



Three Steps to Flavorful!

Healthy food is often equated as being bland, but lucky for all of us, that's not true! Home cooks can create mouth-watering and heart-healthy dishes by learning how to layer on flavor throughout the cooking process. It's easy with these three simple steps:

1. Choose a cooking method that builds a flavor foundation.



Roasting and searing are two easy ways to prepare a variety of foods from meats to vegetables. These methods cook food over high heat, resulting in a crusty exterior. When natural sugars in foods come into contact with high heat on the stove (searing) or in the oven (roasting), they caramelize, bringing mellowed sweetness to veggies such as carrots, onions and potatoes, and a deep savoriness to meats and fish.

Pan-frying in vegetable or olive oil is a nutritious alternative to deep frying and perfect for chicken, scallops and other fish. To get even more flavor and texture, lightly bread fish, such as catfish or salmon, with crushed nuts or whole grain breadcrumbs. Heat one to two tablespoons of oil in a large skillet until it shimmers. Add the fish and cook over medium heat for approximately 3 to 4 minutes per side. You'll know the fish is cooked when the exterior is golden brown, the center is opaque, and the fish flakes easily with a fork.



2. Boost flavor with herbs, spices and marinades.

Choose herbs and spices that please your palate. For savory dishes, thyme, oregano and rosemary each impart a unique earthy flavor and work well together or alone. For a little heat, a dash of crushed red pepper flakes can do the trick. Ground cumin is mildly spicy and adds a warm depth of flavor to your food whether it's rice, a curry dish or chili.

Season as you go. Lightly salt and pepper meats, vegetables, and fish before roasting or searing and add herbs and spices during the cooking process. Create a little space at the side of your pan and add your dried herbs. Let them sauté in a bit of oil until they release their fragrance, then stir them into the rest of your ingredients.

If you need to cut back on salt, herbs and spices are a perfect antidote; they amp up flavor without the added sodium.

Marinades. Combine a fat, an acid and seasonings and you've got yourself a tailor-made flavor enhancer. Olive or vegetable oil, for example, can be combined with lemon juice and seasoned with red pepper flakes and thyme. It's fun to experiment with different marinade flavor combinations. Mustard, which contains vinegar, plays well with olive oil, a bit of honey and your favorite herbs. Buttermilk and Greek yogurt each contain acid and fat, so you can quickly whip up a marinade by just adding your seasonings to them.





Most foods don't need to marinate very long, making marinades perfect for weekday meals. Marinate fish for up to 30 minutes; for thinner cuts of meat and chicken pieces, 30 minutes to several hours should suffice. Save the whole chicken for the weekend as it'll need 4 to 12 hours to marinate.

Be sure to turn your food while it's marinating so all sides can absorb the flavors. If your marinade has been used with raw meat or fish, do not reuse it, unless it has been boiled first to kill any harmful bacteria.

3. Finish your dish with a sprinkle of freshness.

Top dish with herbs like parsley, or a drizzle of extra virgin olive oil. Grated Parmesan cheese adds a dash of savoriness, and chopped nuts add a bit of crunch.

When you follow these steps you'll see how easy it is to tantalize your taste buds while taking care of your ticker, too!

Spicy Salmon

This fragrant marinade can be paired with just about any kind of seafood, but these flavors work really well with salmon.

Ingredients

- 4 cloves garlic, chopped
- ½ teaspoon sea salt
- 1 teaspoon crushed red chili pepper
- 2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
- Juice of 1 lemon
- 4 salmon steaks, each about 4 ounces

Directions

1. Crush the garlic with the salt in a mortar or mash it with a fork in a small bowl. Add the chili pepper, olive oil, and lemon juice and continue mashing to form a smooth paste.
2. Arrange the fish in a baking dish and spread the marinade on top. Cover with plastic wrap and refrigerate for up to two hours.
3. Preheat the oven to 450°F. Uncover the fish and bake for about 20 minutes, or until the fish flakes easily with a fork.

Serves 4



Nutrition Information

Calories 270, Fat 12g (Sat. fat 2g), Sodium 330mg, Carbohydrates 2g, Fiber 1g, Protein 17g