

Simple Approaches to Raising a Healthy Baby
& Creating a Lifetime of Nutritious Eating

Feeding baby

A COOKBOOK



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Feeding A COOKBOOK baby

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& Creating a Lifetime of Nutritious Eating

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The recipes in this book are strategically designed to build powerful brains, dense bones, tough immune systems, and strong muscles. Each recipe has been engineered to teach taste and provide new sensory experiences with fresh herbs, varying textures, aroma, and color, which are organized by stage of development and feeding skill level of the infant.

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This book is written for every parent and guardian who wants his or her children to establish healthy eating habits that will last a lifetime.



Chapter 1

Nutrition without the Numbers

As a mother and dietitian, I want exactly what you want for your children. I want them to be healthy. I want them to eat, but not eat too much. I want them to enjoy food without guilt. I want them to be adventurous in the kitchen. I want them to seek a variety of flavors and get excited about new foods. Simply put, I do not want them to be picky eaters, but healthy eaters.

I realize this wish list may seem unattainable to many parents. However, it is achievable. Yes, I said it. You can raise an adventurous eater capable of having a healthy and positive relationship with food. Many parents focus on nutrition alone. They focus on the numbers of nutrition—eating 5 fruits and vegetables each day, drinking X amount of breast milk or formula ounces per day, or eating the recommended daily calories. Parents should pay attention to nutrition. After all, it is vital for growth and development. The problem occurs when parents focus too much on the numbers. Nutrition is just one component of healthy eating. Parents should also concentrate on variety of foods and lifelong healthy eating behaviors.[1] We now know that a child exposed to a variety of foods has a better nutritional intake.[2] Instead of focusing on the numbers, parents can focus on flavor variety. This book will guide you how to incorporate the following while feeding your children:

- Teach “flavor preference” by exposing children to a variety of food, texture, and taste through a sensory-rich diet.
- Teach infants and children to recognize and appropriately respond to their feelings of hunger and fullness.
- Maximize nutrient absorption and intake by offering children a variety of nourishing foods.

Teaching Flavor Preference

Every parent, including myself, will spend countless hours teaching letters and numbers to their child. But how many of us actually teach our kids to taste food or to prefer food flavors? Teaching taste is just as important as ABCs and 123s because it sets the foundation for healthy eating habits. Flavor is not limited to the actual taste of food. According to science, flavor is made up of a variety of elements including taste, mouthfeel (the actual feeling of food in our mouth—texture and temperature), and aroma.^[3] Flavor preference is taught by offering infants and children sensory-rich foods to eat and explore (you'll read more about this later) starting in infancy.

Most of us only think about our taste buds when we eat something with an intense flavor such as sweet, sour, bitter, or salty. We might also think about taste when we eat something we like or dislike. How often do you consider your baby's taste buds, or even your own? As parents we may overlook the sense of taste because we are so busy trying to be the best parents possible. We are occupied with teaching numbers, letters, words, animals, colors, and songs. Unfortunately, when we feed our children, we tend to concentrate on how much the child is eating, more than the elements that make up the world of flavor.

Parents are faced with many personal decisions without realizing the long-term impact they can have on a child's eating behavior. Tiny taste buds begin to form in the fetus, and further develop in infancy. The food choices we make while pregnant, breastfeeding, and during meals have the potential to expose an infant to a variety of foods. A pregnant or lactating mother's food choices mold a child's food preferences. Breast milk emits the aroma and flavors of the mother's diet. If a pregnant or breast feeding mother eats garlic, the child will taste garlic. If she eats curry, the child will taste curry. If she eats cumin, the child will taste cumin. Even more fascinating is that the infant will remember the taste of those flavors after birth, encouraging food acceptance in later months and years.^{[4]–[7]}

