



The absolute beginners guide to seasoning your food



*Say goodbye to bland food
and hello to great taste!*

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A magical Roast beef seasoned with salt and pepper



Seasoning is the finishing touch to any meal.

If you want to learn how to improve your seasoning skills, this e-book will help you to gain the confidence you need to turn those recipes that seem dull and uninspired into culinary delights the whole family will enjoy.

1: Why season your food?

'Season to taste' is arguably one of the most used recipe phrases – but even though it's perhaps the most important aspect of cooking, do we really understand what it means? This got me thinking about exactly how much salt or pepper I add to a meal. After all, our taste buds are all a little different and the produce we use has a slightly different flavour depending on the time of year, the soil and the region it comes from.

As a simple example, I was recently staying at a girlfriend's house, cooking our South Indian dahl recipe for dinner. 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 raw ingredients to spice ratio, but it still wasn't as good as the one I make regularly at home. I added more salt – it was a little better, but it definitely still needed brightening.

Then I thought about the raw ingredients. The recipe had called for 3 tbsp of lemon juice to 500g of lentils, we had used some frozen ones, so a quick trip to the fruit shop was required, so we could use fresh lemon juice, we added 1 tbsp at a time, tasting as we went and gradually adding more until it seemed just right.

The result was that the dish came alive, tasting not salty or sour, but fresh, vibrant and rich in flavour. I realised that seasoning food is all about tasting and tweaking to fine-tune your dish and bring out the best in it.



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

2: What is seasoning?

Seasoning is about improving the flavour of your food mostly by adding salt and pepper, though it's in no way restricted to this. Herbs and spices are a healthy way to create the flavour base of the dish and seasoning is what puts the finishing touches to your masterpiece. Using good seasoning techniques means you need fewer expensive sauces or liquid stocks to make your food taste interesting.

Did you ever wonder why you loved Grandma's food so much or why the amazing dish you had at a friend's house just didn't taste as good when you made it? It might all be down to the seasoning. I know my son prefers my scrambled eggs to any he makes. Okay, maybe a little teenage laziness comes into the equation, but he still insists he just can't get it right. (Our family's secret ingredient, by the way, is our **celery seasoned salt** – it works like magic with the humble egg, so look out for it on our website.)



Seasoning food isn't hard, but you do need to know a few basics, so here I'm going to get you started

3: How do I go about seasoning a dish?

There are two main times to think about seasoning – at the beginning and at the end. For slow-cooked dishes it's a good idea to get some salt 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.

The cardinal question to ask before you serve is: Does this taste delicious as it 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 **have a little taste and season a small portion. If the seasoned sample tastes better, add salt/pepper to the main dish. If not, you're ready to serve.** It's all about backing yourself and trusting your judgement.

And don't worry about your waistline when tasting dishes. Why not? Because if we get the balance of the five tastes right, we get more satisfaction from our food, so we're less likely to crave those sweet treats or savoury snacks between meals.



Tip: if you are unsure, taste a sample first and season that before adding to the main dish.

4: What types of seasoning are there?

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 Indian, African and Middle Eastern. 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.

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 role of salt should be to bring out the flavour of the food; it shouldn't serve as a flavour replacement.

So how are you feeling so far? Ready to get started but a little overwhelmed? Don't worry – we've created over 30 specialty regional spice blends so you'll be able to confidently cook cuisines from India, Africa, Asia and around the globe.

Head over to our website www.thespicepeople.com.au to buy our spice bundle packs to start cooking with easy, sure fire recipes that you don't need to be a master chef to make. 😊

