

# SPICING THINGS UP THE FLAVORS OF BETTER HEALTH

BY DEVA KHALSA, VMD WITH EXCERPTS FROM DR. KHALSA'S NATURAL DOG



The term *spice* includes *herbs*, which are the fragrant leaves of herbaceous plants, many of which are native to particular temperate regions.



When I think of spices, the word “exotic” comes to mind—perilous ocean voyages, colorful cultures, secret maps, danger, and excitement. History is rich with stories about countries and companies financing long ocean voyages to far-off continents. Why? To find, buy, sell, and trade something they valued more than gold.

Commerce in spices began over 3000 years ago. At this time, the Ancient Egyptians were recording and cataloguing their knowledge of herbs, and a Chinese emperor published a book, *The Great Native Herbal*. Many plants mentioned in there are still used today in Chinese herbal preparations.

Arab merchants, before 2000 BC, controlled the overland trade routes to India in the Middle East. After sea routes were discovered, Egypt became a major commercial center for trading spices. Later, Venice monopolized the spice trade with the Middle East, and became the middleman to the rest of Europe.

When Venice began charging exorbitant prices, Portugal and Spain looked eastward for new routes and then, with the voyage of Christopher Columbus, searched westward. Spice traders supplied most of Columbus’s financial backing. In his expedition across an unknown sea, Columbus wasn’t looking for America; he was looking for a shorter ocean route to India, for their spices.

## MORE VALUABLE THAN GOLD

The phrase “the spice of life” can be translated literally. At the height of the spice trade, spices were not simply spices. With few exceptions, the spices and herbs known today were being used very early in human history, and with medicine in its infancy, mankind placed great value on spices because of their healing properties. Before the advent of industrially prepared medicines, herbal remedies were commonly prescribed. Spices and herbs played important, sometimes magical, roles in medicine. People from all cultures value good health, and history testifies to how spices were considered more valuable than gold.

Spices were big business. Each region had plants and herbs that were specific to that particular area and climate, and because these ingredients were so precious, many countries were motivated to discover and

control new routes for spice trade. The price of health can be high, and many people risked great expense and the dangers of long ocean voyages to obtain herbs for diet and medicine.

## OUR FIRST MEDICINES

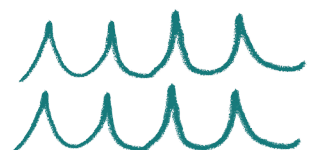
Today we need herbs even more because the majority of our food sources are grown on depleted topsoil. The produce on the supermarket shelf lacks the nutrients that our cells need to thrive. To sustain a good crop, farmers have resorted to mass-produced agriculture, which employs fungicides, pesticides, and tons of fertilizer. This results in an “empty harvest.”

Spices and organic food provide a “full harvest” for the body. Since spices are actually foods, the body recognizes their nutrients and uses them to promote health. They provide a multitude of balanced nutrients that are easily absorbed. Spices contain usable forms of vitamins and minerals from nature that replace the body’s missing nutrients and balance cells, which can be effective in treating physical symptoms.

As with most healthy food sources, what’s good for us is good for our dogs. Spices can easily be added to your dog’s cooked meals. (Simply sprinkling them on dry kibble has never been a hit with my dogs.) To bring out the full flavor and health benefits, add them to home-cooked food. They produce a wonderful fragrance and impart a special touch.

Fresh spices, of course, have greater healing properties than dried. I have a kitchen garden where I grow herbs and many of them return again in the spring. But, when you can’t get fresh spices, dried mixes, like Italian or Provence seasonings, are great to sprinkle in the pot or pan. Spices like fennel seeds last very well in the cupboard.

While I don’t suggest dumping all of these spices into one meal, using one or two of them at a time—sparingly at first—is usually well received by our canine friends. If you typically feed prepared kibble, there’s no harm in spicing things up with a home-cooked meal once or twice a week.





Did you know that the price of a slave in ancient Egypt was about 15 pounds of garlic?

**GARLIC**

Garlic is one of the few herbs that has worldwide recognition and use. The garlic plant is a member of the lily family and is one of the oldest cultivated plants. For ages, garlic has been renowned for its ability to ward off disease.

In 1858, Louis Pasteur proved that garlic was able to kill fungi and bacteria. Modern research has shown that garlic has antifungal, antibiotic, antiviral, anti-parasitic and anti-cancer effects. The good news is that dogs love the taste of garlic.

