

Health – Seasonings and Spices

March 21, 2018 by Judy Hallingstad

Many people have been unsure of the words spice and seasoning and therefore a misunderstanding has occurred causing many to not understand how to healthfully season their food. In Genesis 1:29 it says, “And God said, Behold, I have given you every herb bearing seed, which is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree, in the which is the fruit of a tree yielding seed; to you it shall be for meat.”

Ellen White states, “At one time Doctor ____ tried to teach our family to cook according to health reform, as he viewed it, without salt or anything else to season the food. Well, I determined to try it, but I became so reduced in strength that I had to make a change; and a different policy was entered upon with great success. I tell you this because I know that you are in positive danger. Food should be prepared in such a way that it will be nourishing. It should not be robbed of that which the system needs.

“I use some salt, and always have, because from the light given me by God, this article, in the place of being deleterious, is actually essential for the blood. The whys and wherefores of this I know not, but I give you the instruction as it is given me.” Counsels on Diet and Foods, 344.

This statement tells me that it is possible to be a little fanatical and go a little too far, therefore harming our own bodies.

There are many herbs and greens that our body needs for nourishment and there has been a mistaken idea that these are spices and not to be eaten or used in preparation of our foods. In the past, spices have been categorized as fragrant, aromatic plant products like cinnamon, cloves and pepper. Now there is a tendency to categorize even the herbs, etc., as spices as the word spice is understood in its historical meaning and which include cinnamon, cloves, and pepper.

Many have misunderstood Mrs. White’s statements, i.e., “By the laws of the home everything that renders the blood impure should be discarded from the table. Especially should little children be given wholesome food. They should be given no tea or coffee. Their food should not contain spices or any kind of seasoning. The plainest food is the most wholesome and keeps the temple of God in the most healthy condition.” Sermons and Talks, vol. 1, 215.

The word spice in Mrs. White's time included items like cinnamon, cloves and pepper, which caused problems with the health. The word spice in our day has included all the good as well as the bad. To season, means to add flavor. The two words, season and spice, are actually used interchangeably now and this is the reason that much confusion exists on how to season our food. People have become hesitant to use dried herbs because they may be labeled as a spice.

Each of us needs to study this out for ourselves. I have done a little research and have been much blessed. Many of the seasonings and/or spices that are being condemned now (because they are labeled as a spice) are herbs and have a much needed place in our foods and in our bodies. It may be that some think that since some have been dried, they are now spices and cause harm. People are mislabeling God's garden. God has placed within our reach plenty of these herbs, which are natural vitamins and minerals, for our benefit. Just because they might season or enhance the flavor of the dish we are serving should not be reason to stop using it because it seasons the food and therefore is a spice. The majority of the herbs, many of which are now called spices, are a gift to us from God to enhance the flavor of our food.

We also preserve our food by canning or drying. Because an herb is dried does not make it unhealthy for us to use, to be sprinkled on our foods as a seasoning/spice.

"God has caused to grow out of the ground, herbs for the use of man, and if we understand the nature of those 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. I believe in calling upon the Great Physician when we have used the remedies I have mentioned." Selected Messages, Book 2, 297, 298.

"Again and again I have been shown that God is trying to lead us back, step by step, to His original design—that man should subsist upon the natural products of the earth." Counsels on Diet and Foods, 380. The natural products of the earth include the herbs and greens.

"In this fast age, the less exciting the food, the better. Condiments are injurious in their nature. Mustard, pepper, spices, pickles, and other things of a like character, irritate the stomach and make the blood feverish and impure. The inflamed condition of the drunkard's stomach is often pictured as illustrating the effect of alcoholic liquors. A similarly inflamed condition is produced by the use of irritating condiments. Soon ordinary food does not satisfy the appetite. The system feels a want, a craving, for something more stimulating." The Ministry of Healing, 325.

She states that mustard, pepper, spices, pickles, and other things of a like character, irritate the stomach. The herbs, i.e. sweet basil, dill, oregano, chives, cilantro, parsley, marjoram, mint, mustard, etc., are not in like character as what she has listed and should not be considered within the words irritable spices.

“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.” Manuscript Releases, vol. 15, 245. Some consider ginger as an irritating spice. Ginger is quite useful and healing in many health problems. Also some have problems with the word mustard. There are mustard greens which are excellent for our bodies and were also used by Mrs. White. There are certain preparations called mustard which contain ingredients which are not health orientated, but those should not be confused with mustard greens and the excellent mustards which are made from very healthy ingredients and are excellent for consumption.