One of the first choices you can make that will influence the infant's food preferences is the decision to breastfeed. The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), Institute of Medicine, and World Health Organization (WHO) all stress the benefits of exclusive breastfeeding for the first 6 months. Breastfed infants are more likely to accept new foods during the first introduction compared to a formula fed infant. This is understandable because a formula fed infant experiences one bland flavor day in and day out.[8]–[10]

Breastfeeding is instrumental to the introduction of a variety of tastes. The longer a child is breastfed, the more apt the child is to eat fruits and vegetables later in life. Therefore, lactating women are encouraged to eat a varied diet.[1]–[14]



As the child transitions to solid foods, the mother can continue to teach flavor preference by offering a variety of food. The more variety of food offered to the infant at 6 months of age, the better the acceptance of new foods.[15]–[17] The overall feeding experience of the fetus, infant, and child is heavily influenced by the dietary patterns and decisions of the caregivers.

Let's back up a minute and define the term variety. Most parents tend to associate variety with the idea of introducing different foods (asparagus, banana, apple, carrot). However, there is more to variety. If a child does not like carrots one day, don't give up. Just cut or prepare them differently the next

time you serve carrots. In other words, carrots can be cut into long spears, coined, mashed, or diced. The idea of providing variety is not limited to serving new foods, but offering the same foods different ways. As the child becomes accustomed to the food he will be more apt to try it. Children will eat what is familiar to them. It is the parent's job to make the food familiar to the child through multiple introductions. However, it is important to ensure the texture of the food is age- and skill-appropriate (see [Chapter 3](#)).

A Sensory-Rich Diet

The basis of “flavor preference” is exposing the child to a variety of food by providing a sensory feeding experience. Sensory-rich food offers a variety of tastes, mouthfeel, and aroma while feeding in the appropriate balance. Food provides an opportunity for a child to use all of his senses (taste, touch, smell, sound, and sight). The acceptance or refusal of the meal is determined by those senses. Not only does the flavor of the food bring either disappointment or enjoyment, but the environment also determines the acceptance of the food. Depending on the child, a slight or drastic change in one aspect of the meal can change the entire experience. An uncomfortable seat, a very hot room, or an over-spiced dish can negatively impact the child's experience. It is important to consider all of the senses when creating a positive feeding experience.

Every adult knows the type of foods they like and do not like. Children are no different. They too have opinions about food, and also have stronger and more sensitive taste buds than adults, because unfortunately, adults lose taste buds as they age. Keep in mind—what an adult tastes is completely different than what a child tastes.

Parents should expose children to a variety of foods, but they should also respect their children's individual sensory preferences. Some children will be very sensitive to taste or texture (maybe even both). For example, my son had and still has a texture issue. He hated lumps in his yogurt. I learned to respect this preference and avoided lumps in creamy textures. He is now three and I continue to make slow changes in the texture of his food. Parents can determine an individual starting point for their child by simply listening to the

child's verbal or nonverbal language. This might take time to see a pattern. If you can recognize a food aversion early and work slowly around it, you will be ahead of the game.

If you have a sensitive child, go slow. Mild, diluted, or smooth food may be more inviting to a sensitive child. Don't worry—all hope is not lost if your child dislikes a lump in their yogurt or cinnamon in their applesauce. It's just a starting point. Again, start slow and make very small changes. Select foods the child enjoys and add *very* small changes to the sensation. Avoid sensory surprises for the sensitive child—it would not be a good idea to give her plain scrambled eggs one day and a southwestern omelet the next. Just changing the amount of milk added to the eggs is enough sensory change to start with.

Remember that all children are different. They are different from adults, other children, and even themselves. Children change constantly. Their flavor preference will also change day to day. Just because a child liked a specific texture or flavor one day, does not mean she will like it the next. This is common behavior and should be accepted as normal, not picky (we will discuss this later).

from the mom tip

“Once my kids were cleared for solids around 6 months, I started introducing them to all types of foods. If it was something that was soft enough or I could cut small enough, they ate what we ate at the table. From an early age, my kids have had all types of foods: Chinese, Italian, Mexican, and more. I also made sure to introduce a wide variety of fruits and veggies. Now, years later, fruits and veggies still make up the bulk of our daily diet. Do they eat everything? No, because we all have our own individual tastes and preferences. But when my six-year-old tells people her favorite food is broccoli and my two-year-old begs for strawberries in the grocery store, that makes me pretty happy.”