Daily usage of garlic supports the body in ways that no other herb does. It supports the digestive tract, helping support the good bacteria in the gut, ward off worms, and treat ringworm. Garlic also helps regulate blood sugar levels.

When humans perspire profusely, it's all too easy to tell who recently ate a lot of garlic. That lingering smell comes through our pores. But judge ye not by smell alone. Garlic gets its noticeable odor from sulfur-containing compounds, the very compounds that account for most of garlic's medicinal properties. Dogs don't perspire, except on their feet, but the garlic comes out in their coats' natural oils. The essence of the garlic will mix with the oil produced by your dog's oil glands and help prevent flea infestation.

Garlic is available in many forms. Most health food stores and supermarkets sell garlic supplements or powdered garlic, but garlic is best used fresh. Depending on your dog's size, you can offer a clove or two to your dog daily, diced, macerated, or mixed into his regular food. If you cook for your dog, try garlic in some of your recipes. (Your dog will enjoy fresh garlic in his food!) Garlic can be used as a flavoring in many of the recipes listed in my book, *Dr. Khalsa's Natural Dog*.

Garlic for wart removal: Mash garlic and tape over warts for a few hours. In some cases, the warts will decrease in size or disappear.



**FENNEL**

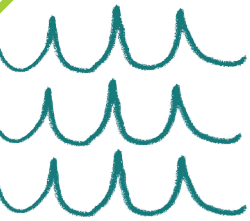
For hundreds of years, Australia and Spain have used the power of fennel. Fennel seeds, when taken after a meal, assist in digestion, and the seeds have been used for years to expel intestinal parasites. The plant itself can be chopped finely and added to a home-cooked dog-friendly stew. To help detoxify the body and cleanse the cells and tissues, the seeds can be brewed into a tea and poured over a meal.

To make a tea, pour 2 cups of boiling water over 2 teaspoons of fennel seeds. Let steep for 15 minutes and add ¼ to ½ cup of the cooled mixture to your dog's meal. Refrigerate the leftover tea and use for future meals.



**PARSLEY**

Rich in minerals, this herb aids digestion and helps the body maintain a good pH level, which helps prevent diseases in you and your dog. The kidneys and bladder will thank you for adding parsley to your dog's diet. Considered a diuretic, parsley removes excess water from the body. For dogs with heart conditions and fluid retention, add a little parsley to each meal. Detoxify the body and give your dog healthy chlorophyll by adding a teaspoon or more (finely chopped) at every meal, including home-cooked food. Parsley also freshens the breath, and we all know a dog or two who could really use that!



### ROSEMARY

A small amount of fresh rosemary can go a long way. Originating in France and the United States, rosemary has a beautiful aroma and is lovely to sit near in the summer months. Plant rosemary near a bench or outdoor table and enjoy the aroma's healing effect on body and soul.



### HEALTHY SPICE APPLE BANANA MUFFINS

yields 18 medium-sized muffins

[ingredients]

- 1 cup yogurt
- 1 cup of chopped turkey breast (lunchmeat)
- 3 medium-sized bananas (very ripe)
- 2 teaspoons baking powder
- 4 cups of unbleached flour (for a grain-free version: use chickpea flour, coconut flour, or almond flour)
- $\frac{2}{3}$  cup olive oil
- 2 teaspoons cinnamon
- $\frac{1}{2}$  teaspoon powdered sage
- 1 cup of chicken broth
- 4 eggs with shells (beaten)
- 3 medium-sized apples (peeled and grated)

[directions]

1. Place the yogurt, bananas, chicken broth, olive oil, and whole eggs in a blender and blend until smooth.
2. Combine the unbleached flour, baking powder, sage, and cinnamon.
3. Mix the liquid mixture with the flour mixture.
4. Add in the turkey breast and grated apples.
5. Bake at 350° F for 30 minutes, or until the top is brown and a toothpick inserted in the center comes out clean.

Also great with mini-muffin tins for bite-sized snacks!

Used topically, rosemary is antifungal, antibacterial, and antiseptic. Inhaling the steam from rosemary tea alleviates symptoms from sinus infections. Add one-fourth a teaspoon of rosemary in 2 cups of home-cooked food for digestive health and a flavor boost. Rosemary also makes an excellent ingredient for coat rinses since it promotes hair growth and brings out the coat's luster, even for dogs with flaky, dry skin.

