The latest research shows flavor may be an effective – and enjoyable – way to help reduce sodium and fat. Simply adding more spices and herbs to the foods we eat could get us closer to meeting the recommendations in the Dietary Guidelines for Americans. Try these flavor tips and recipes inspired by recent studies.

**RESEARCH SNAPSHOT**

- A 20-week behavioral intervention taught adults to flavor food with spices and herbs and led to a **966 mg sodium/day decrease** compared to people who tried to reduce sodium on their own (University of California, San Diego & Johns Hopkins).

- Using spices and herbs to enhance the flavor of reduced fat/saturated fat food showed a spiced meal with **68% less fat and 35% less calories** was equally liked compared to the full-fat meal (University of Colorado).

**Lighten Up Pasta Dishes**

Pasta is a mainstay on the family dinner table. Here are easy ways to pare down fat and sodium.

**Lighten Up Cream Sauces**

When preparing a cream sauce, use less cheese and swap whole milk for the full-fat heavy cream to save up to 20 grams of fat per serving. Add flavor with garlic powder, onion powder and Italian seasoning – a classic flavor combination.

**Go For Red**

Switch from a cream sauce to a tomato-based sauce.

**Flavor Ideas**

- Roast tomatoes to intensify their flavor and season with Italian seasoning, crushed red pepper and black pepper.

- Start with a no-salt-added tomato sauce and add flavor – **about 1 teaspoon of total spices and herbs per cup of sauce**. Add in some sautéed vegetables.

**Opt For Olive Oil**

Keeping it simple lets the spices and herbs shine. Coat pasta with a light drizzle of olive oil, then toss with a blend of spices and herbs. A great combination is garlic powder, crushed red pepper and basil.

For more ideas for using flavor to reduce sodium and fat, visit [SpicesforHealth.com](http://SpicesforHealth.com)
Make Meat Loaf Healthier
Meat loaf is consistently among the top 10 most-searched family meals. By making a few small changes, you can make a big impact on this family favorite.

**Use Lean Meats**
By swapping from 80% lean ground beef to 95% lean ground beef, you can cut 8 grams of fat per serving. Season with salt-free garlic and herb seasoning, basil and oregano to boost flavor.

**Flavor Ideas**
*Use about 3 teaspoons of total spices and herbs for every 2 pounds of meat as a rule of thumb.*

**MEXICAN TWIST:** Add 1 teaspoon each oregano leaves and onion powder plus ½ teaspoon each cumin, garlic powder and ground black pepper to meat loaf mixture. Top with salsa for a spicy kick.

**PIZZA-INSPIRED:** Add 2 teaspoons Italian seasoning plus 1 teaspoon onion powder and ½ teaspoon each garlic powder and ground black pepper. Top with no-salt-added tomato sauce mixed with additional 2 teaspoons Italian seasoning and a sprinkle of Parmesan cheese.

**Keep It Moist**
When you take away fat, you also lose moisture. Add 1 cup of grated vegetables, such as carrots and zucchini, into the meat loaf mixture.

**Consider Your Toppings**
**BROWN GRAVY:** Instead of gravy made with pan drippings, prepare a flavorful gravy made with McCormick Gravy Mix and water, which was used in the University of Colorado study and has only 0.5 gram of fat per serving. Opt for the McCormick 30% Less Sodium Brown Gravy Mix or the Gluten-Free Gravy Mix. Add additional flavor by stirring in ¼ teaspoon thyme leaves.

**TOMATO-BASED SAUCE:** Use no-salt-added tomato sauce instead of regular tomato sauce, which saves about 1,500 mg sodium per cup. Season with oregano, garlic powder and crushed red pepper. Use about 1 teaspoon of total spices per cup of sauce.

**Portion Control**
Make your meat loaf in muffin tins for built-in portion control. This also makes meat loaf more fun for the whole family - everyone can personalize flavors to their own taste preference! Plus, they cook in just 25 minutes. And, it’s a great make-ahead meal you can prepare on the weekend, freeze and reheat on busy weeknights.

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Make Vegetables the Star
Adding spices and herbs to vegetables can make them more appealing to all family members.

