

Living well: Optimizing your nutrition & detoxifying your kitchen  
Session II: Power Spicing

**Rachel Beller, MS, RDN (00:01):**

The next section is going to be about discovering the power of spicing. Spices are great in that they have potent anti-inflammatory and antioxidant properties. They have potential cancer-fighting properties, support weight management and gut health, and they're sustainable for a long cumulative effect. I personally was turned on to this subject, so much so that I created my own spice line, but it was really all inspired by this article, by the American Institute for Cancer Research titled "The Spices of Cancer Protection." I thought to myself with all the oncology patients that I'm working with and with everything that's being promoted out there on the supplement front this is something that anybody can do. This is something that's probably already in everyone's pantries. Let's bring attention to this because this is fascinating and there's so much research. In fact, in the last five years alone, there have been more than 1,900 studies looking at turmeric, 1,600 on cayenne, garlic 1400, cloves, cinnamon, and it goes on and on and on.

**Rachel Beller, MS, RDN (01:22):**

And I'm just fascinated by that. There are so many different studies out there. I'm just going to share a couple examples with you guys. Here, we're looking at reducing inflammation in the body, and there were two different groups, and they looked in a nutshell with just half a teaspoon of a spice combination. After seven days there was a measurable change in antioxidant anti-inflammatory activity, and that's just after seven days of these subjects in the intervention group ingesting the spice blend. Imagine if you did this for a year. Consistency is key, and there's a lot of promise here, in this area of research. Spices have also been shown to support our gut health. This is a study out of UCLA. What was fascinating here is that there was a dual effect. Spices have been shown to promote healthy gut bacteria, but also 'they inhibited the bad bacteria, which was great.

**Rachel Beller, MS, RDN (02:30):**

So, lots going on there. This also, I got really excited about this. This is a study that looked at 3,100 different foods, comparing their antioxidant content. And spices, as you can see here, look at clove is like number one, but clove, allspice, cinnamon, oregano, thyme — they're way up there. Compared to a variety of foods like berries and kale, of course, it's easier to eat kale and berries compared to the volume of spice, but this just shows you the point that a little bit, just a pinch, can go a long way. So, small amounts and consistency for that cumulative effect — really exciting stuff. This is an example. I like to share in how we can transform the nutritional value of our meals in keeping it simple as well. So here we have overnight oats. You're looking at half a cup of rolled oats with a cup of plant-based milk.

**Rachel Beller, MS, RDN (03:33):**

Again, gathered this data from that study that looked at 3,100 foods. I could only pick on those foods and then using, because I have my own formulas, I can do the math on, let's say a heaping teaspoon of my Golden Breakfast blend, which is basically Ceylon cinnamon, pura cacao, and turmeric. You can mix your own combination of this as well. But look, what happens when you take this oatmeal, it has an antioxidant value of 136-ish. You're going to add a teaspoon of a spice blend, and you're going to climb all the way up to 1,292. That is a significant difference. It is very simple and you probably have these ingredients in your pantry right now.

What's also fascinating with spices is the different power combinations. Their combined effects seems to be greater than ingesting them individually.

**Rachel Beller, MS, RDN (04:31):**

There are different combinations. Some are absorption enhancers, where you combine certain spices together to enhance the absorption of their active compounds; some have a synergistic effect; and some we call a double dose, where they're both, let's say, good for cardiac health — They're both good for different things. So, combining more of them. So, really fascinating and fun to create these combinations. This is showing my Vegitude Power spice blend. I thought about this for breast cancer risk reduction, as well. It has garlic and onion; turmeric; black pepper to enhance absorption of the active compound in turmeric; and parsley, which is rich in apigenin, which also has been shown to have a good positive effect when it comes to breast cancer risk reduction.

**Rachel Beller, MS, RDN (05:33):**

So, all these five spices help reduce inflammation, and it's delicious and so easy to use. More transformations here. You could take a cup of sprouted organic tofu, and really crank up the antioxidant value by 52% by adding a spice blend. This one here is paprika, cumin, turmeric, pepper, and cayenne. Again, you can blend these yourselves and keep them in your pantry and just utilize it as such. And here's another one here you're taking garbanzo beans and increasing the antioxidant value 61% just by adding spices to it. This is one of my favorite easy recipes. And I really want to show this to you to empower you, and it's also about keeping things simple. So, this is a recipe I love recommending. I call it a yellow immunity quinoa.

