about how much salt each ingredient is contributing to the overall dish. For example, if you're using a heap of olives, anchovies, capers, or bacon, the dish will probably be sufficiently salty, and you won't need to add extra salt.

Tip 4

The best question to ask before you serve is: Does this taste delicious as is, or would it taste even better with a little salt and pepper? As you'll have guessed, the only way to answer this is to taste your dish.



If you're unsure, take a little sample out and season that. Compare the seasoned sample's taste with the original. If the seasoned sample tastes better, add salt/pepper to the main dish. If not, you're ready to serve. It's all about trusting your judgement, and you will gain confidence over time as you practice.

My best tips for seasoning your food

Tip 5

Consider your accompaniments and the intended use of the dish. If you're making a filling for pies, remember that it's going to be eaten with the pastry, so a little bit more salt might not be a bad thing.

Tip 6

Allow for the serving temperature. The colder things are, the duller the flavours will be (or, technically, the less we perceive the flavours). It's best to taste and season at the correct serving temperature, if possible. Otherwise, try to allow for differences in temperature when you're seasoning.

Tip 7

Consider individual preferences and sensitivities. Our taste preferences are all different. People who rarely eat salty food will be more sensitive to salty flavours than those who eat in restaurants all the time. Likewise, younger people tend to be more taste sensitive than the elderly. The answer is to season as much as you think it needs, but serve some salt at the table for your guests to fine-tune if they want to.

Tip 8

Always on the side of 'less is more'. Removing excess salt is fairly problematic, so it's best to season gradually as you're cooking.





“Seasoning is an art that continues to improve with practice.”



What types of seasoning can I use?



Salts

Salt should be to bring out the flavour of the food – it shouldn't serve as a flavour replacement.

There's an amazing selection of salts on the market – the trick is to figure out which ones are best for you. To help you with this process, here are brief tasting notes on each type of salt, and where they fit into the cooking process.

Remember: There are no right or wrong answers here....it's all about your personal taste preferences and dietary requirements.





Salt Type #1: Foundation Salts

Foundation salts, sometimes called herb salts, are popular in French cuisine. We've created our own version – celery salt seasoning – which contains herbs, garlic and onion powder.

Our [celery salt seasoning](#) is similar to French salts, but also has celery seeds to make it healthier and more aromatic. Celery seeds are good for your joint mobility and add wonderful flavour, reducing the amount of salt you need in your dish.

Most herb salts are used early in the cooking process. Some chilli salts/sea salts are used to pre-season meats prior to grilling.

Salt Type #2: Finishing Salts

Finishing salts will do the job whichever type you sprinkle on your dish. These days, we're lucky to have a choice of salts from around the world that all impart subtly different flavours.

My two favorites are [Himalayan rock salt](#) and [macrobiotic sea salt](#). They're both unrefined, so they still contain the minerals and micronutrients that are characteristic of the regions in which they're harvested. I think they also impart the most flavour to dishes...but you should try a few and make up your own mind!

You can try sea salt mixed with [herbs de provence](#), which makes a tasty finishing salt.

[Smoked and chilli salts](#) are also nice as finishing salts, to mix things up a bit and round out the umami flavours of dishes. Umami is a strong, savoury, meaty taste, that can be created in vegetarian dishes with ingredients like, mushrooms, tomatoes, yeast, soy sauce and olives.

What types of seasoning can I use?

Peppers

Peppers are great for adding heat without fire.

Freshly [ground black pepper](#) is by far the easiest and tastiest way to liven dishes up. It is also common these days to [mix peppercorns](#) – pink, white, green, and black – in a grinder, which looks great and adds a subtly more aromatic flavour profile to your dish.

A lesser known pepper is the [Sichuan \(Szechuan\) pepper](#), which originates from China. Sichuan pepper has a clean, refreshingly cool, slightly numbing heat (a little bit like cloves) and it pairs wonderfully with rich meats like duck and pork. It's also popular in Asian cuisine.

We've created our own [Calamari Salt and Pepper mix](#), which is amazing with calamari and fish, and the kids also love it on chicken – we call it our homemade Kentucky Fried Chicken!



What types of seasoning can I use?

Chillies

Use chillies to add a bit more fire and depth to your food. Contrary to popular belief, not all chillies are hot, and their role in food is far more exciting than just providing heat. They can also add a richness and depth of flavour, and the capsaicin they contain stimulates our pleasure endorphins.

The increasing trend towards Mexican cuisine has brought an exciting array of these wonderful flavours to our shores. We have mild, sweet [ancho](#), [pasilla](#), [guajillo](#), and [mulato chillies](#), which impart a rich flavour reminiscent of sun-dried tomatoes with a chocolate-raisin finish. All these chillies, also help thicken sauces without making them hot.

[Chipotle chillies](#) add a smoky, rich undertone, as well as giving off a little heat kick. They can be combined with other chillies to create different dishes. In India, the [kashmiri red chillies](#) are a milder choice than the fiery cayenne, [habanero](#), [birds eye](#) or Scotch bonnet varieties.





What types of seasoning can I use?

Pure Herb and Spice Blends

Salt may be a great flavour enhancer, but foods that taste salty are often one-dimensional in flavour and lack the depth and complexity of pure herbs and spices.

Instead of letting salt dominate the dish, think about Indian, African and Middle Eastern cuisines. Those dishes blend and balance herbs and spices, with minimal use of salt.

The more flavours you build into your dish, the less salt you will need. Herbs and spices are a healthy way to create the flavour base of the dish, and seasoning is what puts the finishing touches on your masterpiece.