Megan Galko, Founder of www.nepamom.com

Taste

Bitter, salty, sour, sweet, and umami (savory) are the 5 senses our taste buds recognize. Every nourishing bite will provide your baby with one taste or a combination of tastes which all influence each other. For example, something sweet can reduce the bitter taste of a vegetable. Knowing how to provide foods to maximize and balance flavor will encourage children to eat their vegetables. In other words, if you want your infant to benefit from the nutrients in a bitter food like leafy greens, you can add a sweet fruit like a banana to make the flavor more accepting. This is called “flavor pairing.”

Let’s face it—human babies naturally refuse bitter foods and welcome sweet and salty foods. It is not their fault—it is imbedded deep into their DNA. Our ancestors’ survival was dependant upon their ability to distinguish between bitter and sweet foods. The most poisonous foods taste very bitter, making them unappealing. However, the sensation of bitter and sweet can vary considerably between each person due to age and genetics. Parents and children naturally have different taste senses and can influence the perceptions of picky eating as well. The good news is that flavor preference is learned, and strong flavors can be accepted over time.[18]–[20]

Not only do infants prefer sweet foods but they are also neophobic (fear of something new) about food. They have an inherent ability to protect themselves from potentially toxic foods. Don’t worry—just because they fear new foods and love sweet foods, doesn’t mean they can’t learn to be healthy eaters. If your baby scowls at the taste of something new, don’t give up after a couple introductions. Keep moving forward and concentrate on your willingness to reintroduce the same foods. Just change the flavor. Remember, changing the flavor is as simple as changing the texture (mash, finely dice, chop), adding an herb or spice, or serving it at a different temperature.

Myth Buster: Many pediatricians, grandmothers, and mothers recommend giving infants vegetables before fruit. It is thought that the sweet taste of fruit will interfere with the preference for bitter vegetables. There isn’t any clear evidence supporting this theory. In fact, a variety of fruits and vegetables during pregnancy and breastfeeding lead to a greater acceptance of those foods

by the infant. Also, repeated exposure to fruits and vegetables during weaning creates a preference.[16]

Mouthfeel

Texture, Shape, and Temperature

Our mouth has the ability to feel. It can distinguish textures and temperatures, which can have a dramatic impact on the flavor of our food. A food's texture has the ability to captivate and satisfy us at the same time. Creamy, fatty foods give us comfort, while crunchy foods give us pleasure at a social event. However, a food's texture can also repulse us. I know several adults who do not like texture combinations of creamy and lumpy. Keep this in mind when feeding your little one. They have opinions about texture, too.

Infants and children commonly refuse new foods because they may not like the texture or the taste of the food.[21] Parents tend to perceive this behavior as “picky.” There are a couple common mistakes parents can make when introducing a new food to their child. First, they introduce the same food the same way, each time. Second, if the child is still refusing a food after 2–3 exposures, the parent gives up and accepts a picky eater. I hope this book will empower you to take a different approach. If you refer to the chart on the following pages, 100 Ways to Serve 10 Fruits & Vegetables, you will see that there are many ways to introduce common fruits and vegetables, offering a variety of textures.

Temperature also affects the perception of a food's taste. It makes food more enjoyable, and can bring out the sweetness or even hide the bitterness of food. For example, letting ice cream sit out on the counter for a few minutes before serving will maximize its sweet taste. Even better—freezing bitter vegetables will take the bitter taste out of your smoothie when it is blended frozen and consumed immediately!