Throw bits of rosemary and lavender on your floor and vacuum them up as you clean. As they sit in the bag, they will give off a pleasant scent while you vacuum.

To make a tea, pour 2 cups of water over 2 teaspoons of finely chopped rosemary. Let steep for 15 minutes and use as a rinse for the coat.



### SAGE ADVICE

Sage is another herb with a wonderful, healing fragrance that can be added to the everyday diet. One-half teaspoon of chopped fresh sage can liven up a stew or casserole. Rinse the mouth with sage tea to help heal gingivitis. Pour leftover sage tea in your dog's water bowl for a refreshing drink. (Of course, make sure he likes the taste first. Start out with small amounts in the water, and if he likes it, gradually increase the amount of tea.) Sage strengthens the body and balances estrogen levels, which is especially beneficial for spayed females experiencing urinary leakage during sleep.

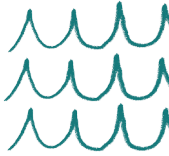
To make a tea, pour 2 cups of water over 2 teaspoons of chopped sage. Let steep for 15 minutes and refrigerate. Use as a mouth rinse for gingivitis, or add a teaspoon or two to the drinking water for a taste test. If your dog likes it, add more, teaspoon by teaspoon.



### IT'S ABOUT THYME

The humble thyme plant has inspired myths, legends, and rhymes. The ancient Egyptians used thyme as part of their embalming recipe for the dead, and even today the oil of thyme, thymol, is an ingredient in embalming fluids. With its life-extending reputation, thyme oil and its components have been suggested as an additive to naturally extend shelf life for processed foods. Thyme has antibacterial and antispasmodic effects on the body. The herb also treats respiratory ailments, as an expectorant, and alleviates bronchitis and laryngitis.

Thyme originated in the Mediterranean, but it has spread all over the world and spices up the cuisine of many cultures today. Variety is the spice of life, as the saying goes, and thyme certainly has variety, with flavors like oregano, cinnamon, lemon, and caraway. But common thyme (or any other cooking thyme) has enough flavor to enrich dog-friendly stews and casseroles. Dogs typically enjoy the taste when spices are added to home-cooked meals.



### 11 FAST FACTS YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT SPICES

For many, many centuries, in all ancient cultures, healing herbs were part of the daily diet. Mediterranean cultures routinely used healing herbs as spices in their food. In general, most of these herbs are healthy, tasty, and will broaden your dog's palate. They're worth a lick!

1. Turmeric, the main ingredient in Indian curry, contains a natural antioxidant and anti-inflammatory called curcumin, which helps relieve arthritis pain.
2. One of the most valuable spices traded from ancient India was cinnamon, another common ingredient in Indian food. Cinnamon regulates blood sugar, which is especially beneficial for diabetics.
3. Caraway and fennel seeds are Indian spices that aid digestion.
4. Wild oregano acts as an antiseptic.
5. Rosemary also acts as an antiseptic. It supports endocrine balance and promotes a lovely coat.
6. Both caraway and fennel seeds eliminate flatulence and intestinal cramping. (Fennel also stimulates lactation.)
7. Sage soothes skin conditions and acts as an antibacterial for oral infections.
8. Along with its antiviral and antibacterial properties, basil is a decongestant and helps clear the lungs.
9. Dill acts as an expectorant and is antibacterial.
10. Oregano helps with respiratory problems.
11. Tarragon fights against the symptoms of colitis, sciatica, and parasites.



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SPICES AND THEIR  
HEALTH BENEFITS @  
EVERYDOG.US/SPICES**



A licensed doctor of veterinary medicine with over thirty years in practice and member of the American Veterinary Medical Association, American Holistic Veterinary Medical Association, and International Veterinary Acupuncture Society, Dr. Deva Khalsa has studied homeopathy for nearly three decades. Dr. Khalsa uses her extensive knowledge and experience to encourage and empower owners in a holistic approach to pet care. In addition to publishing several books on animal care and health, Dr. Khalsa lectures internationally and contributes regularly to several animal-centered magazines. A second edition of her book on holistic pet ownership, *Dr. Khalsa's Natural Dog*, was released earlier this year. For more information, including online pet health videos, visit [doctordeva.com](http://doctordeva.com).