“God has furnished man with abundant means for the gratification of an unpurged appetite. He has spread before him the products of the earth—a bountiful variety of food that is palatable to the taste and nutritious to the system. Of these our benevolent heavenly Father says we may freely eat. Fruits, grains, and vegetables, prepared in a simple way, free from spice and grease of all kinds, make, with milk or cream, the most healthful diet. They impart nourishment to the body and give a power of endurance and a vigor of intellect that are not produced by a stimulating diet.

“Let the table be made inviting and attractive, as it is supplied with the good things which God has so bountifully bestowed. Let mealtime be a cheerful, happy time. As we enjoy the gifts of God, let us respond by grateful praise to the Giver.” My Life Today, 132.

“You speak in regard to my diet. I have not become so wedded to one thing as not to be able to eat anything else. But as far as material for greens is concerned, you need have no concern; for to my certain knowledge there are in the section of country where you live many kinds of vegetable productions which I can use as greens. I shall be able to obtain the leaves of the yellow dock, the young dandelion, and mustard. There will be a far more bountiful supply there, and of a superior quality, than we could obtain in Australia. And if there was nothing else, there are the grain productions.” Counsels on Diet and Foods, 323, 324.

“We rode out a few miles and took dinner near the beach in a little clump of brush. There was a nice stream flowing close by where we ate our dinner. Then we gathered greens and after going down on the beach we returned to our home.” Manuscript Releases, vol. 4, 97. We dry many of these things to use to season or flavor our food.

“The dish of greens was usually especially for Ellen White. One day as Sara McEnterfer passed the bowl of dandelion greens to Ellen White, she said, ‘Mother, here is your horse feed.’ The latter looked over the table at the other dishes and quietly replied, ‘Well, I don’t know as my horse feed is any worse than your cow’s peas.’ ” Ellen G. White, vol. 6, *The Later Elmshaven Years, 1905–1915*, 395. (By Arthur L. White, 1892.)

From all of the above statements, I am sure there were many other kinds of greens that she ate. In fact, if you will notice, the majority of what she called greens are now called herbs, and not greens.

Whether these herbs or greens are eaten fresh or dried, they season the food in a good, nourishing way. Some of the herbs/greens have been called spices and therefore have caused controversy. We cannot call all greens harmful because this is not so.

Some herbs/greens that make excellent flavor enhancers/seasonings and which our bodies require for good health include: sweet basil (basil); dill; thyme; oregano; rosemary; sage; cilantro; parsley; mint, etc. There are many more. Each of us must understand our own bodies and what it requires for good health. Each of these greens has health increasing constituents. In fact, onions and garlic are also dried and labeled seasonings/spices. What is good for one is not good for another. Yes, Mrs. White names specifics and each of us may agree with what she has shared, but that does not mean that we begin to label everything spice because it may not agree with us, or because someone else has labeled it so.

There are many recipes which call for ingredients that I do not use or do not care to use so I will replace those ingredients with more healthful ones or ones that fit my taste buds. I do not expect everybody’s personal recipes to be perfect according to what I like. I am just so thankful when people share recipes with me and I can adjust them to my taste and praise the Lord for someone who wanted to share with me. Praise God for the gift of choice and for all of the different foods He has provided so that we may have an abundance of variety to meet our different tastes and needs.

Food prepared with condiments and spices inflames the stomach, corrupts the blood, and paves the way to stronger stimulants. [145] – {CCh 104.3}

Cinnamon and nutmeg are no-nos too, I believe, and probably mace, cloves, and cardamom. Basically any seed- or bark-based spice = bad.

“Our food should be prepared free from spices.” (Ellen G. White, *An Appeal to Mothers*, page 19, 1864)

She counselled especially against "fiery"spices so obviously black pepper, mustard, hence maybe cinnamon and nutmeg too.

Most staunch Adventists I know avoid them altogether, heavily favouring herbs instead.

Let me add: Food in the mid 1800s were *heavily spiced* The concept here is that in high quantity, spices do indeed irritate the stomach lining. So in small quantity, her counsel was that there is some, even if small, incremental damage which we should avoid.

Spices that are spicy do irritate and can wear down the stomach's mucosal lining. When those types of spices irritate the intestines (capsaicin does it), PubChem sums it up nicely:

"In case of ingestion, gastrointestinal tract irritation may be observed along with a sensation of warmth or painful burning [MSDS]. Symptoms of systemic toxicity include disorientation, fear, loss of body motor control including diminished hand-eye coordination, hyperventilation, tachycardia, and pulmonary oedema."

So, Ellen White was mostly right about it. However, not all spices have capsaicin. "Spices" is a broad