Infants should be introduced to a variety of temperatures, including cold, cool, warm, and tepid. Parents should avoid serving foods that are too hot—a baby's mouth is more sensitive than an adult's, and it is important to use

caution. If a food feels slightly hot to you, err on the safe side and cool it more for your baby.

from the mom tip

"From the beginning of introducing solid foods at 6 months, we always gave Kaelyn the same things we were eating, by placing them on her tray and letting her decide whether or not she wanted to try them, without forcing or even encouraging her to do so. Many times she would either ignore the food, or just place it in her mouth for a second and spit it right out. I believe by doing this she learned that eating is a stress-free time where she can be just like mommy and daddy. Now, at 20 months, there isn't a food she won't at least try, and there are hardly any that she doesn't like."

-Jessica PhD, RD, Scranton, PA

100 Ways to Serve 10 Fruits & Vegetables

	Mashed	Finely Diced	Shredded	Chunky Chopped	Coined	Chilled	Cooked	Strips	Dehydrated	Natural State <small>(not necessarily to eat, but to explore)</small>
Apple	warm applesauce	simmer in water with cinnamon	toss with pineapple juice	cut and serve	cut and serve	chilled applesauce	oven roast with butter and cinnamon	cut and serve	serve apple rings	just an apple
Banana	with cinnamon or plain	cut and serve	freeze without peel, cut into thin strips when frozen	with dash of cinnamon	cut and serve	chill and serve	use a yellow (not brown) banana, cut and brown in butter	cut into 2-4 long spears	serve banana chips	just a whole banana with peel
Broccoli	with cheddar cheese and cream	cook with pasture butter	shred stalk and slightly steam with pasture butter	steam with pasture butter	coin stalk and pan-fry in pasture butter until soft	steam broccoli crowns, chill and serve	oven roast crown with coconut oil	cut stalk, steam, chill, and serve with a dip	cut stalk into thin coins	just a broccoli stalk with crown
Carrot	with dash of cumin or alone	cook	with cilantro and lime	cook with dash of cinnamon	cut and sauté with coconut oil	slightly steam cut carrots, chill, and serve with a dip	cut and cook in broth	cut in strips, chill, and serve with a dip	cut into thin coins	just a carrot
Pineapple	just mash	freeze and serve	cut very thinly and serve	dice with yogurt or cottage cheese	cut and serve	cut into thick strips and freeze on popsicle stick	dice and cook in coconut oil	cut into very long sticks and serve	pineapple chips	just a pineapple
Squash, Butternut	just mash	cut and steam in orange juice	pan-fry with pasture butter or coconut oil	steam and serve	make large coins and oven roast	cut, steam, and chill	your choice	butternut squash fries (oven roasted)	butternut squash chips	just a butternut squash
Sweet Peppers	oven roast, remove peels, and mash	cut and serve	sauté with olive oil	cut and serve	cut and serve	dice and serve frozen	cut and sauté in pasture butter	cut and serve with a dip	pepper chips	just a pepper
Peeled Sweet Potatoes	with cream	cut and steam in orange juice	sauté with pasture butter	steam with diced apples in apple juice	cut and pan-fry with pasture butter	steam, chill, and serve with yogurt dip	bake unpeeled	oven roast with pasture butter	sweet potato chips	just a sweet potato
Tomatoes	as tomato sauce over a favorite grain	with olive oil and balsamic vinegar	cut in half, remove seeds, cut into very thin strips	chill with basil and goat cheese	cut and serve	cut and serve cold	slice and oven roast with olive oil and thyme	cut and serve	sun-dried tomatoes	just a tomato (large)
Zucchini	with cream and parmesan cheese	with basil and garlic	steam with pasture butter	stew with pasture butter	cut and serve raw with a dip	cut into strips, chill, and serve with a dip	slice into coins and oven roast with olive oil	cut, slightly steam	zucchini chips	just a zucchini

Aroma

The power of smell can be a surprising but wonderful sense at the same time. Imagine you just left home (after eating) and arrive at the shopping center around nine in the morning. Your objective is specific: a return or a purposeful coupon purchase. Unarmed, you inhale the sweet scent of cinnamon buns. They pull you in unwillingly. Suddenly, you are hooked and surprisingly hungry. This is called appetite. Technically, you are not physically hungry (stomach growls, dizziness, irritability, and so on), but that smell gave you a strong sense of comfort, memory, and pleasure. Unfortunately, companies know the power of smell very well and use it to their advantage. The good news is that you can do the same thing in the comfort of your own home.