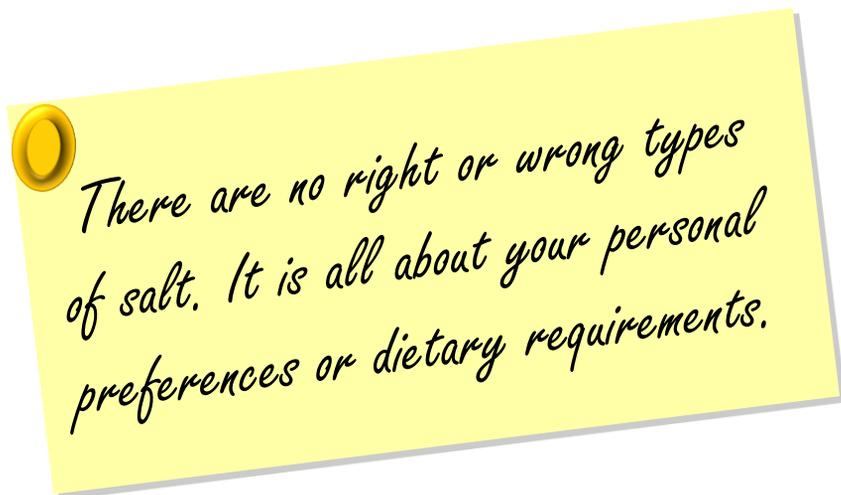
So now let's look at the different types of seasoning....

Salts - Use these to bring out the flavour, not to dominate.

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

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, similar to the French salts, but also has celery seeds to make it healthier and more aromatic. Celery seeds are good for your joint mobility and add great flavour, reducing the amount of salt you need. Most herb salts are used early in the cooking process. Some chilli salts/sea salts are also used to pre-season meats prior to grilling.

Finishing salts – any will do the job, For me, the two most flavoursome are **Himalayan rock salt** and **macrobiotic sea salt**, which are unrefined and so still contain the minerals and micro-nutrients that are characteristic of the regions in which they're harvested. **Sea salt** is often mixed with **herbs de provence** to make a tasty finishing salt while **Smoked** and **chilli salts** are also nice as finishing salts, for variety.



There are no right or wrong types of salt. It is all about your personal preferences or dietary requirements.

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 as well as 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, and has a clean, refreshingly cool, slightly numbing heat, a little like cloves. It pairs wonderfully with rich meats like duck and pork and is popular in Asian cuisine. We've created our own [Chinese 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. See our picture below here is the recipe link

Salt and pepper calamari



There is nothing like freshly ground pepper to add warmth and energy to food.

Chillies -Use chillies to add 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 seen an exciting array of these wonderful flavours reach our shores. We have mild, sweet **ancho**, **pasilla**, **gjuaillo**, and **mulato chillies**, which impart a rich flavour reminiscent of sun-dried tomatoes with a chocolate-raisin finish. They also help to thicken sauces without making them hot.

Chipotle chillies add a smoky, rich undertone as well as giving off a little heat kick and 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**, or **Scotch bonnet** varieties.

Selection of different types of dried chillies



*Dried chillies rehydrate easily
and have less fumes than fresh
chillies.*

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Herb and Spice Blends -‘A herb is the friend of the physician and the praise of the cook.’

Our entire website – www.thespicepeople.com.au – is devoted to helping you use more herbs and spices in your everyday cooking, so we won't go into depth here.

We've created over 30 wonderful herb and spice blends from around the globe to help you on the next step of your culinary journey. You can be confident that these blends will help you create delicious-tasting dishes you simply couldn't achieve using pre-packaged sauces.



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5: What happens if I overdo it?

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...

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.