Vary Your Veggies
Choose vegetables that are in season for the best flavor. Color is a great cue for nutrient density, so choose deeply hued vegetables and a variety of colors.

Mix Up Your Preparation Method
Think about sautéing, roasting, steaming, grilling and serving raw, too! Whatever method you choose, focus on combining vegetables with flavor.

Flavor Ideas
Toss steamed broccoli and cauliflower with a small amount of olive oil along with garlic powder and onion powder, as well as black pepper.

Use raw vegetables as salad greens instead of lettuce, like shaved Brussels sprouts and sliced zucchini ribbons. Toss with a simple homemade vinaigrette and your choice of dried or fresh fruit and/or toasted nuts.

Roasting gives vegetables a concentrated, robust flavor. Try roasting sweet potatoes, beets, carrots, butternut squash or Brussels sprouts. Add a small amount of olive oil and a flavor like rosemary, cumin, ginger, garlic powder or chipotle chile pepper.

Add A Hint Of Sour
Brighten up vegetables by adding citrus - like lemon or lime juice - or a splash of vinegar, including balsamic, red wine, champagne or other flavored vinegars.

Make It A Medley
Combine carrots, broccoli, sugar snap peas, onion and red bell pepper, then sauté with Asian-inspired spices like toasted sesame seed, ground ginger and garlic powder. Add a splash of reduced-sodium soy sauce.

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**Muffin Pan Meat Loaf**

**Prep Time:** 15 minutes  |  **Cook Time:** 25 minutes  |  **Makes 12 servings**

**INGREDIENTS**
- **Meat Loaf:**
  - 2 pounds 90% lean ground beef
  - 1/2 cup grated carrots
  - 1/2 cup grated zucchini
  - 2 eggs, lightly beaten
  - 1/2 cup milk
  - 1/4 cup dry bread crumbs
  - 2 teaspoons McCormick® Perfect Pinch® Salt Free Garlic & Herb Seasoning
  - 1 teaspoon McCormick® Basil Leaves
  - 1/2 teaspoon McCormick® Oregano Leaves

- **Sauce:**
  - 2 cups no-salt-added tomato sauce
  - 1 teaspoon McCormick® Oregano Leaves
  - 1/2 teaspoon McCormick® Garlic Powder
  - 1/2 teaspoon McCormick® Crushed Red Pepper

**DIRECTIONS**
1. Mix all meat loaf ingredients in large bowl until well blended. Divide mixture into 12 balls. Place each ball into a muffin cup.
2. Bake in preheated 350°F oven 25 minutes or until cooked through. Let stand 5 minutes before serving.
3. Meanwhile, for the Sauce, place all ingredients in medium saucepan. Cook on medium heat until heated through, stirring occasionally. Serve with meat loaf.

**NUTRITION INFO PER SERVING:**
- Calories: 160
- Sodium: 80mg
- Fat: 7g
- Carbohydrates: 6g
- Cholesterol: 80mg
- Protein: 17g
- Fiber: 1g

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**Mediterranean Pasta with Fire Roasted Vegetables**

**Prep Time:** 15 minutes  |  **Cook Time:** 1 hour  |  **Makes 6 (1-cup) servings**

**INGREDIENTS**
- 2 pounds medium plum tomatoes (about 10 to 12) halved lengthwise
- 1/4 cup olive oil
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 2 tablespoons balsamic vinegar
- 2 tablespoons McCormick® Perfect Pinch® Italian Seasoning
- 1/4 teaspoon McCormick® Crushed Red Pepper
- 1/4 teaspoon McCormick® Black Pepper
- 1/4 teaspoon Sea Salt from McCormick® Sea Salt Grinder
- 8 ounces whole grain pasta, such as penne or linguine

**DIRECTIONS**
1. Place tomato halves, cut-sides up, in foil-lined 15x10x1-inch pan sprayed with non-stick cooking spray. Mix oil, garlic, balsamic vinegar and seasonings in small bowl. Spoon over tomatoes.
2. Roast in preheated 400°F oven 45 to 60 minutes until tomatoes are soft and browned on top.
3. Prepare pasta as directed on package. Drain well. Place 1/2 of the roasted tomatoes in large bowl. Coarsely mash tomatoes. Add pasta and remaining roasted tomatoes from baking pan; toss to mix well. Sprinkle with additional crushed red pepper, if desired.