A smell can also take you back in time to a special place. It will transport you to the minute—no, the second—you experienced that smell. A scented hand soap or candle might take you back to an exceptional childhood place. You might be in your thirties, but for a moment you are transformed into a young child on your grandmother's back porch—all because of a whiff of a sweet melon in an unexpected place. The sense of aroma is powerful.

The smell of food is thought to be responsible for a large majority of the flavor in food. I do know that a stuffy nose equates to very little taste in food (from personal experience). Using fresh foods and herbs in cooking could

entice your little one to eat a variety of foods. If aroma potentially plays a large role in taste, memory, and appetite, we should not overlook it. Adding fresh herbs while cooking can increase lifelong food experience and food acceptance. See the Baby Food Herb and Spice Guide on [pages 16–19](#).



Food Fun

Sensory Play & Exploration with Food

As I introduce new vegetables and fruits to my children, I encourage exploration experiences. A child's decision to eat or try a new food depends on her sensory perception of the food. If a child does not like the way it smells, feels, or looks, she will probably not taste it until the food becomes more familiar to her.^{[22]–[25]} To make food more familiar to them at the table and away from the table, I encourage my children explore the world of food on their own terms. I do this in various ways. I allow them to self-feed at the table

or highchair, and I let them independently play with produce in its raw state. I read picture books to them with a variety of produce, and participate in structured play, which includes age appropriate cooking tasks.

For independent produce play, I simply put my child on a blanket and allow her play with her new vegetable toy in its natural raw state. I watch intently. Yes, I watch for potential choking, because children will put the produce in their mouth when curiosity gets the best of them—trust me. But I also watch because I find personal self-reward when they taste the vegetable. Not only did she discover the color, texture, and smell, but she also experienced taste because she wanted to try it. To increase familiarity with the vegetable, I always strategically feature the vegetable at the next meal.



Structured play is easy and fun. Instead of using paintbrushes for artwork, allow your child to use the ends of celery and other produce to stamp paint onto paper. For younger children, let them use their fingers to paint with the purées they eat at the highchair. As for cooking skills, I allowed my children to get active in the kitchen by 18 months of age. They would tear the kale leaves from the stems, peel cooked but chilled whole tomatoes, and peel their own clementines—or at least I encouraged them to try. Sometimes it was successful, and other times they created their own experience with the produce. Either way, we practiced familiarity away from mealtime.



I often tell my clients to think of introducing a new vegetable as meeting a new person. Imagine that your partner wants you to socialize with someone you dislike. Your partner pressures you to talk to her at the party, but you really do not like this person because she is bitter, pungent, and smelly. The more your partner pressures you, the more you distance yourself from the person.

Now imagine that your partner does not care if you socialize with this person. During your first encounter, you stand on opposite sides of the room, making no eye contact. At the second meeting, you walk past each other at the buffet table brushing elbows. During the third meeting, you exchange a simple hello. By the 11th meeting, you have grown on each other and actually enjoy each other's company.

The major difference between the two scenarios is your desire to meet this person on your terms. You were not forced to socialize. There is nothing more awkward than forced socialization, in my opinion. Using the second approach to introduce your infant or child to a new vegetable is easy, rewarding, and fun.