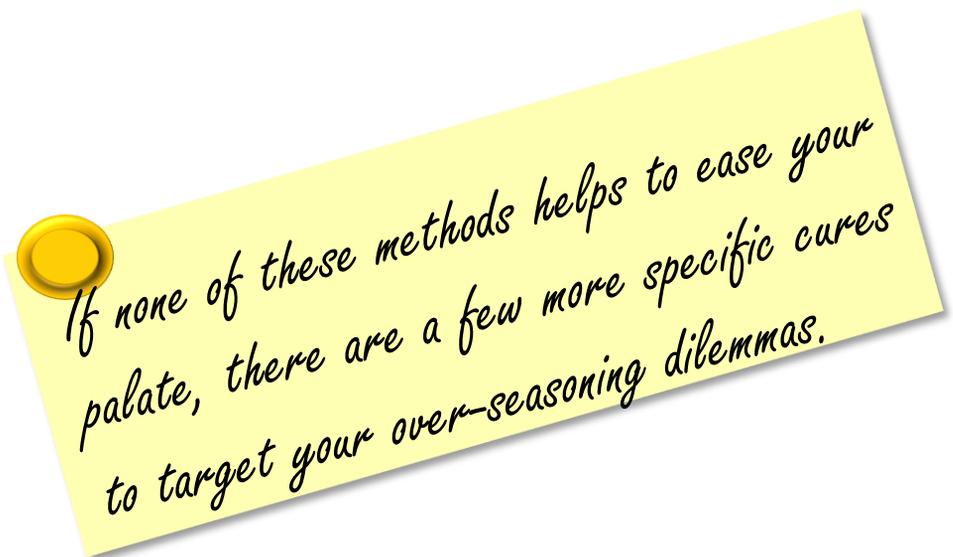


What do I do if my dish is too salty?

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. Just like the example at the beginning with the South Indian dahl recipe, try adding a squeeze of lemon juice or a spoonful of sugar to your dish, then taste it again and proceed from there. Depending on the dish, switch up the acid and sugar sources – sub in vinegar for citrus, or honey for sugar.

Tip 2: Dilute the base. If you're making a soup or a curry, **add water, unsalted stock, 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 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.



If none of these methods helps to ease your palate, there are a few more specific cures to target your over-seasoning dilemmas.

What if my dish has too much 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. So, 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 its 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. 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.

6: Other great seasoning tips

Reduce salt for health and well-being. Avoid processed foods as they have hidden sugars and salts. The simplest way to do this is to get back to basics and season your own food.

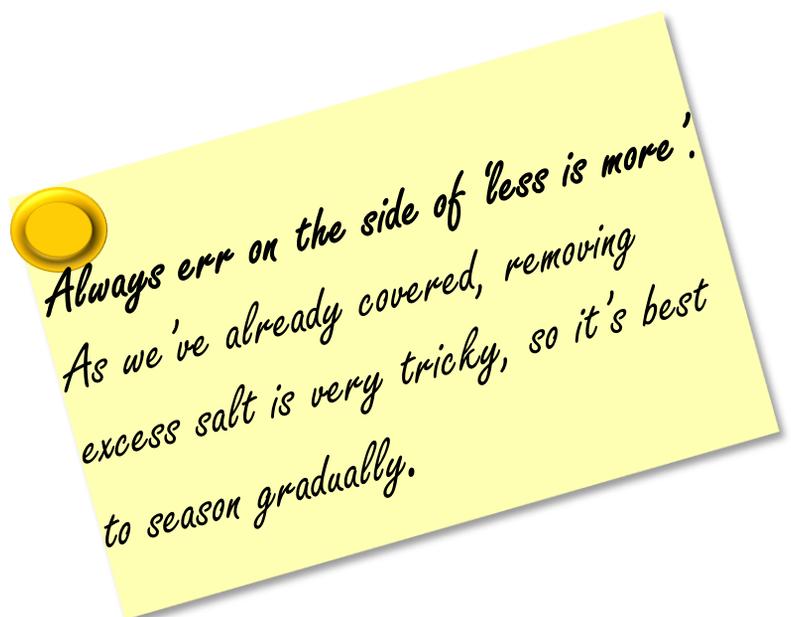
Think about the saltiness of your ingredients. If there's a heap of olives, anchovies, capers, or bacon, for example, the dish will probably be sufficiently salty already.

Beware of taste saturation. Remember that when your taste buds have been exposed to something a few times, they become less sensitive to those flavours. Ideally take 5 minutes between tasting.

Consider your accompaniments and the end use. 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.

Allow for the serving temperature. The colder things are, the duller the flavours (or, really, the less we perceive them).

Consider individual preferences and sensitivities. 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 wish.



*Always err on the side of 'less is more'.
As we've already covered, removing
excess salt is very tricky, so it's best
to season gradually.*

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www.thespicepeople.com.au

Now you've mastered this, you're ready to explore the recipes on our website then get creative in the kitchen. And don't forget our handy pure herb and spice blends will save you time and take all the hard work out for you. Your biggest decision is which country you wish to dine in tonight! 😊



PS. If you have any questions drop me an email or facebook message.

