

One of the top reasons people abandon their healthy eating plan after a few weeks is that they get tired of eating the same bland meals day after day. More chicken and broccoli anyone?

The good news is that it doesn't have to be this way. The solution is simple - use the correct spice for your food.

With most local supermarkets carrying a large variety of high-quality, exotic herbs and spices from all over the world, using them in your cooking is an easy, guilt-free, low-calorie way to boost your meal's flavour while

adding a heap of health benefits.

The best part about using spices to make healthy meals tastier is that you'll improve your chances of staying on your diet long enough to actually see real results. You might even enjoy your spiced-up cuisine so much that it'll become part of your permanent healthy-eating lifestyle.

The array of spices on grocery-store shelves can be dizzying and it can take quite a bit of trial and error to figure out what tastes good with different foods. But fear not, here is my list of the six must-have spices every man should have in his kitchen.

CINNAMON

This spice tops my list because it is not only extremely versatile but also full of amazing health benefits. Adding cinnamon to foods like oats or sweet potato will give the dish a warm, spicy taste, and will also help to regulate your blood sugar levels, relieve arthritis and provide your body with iron, fibre and calcium.

BLACK PEPPER

Originating from southern India, black pepper is probably the most common spice in the world today, and rightfully so. To get the most from this spice use a pepper mill to grind fresh peppercorns directly onto almost any food. Black pepper helps regulate blood pressure, eases colds and flu and even fights some cancers.

SPICE IT UP!

6 SPICES THAT'LL TURN BORING DIET MEALS INTO MOUTHWATERING DISHES YOU'LL WANT TO EAT!

SOME OTHER SPICES YOU MAY WANT TO TRY: CUMIN, NUTMEG, MUSTARD SEEDS, CLOVES, TURMERIC, PAPRIKA AND GARLIC.

CORIANDER

Some extra fat and lots of coriander. Yip, that's how we like our favourite rugby-time snack food, biltong. But coriander is a great spice to use on almost any meat, and it goes surprisingly well with chicken. Coriander is also a great antioxidant that's rich in dietary fibre and vitamin C, and it can even help lower your cholesterol.

GINGER

Ginger packs as much of a punch in the flavour department as it does in terms of its health benefits. It's delicious with fish or chicken and you can simply cut off a piece of fresh ginger and grate it over a cooked dish just before serving. This spice soothes nausea, headaches and even motion sickness. It also helps relieve colds and flu and is a great digestive agent.

CAYENNE PEPPER

If you like things hot then cayenne pepper is a must. The best thing about this spice is the capsaicin it contains - the compound that gives the pepper its heat. Capsaicin boosts your metabolism to help you burn off a few extra calories. Cayenne pepper works really well with bland foods such as fish and chicken, but it's also an excellent addition to a nice beef stir-fry. Cayenne pepper is also a powerful anti-inflammatory and helps your digestive system.

BONUS FLAVOUR TIP

One of the healthiest cooking techniques that also adds a lot of flavour — to the point that your food can be damn near impossible to resist — is the good old braai. Even if you braai plain meat without any spices, it will taste great and is much healthier than any kind of meat cooked in a pan full of oil. So, if you have a braai this weekend, add a few extra pieces of lean beef and chicken, sprinkle on some of the spices mentioned above and you'll have tasty, ready-to-eat food for the next three days. ■

ROSEMARY

Rosemary is a versatile, strong, full-flavoured herb that you will find growing all over South Africa. Although it is normally served with lamb and red meat, it goes just as well with chicken and even fish. It is a powerful anti-inflammatory, it will increase your metabolism and can even help fight off a cold or flu.