Simply put your child who can sit alone on a clean blanket with a favorite toy. Next to the toy, place a broccoli stalk. Step back and observe. You did it—you just gave your child the opportunity to meet broccoli on her own terms. Don't forget your camera, because you will want the picture of your child putting the broccoli in her mouth. Remember, children explore their environments with their mouths, so supervision is necessary.

from the mom tip

“In the first months of starting solids, most babies are very open to new flavors. It is the best time to educate their palates by exposing them to as much dietary variety as possible. You can do it by including them in family meals to share the same food, with slight adjustments in salt content and texture, and by avoiding flavor-uniform baby food. At nine months old, my daughter enjoyed black rice with squid ink and seafood.

At the “ripe” age of five, she still considers squid, octopus, and mussels her favorites!”

—Natalia Stasenko MS, RD, CDN, Pediatric Registered Dietitian and Founder of www.tribecanutrition.com

Note: While your children will explore and play with their food at the table—a normal and acceptable behavior until the age of two—you should separate intentional food exploration from meals.



Adding Flavor to Baby Food

Have you ever wondered what parents of other cultures feed their babies? From whale blubber in Alaska to spiced curries in India, infants around the world eat a variety of textures and flavors. Many countries follow their customs and traditions while feeding infants and children. Raising a child is a great time to get back to your culture. It is a time to teach your family history through flavor, and of course, love! Ask yourself: How can I get back to my culinary roots and further away from our commercially processed food world?

Food preferences develop early in life. Don't be afraid to spice up your infant's life. I am not talking about adding a ton of spice or even hot seasonings. I am simply suggesting adding a little flavor to homemade or commercial food. A dash of cinnamon in oatmeal, a small heap of garlic puréed in meat, or a pinch of cumin in avocado can go a long way. Don't be afraid to open up your infant's senses, and have fun.

Make sure you read the allergy section of this book ([pages 44–47](#)) before introducing new foods, including herbs and spices.



from the mom tip

“Try not to let your food preferences limit what you will feed your baby. Let your baby explore all of the different flavors that God has created and break the cycle of picky eating.”

Mindy, Cleveland, OH

To determine the best herbs and spices to pair with fruits and vegetables, refer to the Baby Food Herb and Spice Guide on [page 16](#). This will help you add flavor to any food you serve your child. However, in this situation, more is not necessarily better. Start slowly and add small amounts of flavor to your child’s food. Pay attention to your child’s response, determine a starting point for flavor preference, and adapt the flavor gauge of your recipes. Remember, adult taste buds are weaker than infants’. Most of all, have fun and get creative!

10 Tips to Teach Taste

- Breastfeed exclusively for 6 months.
- Eat a variety of flavors while pregnant and breastfeeding.

- Add small amounts of flavor to baby food (commercial or homemade).
- Let your infant (who should be able to sit alone or with support) play with clean produce such as ginger root, celery root, carrots, beets, turnips, thick carrots, and garlic bulbs on a clean blanket. Please watch your child while playing with raw, hard vegetables because natural curiosity will entice them to put the produce in their mouth.
- Let your infant (6–24 months) explore her food at the table while feeding. Encourage self-feeding and exploration of foods without the pressure to eat them.
- Add variety within the same food.
- Throw out processed foods and replace them with natural whole foods.
- Replace sugar with fresh herbs in your entire family's food.
- Don't offer the same food two days in a row (unless you are breastfeeding).
- Get creative and explore new foods on your own. Look up new and exciting ways to prepare something that is on your staple menu rotation.