**Rachel Beller, MS, RDN (06:36):**

So, what you would do is take two cups of, let's say, low-sodium vegetable broth, one teaspoon of that Vegitude Power spice blend. Again, you can also combine your own. One cup of quinoa, and you're going to simmer it for 15 minutes. That is it. Now within, you've got a plant-based protein from the quinoa — eight grams of protein per cup, which is great. And five grams of fiber — great combination there. Then you've got the parsley and turmeric, and there's a synergistic effect there. Quercetin in parsley enhances the absorption of curcumin, the active compound in turmeric; black pepper and turmeric, as I mentioned, work in sync together; and also onion and garlic both offer breast cancer, protective benefits. This is so simple, yet it delivers so much.

**Rachel Beller, MS, RDN (07:32):**

So, here are some tips to add daily power into very basic foods, again that you probably have in your pantry. Here's how you can enhance and the antioxidant anti-inflammatory properties of, let's say, marinara sauce. You can add dried basil, rosemary, and thyme, really taking it to the next level. If you have hummus that you're buying, you can stir in paprika, or one of the spice blends, or turmeric; any spice actually will elevate the nutritional value of your hummus, even store bought. Really good stuff; super simple. Nut butters. Think about it. You can stir in Ceylon cinnamon. You can stir in pura cacao. Really take it to that next level with something simple. Coffee: ginger and cinnamon have a synergistic antioxidant effect, especially when combined with coffee, which is interesting. Popcorn: you can add all kinds of toppings there. Lentils, beans: adding a spice blend in there really elevates the nutritional value. Some tips, do's, and don'ts when it comes to buying your spices.

**Rachel Beller, MS, RDN (08:46):**

I do recommend buying organic spices whenever you can. It is a small difference; think about how long, how many months we keep our spice jars—six months or longer. 'After a year after you've opened it, you probably want to get rid of it, but it's a small difference in the price for something that you're keeping for a long time. And the reason is they sterilize it with steam when it's organic, but for the conventional, they fumigate it using gamma ray radiation, which does decrease the nutritional value. With spicing, I want to stress consistency is key. And even little pinches. My patients have a.m. spices that they use, p.m. spices for the more savory dishes, maybe in the evening. And again, a consistent pattern over time, just like in the research setting, for a cumulative effect. Again, replace every six to 12 months after you've opened it', and store it in dark, in the back of the pantry or out of the sun.

**Rachel Beller, MS, RDN (09:53):**

And of course, please don't buy spices out of bulk bins. They don't clear them out. They just kind of keep adding to the top there and mixing it up. So you don't know what's in there. And try to avoid buying spices with additives. Spice has salt, sugar, fillers, additives, anti-caking agents. It's not necessary. Just go for the pure spice. You can add your own salt. You can add anything that you want on your own, but for the spice, just let it be as it is, and keep it pure and simple.

**Janine Guglielmino, LBBC (10:32):**

Thanks so much, Rachel. That was great. I'm really glad you talked about how long to keep spices, because just last week I threw away some spices I had since before I was married, which was more than 10 years ago. I'm sure there are others on the line who have that same experience. We have a lot of great questions, so I'm going to go ahead and pass it to Keneene to get started.

**Keneene Lewis, LBBC (10:52):**

I think we all have that issue, Janine. So I'll be looking in my spice cabinet after this. I know myself and many others who are on tamoxifen for hormonal therapy were told to avoid turmeric. Is that something that has changed, or is there another spice we can use in place?

**Rachel Beller, MS, RDN (11:11):**

That's a common question. And I have spoken to so many pharmacists about this. 'What you're referring to there is supplements — curcumin, which is the active compound in turmeric, that's been isolated and concentrated. It's a concentrate like that. And taking supplements, not culinary use. In your food again, we're looking at these smaller amounts. It's different. One pharmacist mentioned to me, wrote to me also, you'd have to 'ingest every day probably a good heaping, huge tablespoon, if not two, of turmeric alone. And I've yet to meet somebody who does that. That's just too much of a good thing; it's just too much. So, when it comes to culinary use, that's very different from supplement use.

**Keneene Lewis, LBBC (12:09):**

Thank you. How can we make such blends without knowing quantities, such as the type of cacao ...

**Rachel Beller, MS, RDN (12:18):**

Say it one more time.

**Keneene Lewis, LBBC (12:19):**

Quantity. How can we make such blends without knowing the quantities?