**NUTRITION INFO PER SERVING:**
- Calories: 260
- Sodium: 105mg
- Fat: 11g
- Carbohydrates: 36g
- Cholesterol: 0mg
- Protein: 6g
- Fiber: 5g

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**Shaved Brussels Sprouts Salad**

**Prep Time:** 15 minutes  |  **Makes 6 servings**

**INGREDIENTS**
- **Dressing:**
  - 3 tablespoons white wine vinegar
  - 2 tablespoons olive oil
  - 1 1/4 teaspoons McCormick® Pure Vanilla Extract
  - 1/2 teaspoon McCormick® Ground Ginger
  - 1/2 teaspoon sugar
  - 1/4 teaspoon salt
  - 1/8 teaspoon McCormick® Ground Black Pepper

- **Salad:**
  - 3 cups Brussels sprouts, trimmed and thinly sliced
  - 1/4 cup dried cranberries
  - 1/4 cup chopped walnuts, toasted

**DIRECTIONS**
1. Mix all dressing ingredients in small bowl with wire whisk until well blended. Set aside.
2. Toss Brussels sprouts, cranberries and walnuts in large bowl until well blended. Drizzle with dressing; toss to coat well. Serve immediately.

**NUTRITION INFO PER SERVING:**
- Calories: 80
- Sodium: 110mg
- Fat: 4.5g
- Carbohydrates: 9g
- Cholesterol: 0mg
- Protein: 2g
- Fiber: 2g

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REFERENCES

Asian Vegetable Medley

**INGREDIENTS**
- 1 tablespoon oil
- 1 medium onion, sliced thin
- 1 cup diagonally sliced carrots
- 2 cups broccoli florets
- 2 cups sugar snap peas
- 1 large red bell pepper, cut into strips
- 1 tablespoon reduced sodium soy sauce
- 1 teaspoon McCormick® Garlic Powder
- 1 teaspoon McCormick® Ground Ginger
- 2 teaspoons McCormick® Sesame Seed, toasted

**DIRECTIONS**
1. Heat oil in wok or large deep skillet on medium-high heat. Add onion and carrots; stir fry 2 minutes. Add remaining vegetables; stir fry 5 to 7 minutes or until vegetables are tender-crisp.
2. Add soy sauce and seasonings to skillet. Stir-fry until well blended. Sprinkle with sesame seed before serving.
3. Serve over rice, if desired.

To Toast Sesame Seed: Heat small skillet on medium heat. Add sesame seed; cook and stir 2 minutes or until golden brown and fragrant. Immediately pour out of hot pan to avoid over-toasting.

**NUTRITION INFO PER SERVING:** Calories: 45, Sodium: 75mg, Fat: 2g, Carbohydrates: 6g, Cholesterol: 0mg, Protein: 2g, Fiber: 2g

Roasted Broccoli and Tomatoes

**INGREDIENTS**
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 1 teaspoon McCormick® Garlic Powder
- 1/4 teaspoon McCormick® Black Pepper, Coarse Ground
- 12 ounces broccoli florets
- 1 cup cherry or grape tomatoes
- 1 tablespoon white wine vinegar
- 2 teaspoons honey
- 1/2 teaspoon McCormick® Basil Leaves
- 1/4 teaspoon McCormick® Oregano Leaves

**DIRECTIONS**
1. Preheat oven to 425°F. Mix oil, garlic powder and pepper in large bowl. Add broccoli and tomatoes; toss to coat well. Spread in single layer on foil-lined 15x10x1-inch baking pan.
2. Roast 13 to 15 minutes or until broccoli is lightly browned.
3. Meanwhile, mix vinegar, honey, basil and oregano in small bowl. Drizzle over roasted vegetables; toss to coat well.
4. Serve immediately.

**NUTRITION INFO PER SERVING:** Calories: 88, Sodium: 27mg, Fat: 4g, Carbohydrates: 10g, Cholesterol: 0mg, Protein: 3g, Fiber: 3g

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