

# SPICE APOTHECARY



BLENDING AND USING  
COMMON SPICES FOR  
EVERYDAY HEALTH

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## PREFACE

# THE MEDICINE OF SPICES

I HAVE BEEN ASKED HUNDREDS OF TIMES, “What do you take every day to stay healthy?” I imagine people have visions of me with cauldrons of bubbling medicines, or bowls of rainbow-colored capsules, or dozens of amber tincture bottles lined up on my kitchen table. When I tell people that the only medicine I take every day are things like garlic, cinnamon, black pepper, and basil, I can sometimes see a hint of disappointment. Just simple spices, when they thought they might discover the secret to youth or immortality.

But this is an underestimation of the power of culinary herbs and spices. How could something that tastes good be used medicinally? Could something that our grand-mothers and grandfathers cooked with every day be fundamental to good health?

What we’ve forgotten is, our bodies evolved in tandem with the plants that offer an abundance of spices and herbs. These spices and herbs were used to make (often unpalatable) food palatable as well as for food preservation and cultural traditions. The distinction between what was considered “food” and “medicine” was not always so starkly drawn.

Today, however, as people reach for bland and salty processed foods, we see less use of culinary spices and more prevalence in the conditions these spices can actually prevent and treat. While this may not be a causal relationship, I do have a clear observation: We need the medicine of spices.

To compound the issue, holistic, integrative, or herbal medicine tends to be expensive and inaccessible to the general population. What was once a simple daily practice, herbal medicine has become the medicine of the elite, with fancy products in pricey bottles. And while there are many wonderful companies and products out there, herbal medicine does not need to be expensive or exclusive. In fact, the more you can taste and smell and touch and grind and sift the medicines you are using, the better. Backed by a plethora of scientific evidence supporting the beneficial properties of using herbs and spices for health, I am making the call for more people to use medicinal spices every day.

Finally, I want to say, this is the medicine of families, communities, and traditional cultures. A whiff of celebratory cardamom can conjure the joys of a wedding; the heady scent of fresh rosemary conveys a sense of elegance. While children sprinkle cinnamon in their hot cocoa, their grandparents can add it to a dinner dish to support cardiovascular health.

Spices are our perfect medicine. They are my daily tonic, my connection to past and present. They also bring joy to the food I prepare for my family. I invite you to integrate spices into your diet, and to enjoy the health-boosting deliciousness that they bring.

*Bevin Clare*