Some of the most effective dried herbs and spices for replacing salt are [black pepper](#), [garlic powder](#), [curry powders](#), [cumin](#), [dill](#), [basil](#), [ginger](#), [coriander](#), and [onion](#).



“The more flavours you build into your dish, the less salt you will need.”



How to fix seasoning disasters

Is your dish too salty?

We've all been a bit heavy-handed with the salt at times, or been in that sticky situation where the top of the salt shaker falls into the stew, along with a large helping of salt.

Don't panic! There is a solution...for those common kitchen mistakes!



Tip 1: Balance out the flavours.

When faced with an over-seasoned dish, your first move should be to try to balance out the flavours. Typically, you do this by playing with sugars and acids.

Try adding a squeeze of lemon juice or a spoonful of sugar to your dish, just like I did with the South Indian dahl recipe at the beginning of this guide. Once you've added a little, taste your dish again and proceed from there. Depending on the dish, switch up the acid and sugar sources – substitute vinegar for citrus, or honey for sugar.

Tip 2: Dilute the base.

If you're making a soup or a curry, try adding water, unsalted broth, coconut milk, or cream to dilute the excess seasoning. Increasing the volume of the dish will spread out the spice or salt, and make each individual serving more palatable.

Serving with your dish with unsalted accompaniments can help, too – try mashing potatoes with unsalted butter, or skipping the salt in your pasta water.

Tip 3: Add more bulk.

If it doesn't make sense to add more liquid to your dish – say, if it's a salad or a pilaf – try adding more bulk to put things back on an even keel. Rice, beans, or any other neutral grain will help to round out the flavour. Or make a second batch and mix the two – you can freeze or save the leftover portion for another day.

Does your dish have too much spice or heat (chillis or peppers)?

Tip 1: Neutralise the heat with dairy.

When it comes to spice, dairy is the best neutraliser. This is because chillies contain capsaicin, a substance that makes your taste buds feel that fiery burn; whereas milk contains casein, a compound that bonds with capsaicin and helps to dissipate it. Next time you want to dial back the spice level on a dish, try stirring in a few spoonfuls of yogurt or sour cream.

Tip 2: Use condiments.

The condiments you use can also help to neutralise the heat in a dish. Curries are often served with a sweet fruit chutney, bananas and coconut, yoghurt and cucumber, or a tomato, coriander and avocado relish. There is no reason why you can't use any of these condiments for any dish that is too hot, regardless of the style of cuisine.

Tip 3: Add healthy fats.

Another ingredient that can help combat spice is nut butter. Rich in fat, nut butter mellows out the fire in your dishes – just make sure your nut butter flavours will play well with the other ingredients.

Tip 4: Scale your recipe.

One of the best ways to ensure your dish is not too spicy is to make sure you scale your recipe. This means that if any one ingredient – particularly the main protein – is reduced in quantity, you also need to scale back the rest of the ingredients to keep the flavours in balance.

Tip 5: Use 2/3 of the spices when you're making your dish.

If you're making a dish for the first time and you're unsure about how spicy the recipe reference guide is, then just use two-thirds of the spice mix and leave out the fresh chillies. You can always add them at the end if you need to.



Where to next...

That wraps up our very best tips and tricks for seasoning your food....now we encourage you to go out and try these ideas in your kitchen. You'll become a confident, adventurous seasoning master in no time!

Thanks for joining the Spice People community, and we sincerely hope you enjoyed adding to your culinary skills with this free e-book.

But why stop here?

Great tasting food is just the first step to awakening your taste buds and enjoying your everyday meals. We have loads of inspiration on our website to help you create meals from different cultures, learn more about the tastes and flavours of individual spices, and discover how fantastic food can contribute to your health and wellbeing.

Here are some examples of our favorite recipes, blog posts, and videos, to help you continue your journey from here:



How to make the perfect curry

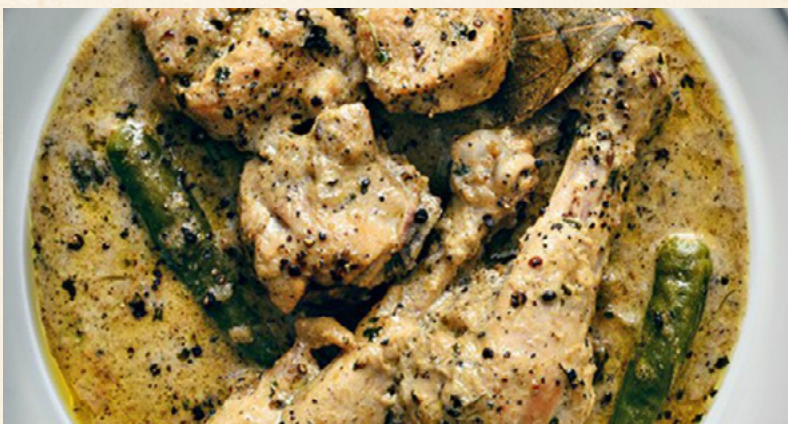
A simple method for making delicious curry at home, using only fresh ingredients and beautiful spices.



How to store your spices for maximum freshness



A few quick tips and tricks on how to buy high-quality spices and get the best life out of the herbs and spices you buy.



Black Pepper Chicken

We fell in love with this simple Indian dish, and its creamy peppery flavours. Get our recipe using this link!



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www.thespicepeople.com.au

enrich your life

This unique e-book has been produced exclusively for you by The Spice People, where we help you enjoy your journey of culinary discovery by continually delivering new mouth-watering experiences with every dish.