Baby Food Herb and Spice Guide

Herbs & Spices	Taste	Baby Food Pairing <small>(food is in order of easy to more difficult to digest)</small>	Herb and Spice Pairing	Tips
Basil Leaves	sweet, spicy aroma	apricots, peaches, peas, zucchini, carrots, blueberries, red bell peppers, broccoli, corn, potatoes, tomatoes, white beans	chives, cilantro, garlic, oregano, mint, parsley, rosemary, thyme	Avoid leaves that are drooping or blackened. Store for 2–3 days in damp paper towel or a plastic bag in the refrigerator vegetable crisper.
Caraway (dried seeds)	sweet, bitter	poultry, pork, apples, cabbage, onions, potatoes, sauerkraut, tomatoes	coriander, garlic, parsley, thyme	Caraway seeds can be bought ground but are best if bought whole. Grind as needed.
Cardamom (dried seeds)	sweet, bitter	apples, pears, sweet potatoes, yogurts, oranges, legumes	caraway, cinnamon, cloves, coriander, cumin, ginger	Seed pods will keep for a year or more in an airtight jar. Grind your seeds as needed.
Cilantro Leaves	sweet, sour	avocado, yogurt, carrots, coconut milk, sweet potatoes, bell peppers, corn, cucumber, figs, potatoes, soups, stews	basil, chives, dill, garlic, ginger, lemon grass, mint, parsley	Cilantro will keep for 3–5 days in the refrigerator vegetable crisper. Always use fresh and add to cooking at the last minute.
Cinnamon	sweet, bitter	poultry, bananas, apples, apricots, pears, yogurt, oatmeal, blueberries, pancakes, French toast	cloves, coriander, cumin, ginger, nutmeg, turmeric	Add early in cooking process.
Chives	savory, spicy	avocados, egg yolks, fish, wild salmon, root vegetables, zucchini, potatoes	basil, cilantro, fennel, parsley, tarragon	Chives can be chopped and frozen.
Coriander Seeds	sour	apples, egg yolks, beef, poultry, pork, onions, plums, potatoes, citrus, lentils	cinnamon, cloves, cumin, garlic, ginger, fennel, nutmeg	Buy whole seeds and grind as needed. Add near the end of cooking process.
Clove (dried flower bud)	sweet	apples, pumpkin, sweet potato, squash, beets, red cabbage	cinnamon, coriander, curry, fennel, ginger, nutmeg	Clove flower buds will keep for a year in an airtight jar. Ground cloves should be dark brown. Add early in cooking process.
Cumin (dried seeds)	bitter, sweet	apples, squash, beef, eggplants, lentils, chick-peas, beans, potatoes, sauerkraut, tomatoes	cardamom, cinnamon, cloves, coriander, curry leaves, fennel seeds, garlic, ginger, nutmeg, oregano, paprika, thyme, turmeric	Seeds will keep in an airtight jar for several months and ground cumin has a very short shelf life. Add early in cooking process.
Dill (fresh and dried leaves)	sour, sweet	avocados, fish, carrots, zucchini, yogurt, cucumber, asparagus, potatoes, beets, cabbage, tomatoes, seeds: cabbage, onion, pumpkin	basil, garlic, parsley, cumin, garlic, ginger, turmeric	Store fresh dill in a plastic bag for 2–3 days.
Garlic	bitter, sweet	poultry, lamb, meats, zucchini, tomatoes	most herbs and spices	Choose unblemished, firm heads without signs of mold or sprouting.
Ginger	sour	apples, poultry, fish, passion fruit, pears, pineapple, mango	basil, cilantro, coconut, garlic, lime, lemon grass, mint, scallions, turmeric	Fresh ginger should be hard, plump, and heavy. They keep well in the vegetable crisper of the refrigerator for 7–10 days.

