

herbs for baby

Some parents are reluctant to introduce herbs and spices to babies since typical jarred baby food is very bland. However, babies in many cultures are introduced to seasonings and flavorful foods early on. Let your own diet, your culture, and your baby be your guide. Treat herbs and spices like any other ingredient, introducing them one at a time, starting with milder ones when baby begins solid food and moving on into toddlerhood with the more pungent ones. If allergies run in the family, exercise caution when you introduce caraway, cinnamon, coriander, fennel, paprika, and saffron, which can cause reactions.

- Basil** Minty, clovelike aroma. Pairs well with tomatoes, pasta, white beans, and asparagus.
- Chives** Mild onion flavor. Best when sprinkled on potato, egg, and fish dishes.
- Cilantro** Also known as fresh coriander. Adds an aromatic flavor to chicken, avocados, black beans, rice, corn, cucumbers, and carrots.
- Dill** A delicate, fresh flavor. Pairs well with baked fish, peas, and artichokes.
- Mint** Sharply aromatic flavor matches well with peas, green beans, eggplants, and lamb.
- Oregano** A robust and pungent flavor. Pairs well with turkey, pastas, summer squashes, and tomatoes.
- Parsley** Lends a mild, fresh taste to many dishes. The flat-leaf, or Italian, variety has more flavor and is easier to chop and chew than the curly type. Add to stock, carrots, and potatoes.
- Rosemary** Bold piney and minty flavor. Best with beef, lamb, and grilled vegetables.
- Sage** Yields a bitter, slightly musty and minty flavor. Complements pork, turkey, white beans, and summer squashes.
- Tarragon** A subtle, aromatic licorice flavor. Pairs well with chicken, white fish, lamb, rice, and asparagus.
- Thyme** Both mint and lemon tones. Add to roasted meats and poultry, fish, shellfish, beets, and potatoes.

spice it up

Spices and dried herbs are convenient to keep in the pantry. Warming whole or ground spices in a dry frying pan for a few seconds will bring out their flavors. Since they have lost their moisture, dried herbs are more concentrated in flavor than fresh ones. To substitute fresh herbs for dried, triple the amount. Before adding a fresh or dried herb to a dish, bruise or crush it with your fingers to release its flavor.

Allspice Earthy, warm flavor. Pairs well with sweet potatoes, apples, pumpkins, and meat stews.

Cardamom Spicy, sweet flavor with peppery tones. Pairs well with winter squash and curry dishes.

Cinnamon Strong, spicy, sweet flavor. Lends depth to ricotta, butternut squashes, and oatmeal.

Cumin Pungent spicy flavor. Add to potatoes, chicken, couscous, and curries.

Curry Fragrant, mild to hot blend of spices. Works well with chicken, carrots, parsnips, and rice. Start with a mild blend for baby.

Fennel Mild licorice flavor. Goes well with pork, cabbage, and poached fish.

Garlic Pungent, hot flavor that mellows when cooked. Used as a seasoning when dried and ground, or as a seasoning, condiment, and ingredient in fresh form. Adds savory flavor to all meats and vegetables.

Ginger Sweet-hot flavor. Pairs well with meats, pumpkin, carrots, and sweet potatoes.

Nutmeg Slightly sweet and spicy flavor and aroma. Adds spice to ricotta cheese, spinach, pears, and rice pudding.

Paprika Slightly sweet and bitter. Pairs well with baked fish, eggs, corn, and roasted potatoes.

Pepper Both pungent black and milder white pepper go well with savory dishes. Add to meat, poultry, eggs, and vegetables.

Turmeric Earthy and peppery flavor. Adds flavor and a bright yellow-orange color to potatoes, lentils, meat, and curry dishes.

Vanilla Seeds and liquid extract are used to flavor baked goods, waffles, and pancakes.