**Rachel Beller, MS, RDN (12:26):**

'I made my own formulations just kind of by taste, but you can do the same thing and just make your own combinations, if you prefer. You can just kind of put a little bit of this, a little bit of that and, and' it's all good. I did it just, you know, after a lot of taste testing and putting it together and seeing what works in beverages, as much as we could and not adding anything to it. So hitting that flavor profile like that. So, those are some of our formulations for that, but a lot of my patients sometimes will kind of do their own thing. We to get it to get a blend to blend properly for our flavor, we probably need to run almost 200 pounds through a machine to do wow, which is, which is so frustrating for me. This was just a, a little side. It was hobby, and it just became something that my patients really wanted us to make, but many people make their own. Yeah. You can sort of play with it a little bit. Y

**Keneene Lewis, LBBC (13:42):**

OK.

**Rachel Beller, MS, RDN (13:43):**

It's a little messy, but it's fine.

**Keneene Lewis, LBBC (13:44):**

Are we good to store spices in the fridge or freezer?

**Rachel Beller, MS, RDN (13:51):**

You could, definitely. So, the moisture, you know, is not in there, but it's good. A question I get a lot is dried versus fresh, like parsley and oregano and things like that. Believe it or not, the dried has a greater antioxidant value than fresh. Although fresh is amazing.

**Keneene Lewis, LBBC (14:11):**

OK.

**Rachel Beller, MS, RDN (14:12):**

People are surprised to hear that.

**Keneene Lewis, LBBC (14:14):**

If you're cooking and adding garlic and onions, is that the same as powder or concentrated?

**Rachel Beller, MS, RDN (14:22):**

I'm not sure what the concentrate would be, but' it's similar in its function, garlic, and onion. The dried spice has a greater amount of antioxidant value and anti-inflammatory properties, but again, both are amazing. I would not downplay fresh garlic by any means; they just have different functions. If I'm making, let's say, that yellow immunity quinoa, I have one version in our class" that has shredded carrot and onion and the spices; of course, that's if you have a little more time, like 10 minutes to do it. But 'it's like, I'm just going to do this quick. And then I just use the spice with quinoa and the broth. And I'm so happy to see that yellow, vibrant color and to feel good about that — that it's got good value.

**Keneene Lewis, LBBC (15:21):**

Awesome. Do essential oils like rosemary, turmeric, and cinnamon have the same antioxidant properties and benefits?

**Rachel Beller, MS, RDN (15:29):**

I haven't done a comparison between the two, but they're definitely valuable.

**Keneene Lewis, LBBC (15:33):**

OK. Is it best to eat raw spices and food or cook them?

**Rachel Beller, MS, RDN (15:42):**

Probably they mean, for example, ginger root, turmeric root. The dry spices are not raw, they're dried. There's ginger and turmeric. And those are great. Just keeping it raw like that.

**Keneene Lewis, LBBC (16:00):**

Do you have any fiber, spices, etc., that you would recommend to reduce joint pain caused by hormone suppression?

**Rachel Beller, MS, RDN (16:10):**

We talked about reducing overall body inflammation with fiber, and then the spices have great anti-inflammatory properties, which would support that. But all in all, these are like two pieces of a bigger puzzle. When it comes to nutrition, I can't stress that enough. Right now, I see everyone's talking about fiber. They used to talk about protein, but now it's like, oh, everyone's fiber division. But really again, fiber is one piece of my method. And when it comes to reducing body inflammation, you really want to think about fiber, and what types of sugars get introduced into the body and selecting premium proteins. And there's so much more to it. Getting an oil change. What kind of oils do we choose, and what kind of products do we buy, and what type of oils are in those? And there's a lot more to it. It sounds complicated. Dietitians, we make it super simple. We just tell you do this, do this, do this, but that's the goal.

**Keneene Lewis, LBBC (17:23):**

OK. And then I'll ask one more: eating. If you're not able to eat black pepper, can you eat white pepper? Would that work in place well with turmeric?

**Rachel Beller, MS, RDN (17:35):**

Yes, you could. Black pepper has been studied a little bit more, but there are so many things that can enhance the absorption of curcumin in the body. Fats enhance cacao. We're going to talk about power beverages in a minute. Cacao enhances the absorption of curcumin. You saw the parsley that I put in the Vegitude Power spice blend. That that also enhances curcumin absorption. So, there are a lot of different foods and different spices that enhance the absorption. It's not all about the pepper. There are so many other ways to go about it.