

## HIGHLIGHTS

- Herbs come from the leafy green part of plants and spices come from every other part of plants
- Spices can come from the root, stem, bulb, bark or seeds of plants
- Thyme, rosemary, parsley and oregano are herbs
- Cinnamon, ginger, pepper and turmeric are spices
- There are some health benefits of using spices
- There are some health risks of using spices
- Chili spices cause dyspepsia and gastro esophageal reflux
- Paprika, pepper, and cinnamon increase gastric acid secretion
- Black and red pepper have induced epigastric pain
- Cinnamon oil has been associated with oral cancers
- Turmeric may be harmful for those who are pregnant and lactating

# SPICES

## THE GOOD & THE BAD

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Throughout the ages, we have been experimenting with different foods and flavors. In a never ending attempt to amaze our dinner guests or on a more personal level win that special lady's heart with our professional cookery and culinary delights, we have been on a mission to stimulate our appetites to greater and grander heights. But...has this quest for the next taste bud sensation been not to our own health benefit but to our own body's detriment? Gentlemen, keep on reading to find out why those spices that are so great tasting are sending your ladies' hearts a racing!

### WHAT ARE SPICES?

Many people are confused about what constitutes a spice versus what constitutes an herb. Sometimes the terms are used interchangeably which adds to the confusion. According to the European Spice Association, "culinary herbs and spices are edible parts of plants that are traditionally added to foodstuffs for either their natural flavouring, aromatic and/or visual properties." Spices and herbs are obtained from different areas of the plant. Herbs come from the leafy green part of the plant; whereas, spices come from everywhere else on the plant including the root, stem, bulb, bark or seeds. Some well-known herbs are thyme, rosemary, parsley and oregano. Some examples of spices are cinnamon, ginger, pepper and turmeric.

### HEALTH BENEFITS OF SPICES

Spices have been reported to exhibit a variety of health benefits. Some of these health benefits include lowering blood sugar levels, stopping nausea, relieving heartburn, lowering the risk of skin and colon cancers, boosting metabolism, reducing asthma and having antibacterial, antiviral, antifungal, and antiseptic properties. Although spices come with health benefits, there are also health risks associated with their consumption.

### HEALTH RISKS

Chili causes dyspepsia. It also is associated with gastro esophageal reflux. Other spices such as paprika, pepper and cinnamon increase gastric acid secretion in men and promote histamine induced ulcer formation in dogs. Black and red pepper have induced epigastric pain by removing the stomach's hydrophobic lining and activating intramucosal pain receptors. Cinnamon oil has been cited as a risk factor for oral cancers; however, whether this is because of the cinnamon itself causing oral cancers or chemical preservatives and processing products found in the cinnamon oil causing an adverse effect remains to be determined. Turmeric is potentially dangerous for those who are pregnant and lactating because it has documented emmenagogue and abortifacient effects. Moreover, a reduction in sperm motility was observed in rats receiving turmeric 500mg/kg/day as an aqueous or alcoholic extract.

- Many spices are stimulants
- Stimulants have an effect on our autonomic nervous system
- The Bible alludes to a relationship between the autonomic nervous system and sexual behavior
- The unnatural stimulation of our autonomic nervous system may increase sexual pleasure seeking
- We maintain a connection with God using our minds
- God wants to transform our minds
- God does not want us to have a worldly mindset
- Many years ago, prominent individuals have warned against the use of spices

## SPICES AND THE MIND

Many spices are stimulants. These chemicals have an effect on the mind specifically on our autonomic nervous system controlled by the spinal cord, brain stem and hypothalamus. When our body becomes over stimulated, there is a cascade of physiological effects including increased body temperature, heart rate and metabolic rate. As a result of using stimulants, our behavior changes too. In figurative language the Bible makes a connection between temperature and sexual behavior. The book of Romans chapter one verses twenty-seven and twenty-eight say “and likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompence of their error which was meet. And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient;” Here, the Bible speaks about men engaging in homosexual relations “burning” in their lust towards each other. Also note that these people’s minds changed and they began to do that which was not right for them to do. The Bible gives us a clue as to the cause of promiscuity and gross sexuality. The unnatural stimulation of our autonomic nervous system may increase sexual pleasure seeking, and some spices may do this.

Stimulants are not good for us because they have an effect upon the mind. With the mind we serve God, and whatever impacts our minds will ultimately change our relationship with God. Jesus directed us with these words in Matthew 22:37 “thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.” By surrendering self to God and by the power of the Holy Spirit working in our lives, our minds will not be conformed to worldly thinking, but transformed into the likeness of Christ’s mind and thinking. The Bible counsels us in Romans 12:2 “and be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.” This transformation of mind from carnally minded to heavenly minded is so that we may all in unison with one mind and one mouth glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ {Romans 15:6 reference}.

## WELL RESPECTED HEALTH REFORMERS

Quite a few prominent individuals have warned against the use of harmful spices. Consider some of these quotations from these past health reformers:

“...**Spices at first irritate the tender coating of the stomach**, but finally destroy the natural sensitiveness of this delicate membrane. The **blood becomes fevered**, the **animal propensities are aroused**, while the **moral and intellectual powers are weakened**, and become servants to the baser passions. The mother should study to set a simple yet nutritious diet before her family.”