Herbs & Spices	Taste	Baby Food Pairing <small>(food is in order of easy to more difficult to digest)</small>	Herb and Spice Pairing	Tips
Lemongrass (lower part of stalk)	sour	poultry, fish, coconut milk, soups, stews	basil, cilantro, cinnamon, cloves, coconut milk, garlic, ginger, turmeric	The stalk should be firm and not wrinkled or dry. Fresh lemongrass will keep for 2–3 weeks in the refrigerator if wrapped in plastic. Use in stir-fries. Add near the end of the cooking process.
Mint (leaves)	sweet, tangy	carrots, peas, yogurt, asparagus, beans, cucumbers, eggplant, potatoes, tomatoes	basil, clove, cumin, dill, ginger, oregano, parsley, thyme	Bunches of fresh mint will keep for 2 days in a glass of water in the kitchen.
Mustard (white seeds)	sweet	beef, fish, poultry, cabbage, curries, dals	bay, coriander, cumin, dill, fennel, garlic, parsley, tarragon, turmeric	
Nutmeg (seeds)	sweet, bitter	egg yolks, poultry, fish, lamb, carrots, sweet potato, pumpkin, onion, potato, cabbage, spinach	cardamom, cinnamon, cloves, coriander, cumin, ginger, thyme	Nutmeg is best bought whole and ground as needed.
Oregano/Marjoram (leaves)	bitter, savory	poultry, egg yolks, fish, lamb, meat, squash, zucchini, artichokes, beans, bell peppers, cabbage, cauliflower, corn, eggplant, potatoes, sweet peppers, tomatoes	basil, cumin, garlic, parsley, rosemary, sage, thyme	Rub the leaves off the stem and store them in an airtight container.
Parsley (leaves and stems)	sweet, tangy	eggs, fish, most vegetables, lentils, tomatoes, lemon	basil, chives, garlic, mint, oregano, rosemary, tarragon	Fresh will keep in a plastic bag in the refrigerator for 4–5 days. Parsley can be frozen in ice cube trays with a little water. Don't buy dried parsley.
Rosemary (needles, stems, flowers)	savory	poultry, fish, egg yolks, apricots, peas, pork, squash, beans, bell peppers, cabbage, eggplant, lentils, potatoes, soups, stews, tomatoes	bay, chives, garlic, lavender, mint, oregano, parsley, sage, thyme	Fresh rosemary can be kept for a couple of days in the refrigerator. Add early in cooking process.
Sage (leaves)	sweet, bitter, sour, savory	poultry, fatty meats, fish, goose, liver, asparagus, beans, cherries, pasta, potatoes, soups, stews, stuffing, tomatoes	bay, caraway, ginger, paprika, parsley, thyme	Fresh sage leaves are best picked and used as soon as possible. Wrap them in a paper towel and keep in the vegetable crisper of the refrigerator for 2–3 days. Always use cooked and add at the end of cooking.
Tarragon (leaves and sprigs)	sweet	egg yolks, poultry, fish, zucchini, artichokes, asparagus, potatoes, tomatoes	basil, chives, dill, parsley	Fresh tarragon can keep for 4–5 days in the vegetable crisper of the refrigerator.
Thyme (leaves and seeds)	savory	meat, poultry, egg yolks, fish, root vegetables, beans, cabbage, carrots, corn, eggplant, onions, potatoes, soups, stews, tomatoes	basil, garlic, lavender, nutmeg, oregano, parsley, rosemary	Fresh leaves will keep for up to a week stored in a plastic bag in the refrigerator. Use at the beginning of the cooking process. Use dried or fresh.
Turmeric (fresh and dried rhizomes)	bitter, sour	meat, poultry, egg yolks, fish, root vegetables, spinach, eggplant, lentils, beans	cilantro, cloves, coconut milk, coriander, cumin, curry leaf, fennel, garlic, ginger, lemongrass	Store fresh turmeric in a cool, dry place or in the refrigerator vegetable crisper for up to 2 weeks; it also freezes well. Dried turmeric can last 2 years in an airtight container.
Lavender (flowers)	sweet, sour, spicy aroma	meat, lamb, apples, peaches, plums, berries, cherries, oranges, potatoes, walnuts	oregano, parsley, rosemary, thyme	Fresh flowers can be chopped and added to dough before baking. Infuse flowers in cream or milk. Chop flowers and fold into rice or use with meat. Fresh lavender will keep in a plastic bag in the refrigerator for up to a week. Dried lavender will keep for a year or more. Caraway seeds can be substituted for lavender.

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