



## Buying and Storing Herbs, Spices, and Oils

Having a good mix of fresh and dried herbs and spices on hand is truly a game changer in the kitchen. Experience the unique flavors of African and Latin American cuisines by experimenting with some of the herbs, spices and oils that follow.

### Where to Find Them

Dried herbs and spices can be found in any grocery store, usually in the:

- Seasonings Aisle
- Natural-Food Aisle
- Bulk Section of Natural-Food Stores

Fresh herbs like thyme, mint, and cilantro can be found in the produce section either alongside fruits and vegetables, or in the refrigerated salad-mix section. Depending on the season, fresh herbs will either be loose or prepackaged.

### Spice Blends

Many spice brands have created their own lines of regional spice blends like “Jamaican Jerk Spice Blend” or “Creole Seasoning” inspired by the traditional spice signatures of Jamaica and Louisiana. These blends include paprika, anise pepper, coriander, and more. Try a specialty blend and look at the ingredients to discover which individual herbs and spices you like best.

### Spice Shops and Online Sources

More and more spice shops are popping up around the country. These specialty stores feature rows and bins of colorful, aromatic spices. Like the bulk aisles of natural-food stores, spice shops let you weigh and then take home as much of a spice as you’d like. You can also order spices directly from spice shops, African specialty stores, and major spice brands online.

### Storage

Unpotted fresh herbs will keep for up to two weeks with proper handling. Simply snip off the ends of the stems, fill a small glass jar halfway with water, and place the herbs in the water. Make sure that the top leaves are dry (rinse them before each use) and cover the top with a small plastic bag. Store hardier herbs like cilantro, dill, and parsley in the refrigerator. Store more delicate herbs, like basil and tarragon, on your kitchen counter at room temperature.

While dried herbs don’t go bad, they do lose their flavor and aroma over time. Dried herbs keep best and longest in cool, dark places. Keep yours in a cabinet away from light and heat for maximum flavor.

### Latin American and African Heritage Herbs and Spices:

#### Fresh

- Basil
- Chiles
- Cilantro
- Dill
- Epazote
- Garlic
- Ginger
- Lemon
- Mint
- Oregano
- Parsley
- Tarragon
- Thyme

#### Dried

- African or Caribbean Spice Blends
- Allspice
- Anise Pepper
- Bay Leaf
- Berbere
- Caraway
- Cardamom
- Cayenne
- Cinnamon
- Cloves
- Coriander
- Cumin
- Curry Spices
- Fenugreek
- Grains of Paradise
- Harissa
- Paprika
- Ras el Hanout
- Saffron
- Turmeric
- Vanilla Bean



## Oils

Many scientists and health experts agree that extra-virgin olive oil is one of the healthiest oils we can eat. It's also one of the most delicious, and is found in North Africa.

Use extra-virgin olive oil raw, drizzled on salads or steamed vegetables, or lightly cooked on low to medium heat. Never let oil smoke; this means it's too hot.

Coconut oil has been used traditionally throughout the Caribbean, and red palm oil throughout Africa. These oils are currently being researched for their health benefits. Many African cooks add a dollop of red palm oil to dishes after they've been cooked, to add color and flavor to meals, and to retain all of the heat-sensitive vitamins and nutrients in the oil.

Flaxseed comes from Egypt. Flaxseed oil is a wonderful source of omega-3 fatty acids and other powerful nutrients. This oil is highly sensitive to heat, light, and air, so it typically comes in a dark bottle and should be kept refrigerated. You never want to cook with flaxseed oil.

### Oils for cooking

- Extra-virgin olive oil
- Coconut oil
- Red Palm oil

### Oils for drizzling

- Extra-virgin olive oil
- Flaxseed oil
- Sesame oil

