

# THE MAGIC OF CULINARY HERBS

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**Herbs are one of my favourite additions to any meal. I love the flavour and colour they bring. I also love that we can grow herbs in pots, on our windowsills, or in our gardens with relative ease. They are full of nourishment, taste good and smell great!**

Just by adding fresh herbs to a meal we increase the nutritional value and antioxidant capacity, without adding in calories or increasing the portion size. As I have mentioned in previous blogs, antioxidants are incredibly important for health. Found in most if not all fresh fruits, herbs, spices and vegetables, antioxidants are powerhouses of molecules that safely interact with and 'mop up' harmful free radicals which can cause damage to our cells.

For the elderly, often the taste buds diminish so more flavourful additions such as herbs and spices enable food to have some 'zing' and interest again.

I could share information about the medicinal properties of culinary herbs all day long and I encourage our kitchens to use them where ever possible.

Here is a taster of three easy growers that are also easy to find in the shops. See just how beneficial

our little flavourful friends can be! All you need to do is chop them up finely and throw them into your cooking, add them into salads or simply use them as a topper or seasoning to any meal or snack.

## Chives

- Laboratory studies show that chives contain the antioxidant allicin which reduces cholesterol production by inhibiting an enzyme in the liver cells. Allicin also decreases blood vessel stiffness and can help reduce total blood pressure.
- Chives are also found to have antibacterial, antiviral, and anti-fungal activities.
- Comprising more vitamin-A than any other allium family member vegetables, 100 g of fresh leaves contain 145% of daily recommended levels.
- Anti-oxidant compounds within chives offer protection from lung and oral cavity cancers.
- Packed with B-complex vitamins as well as some essential minerals such as copper, iron, manganese, zinc, and calcium.

## Oregano

- Oregano contains an impressive list of plant-derived chemical compounds that are known to have disease preventing and health promoting properties and are a rich source of dietary fibre, which helps to control blood cholesterol levels.
- The herb is rich in polyphenolic flavonoid antioxidants (including vitamin A) and has been rated as one of the plant sources with highest antioxidant activities. These compounds help act as protective scavengers against oxygen-derived free radicals that play a role in ageing and various disease processes.
- The active principles in the herb may improve gut motility.
- This marvellous herb is an excellent source of minerals like potassium, calcium, manganese, iron, and magnesium. Potassium is an important component of cell and body fluids that helps control heart rate and blood pressure caused by high sodium. Iron helps prevent anaemia. Magnesium and calcium are essential minerals for bone metabolism.

## Rosemary

- Rosemary herb carries great amounts of vitamin A, around 97% of RDA. A few leaves a day in the diet would contribute enough of this vitamin. Vitamin A is known to have antioxidant properties and is essential for vision. It is also required for maintaining healthy mucosa and skin. Consumption of natural foods rich in vitamin A is known to help the body protect from lung and oral cavity cancers.
- Fresh rosemary leaves are a good source of antioxidant vitamin C, containing about 37% of RDA. It is essential for collagen synthesis in the human body. Collagen is the main structural protein in the body required for maintaining the integrity of blood vessels, skin, organs, and bones. Regular consumption of foods rich in vitamin C helps the body develop resistance against infectious agents (boosts immunity) and help scavenge harmful, pro-inflammatory free radicals from the body.
- Rosemary herb parts, whether fresh or dried, are a rich source of minerals like potassium,

calcium, iron, manganese, copper, and magnesium. Potassium is an important component of cell and body fluids, which helps control heart rate and blood pressure.

***So next time you chop up those chives or reach for the rosemary - remember how amazing they are!***

Herb facts taken from: [www.nutrition-and-you.com](http://www.nutrition-and-you.com)