{Christian Temperance & Bible Hygiene 46.3} ~Ellen G. White

- Spices may weaken our bodies and contaminate our blood
- Spices may promote inflammation
- Spices may promote the development of various physical disorders
- Spices may induce premature puberty
- We should carefully avoid the use of every substance which blunts the use of taste
- Ellen White indicates that we can use roots and herbs
- Simple herbs and roots every family can use to keep themselves from getting sick
- We must understand how to use roots and herbs safely

“**Condiments and spices** used in the preparation of food for the table aid in digestion in the same way that tea, coffee, and liquor are supposed to help the laboring man perform his tasks. After the immediate effects are gone, they drop as correspondingly below par as they were elevated above par by these stimulating substances. **The system is weakened. The blood is contaminated, and inflammation is the sure result.**”

{Counsels on Diet & Foods 339.4} ~ Ellen G. White

“The use of **spices**, pepper, mustard, vinegar, cloves, etc., is wholly uncalled for by a healthy taste, and may operate in the strongest possible manner to **create an artificial craving which demands an excess of food, and produces, at an early age, conditions which ultimately result in dyspepsia and various physical disorders of a serious character.**”

{Man, the Masterpiece 82} ~John Harvey Kellogg, M.D

“**Stimulating food**, such as pepper, vinegar, mustard, **spices**, and condiments generally, together with tea and coffee, and an excess of animal food, have a clearly appreciable influence in **inducing the premature occurrence of puberty**”

{Home Hand Book of Hygiene & Medicine 331} ~ John Harvey Kellogg, M.D.

“Those persons who cannot realize any agreeable savor in any article of nutriment until the papillae of the tongue are stung into action by salt, pepper, mustard, vinegar, or other pungents, have greatly blunted the sense of taste, and know but little of the real pleasures of eating. Such eat more to silence the goadings of a morbid appetite than to enjoy life. **We should carefully avoid the use of every substance which blunts the use of taste: such as intoxicating liquors, tobacco, spices, salt, &c.**”

{Hand Book of Health 133} ~John N. Loughborough

### MUCH NEEDED CLARIFICATION

Although there are multiple quotations about refraining from the consumption of spices, Ellen White shares that we can use **roots and herbs** to achieve and maintain good health. Read the following quotations from the pen of Ellen White:

“**...There are simple herbs and roots that every family may use for themselves and need not call a physician any sooner than they would call a lawyer.** I do not think that I can give you any definite line of medicines compounded and dealt out by doctors, that are perfectly harmless. And yet it would not be wisdom to engage in controversy over this subject.” {2SM 279.1}

“**...God has caused to grow out of the ground herbs for the use of man, and if we understand the nature of these roots and herbs, and make a right use of them, there would not be a necessity of running for the doctor so frequently,** and people would be in much better health than they are today.”—Letter 35, 1890. {MM 230.3}

- Spices come from other parts of the plant besides the leaves
- Not all spices are bad for health
- We can use roots and herbs
- We should not use spices regularly in our food
- Spices can be used in place of pharmaceutical drugs
- Ellen White did use cayenne pepper and ginger to treat illnesses
- Many different herbs can be used to flavor our meals
- Revelation 22:2 supports the use of herbs
- Parsley and borage offer important health benefits
- Marijuana should not be used

## WHAT CAN WE USE TO FLAVOR OUR FOOD?

According to our modern definition of spices, these substances come from other parts of the plant besides the leaves. Not all spices are bad for health. We can use roots, but we need to know how to use them safely. Ginger is a spice and Ellen White used it, but not as a regular food item. See the following quote:

“In regard to our using spice, I plead not guilty. We have not had spice in our house for ten years **except a little ginger, which we have always used to some extent.** We have always used a little milk and some sugar. This we have never denounced, either in our writings or in our preaching. We believe cattle will become so much diseased that these things will yet be discarded, but the time has not yet come for sugar and milk to be wholly abolished from our tables...” {Lt1-1873.47}

Spices of concern are the ones which stimulate our autonomic nervous system and irritate our stomachs. Some examples of spices we should not regularly consume are chili powder and cayenne pepper. Another important fact to note is that Ellen White did use cayenne pepper once in place of the use of harmful pharmaceutical drugs as recorded in the following quote:

“I had an ill turn that night. The wind came up while we were searching for a place to rest. I think I took cold. I was in such severe pain **I called for cayenne pepper and obtained some relief**, but the same kind of a cold I had when at San Diego was upon me...”{Lt353-1905.3}

Since herbs are not spices, we can use herbs because they are derived from the leaves of the plants. The Bible supports the fact that leaves have healing properties. Take for example Revelation 22:2 which says “in the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.” So it is likely that adding herbs to our food may be beneficial for our health. For example, parsley and borage were able to inhibit adhesion of *H. pylori* strains to the stomach. Overgrowth of *H. pylori* is implicated in stomach ulcers. Also, peppermint oil can exert an antispasmodic effect. Please note that not all herbs are good for our health. For example, marijuana can be used as an herb and consumed; however, it contains a harmful psychoactive compound called tetrahydrocannabinol (THC). Remember, true temperance teaches us to dispense entirely with everything hurtful, and to use judiciously that which is healthful.

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## **Readings for this Article:**

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