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7 Ways to Enhance the Flavor of Your Meals

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Cooking at home can be healthy, rewarding and cost-effective. And, according to research, taste tops nutrition as the main reason why Americans buy one food over another. The foods you enjoy are likely the ones you eat the most, so make taste a kitchen priority when preparing nutritious, satisfying meals.

To maximize food's flavor and nutrition, start with high-quality ingredients. They don't need to be the most expensive foods. It's also important to handle and store foods properly, because poor storage destroys flavor and quality.

Overcooking can destroy flavor and nutrients. So cook to retain nutrients, flavor, color, texture and overall appeal. Cooking can't improve poor-quality foods, but it can enhance the flavors of high-quality foods.

Try these seven simple techniques to enhance flavor and experiment with flavor combinations.

- Intensify the flavors of meat, poultry and fish with high-heat cooking techniques such as pan-searing, grilling or broiling, which help to brown meat and add flavor. Just don't overcook, burn or char meat.
- Grill or roast veggies in a very hot (450°F) oven or grill for a sweet, smoky flavor. Before popping them into the oven, brush or spray lightly with high-heat oil and sprinkle with herbs.
- Caramelize sliced onions to bring out their natural sugar flavor by cooking them slowly over low heat in a bit of oil. Use them to make a rich, dark sauce for meat or poultry.
- Pep it up with peppers! Use red, green and yellow peppers of all varieties — sweet, hot and dried. Or, add a dash of hot pepper sauce.
- Add a tangy taste with citrus juice or grated citrus peel: lemon, lime or orange. Acidic ingredients help lift and balance flavor.
- Use small amounts of ingredients with bold flavors such as pomegranate seeds, chipotle pepper or cilantro.
- Give a flavor burst with good-quality condiments such as horseradish, flavored mustard, chutney, wasabi, bean purees, tapenade and salsas of all kinds.



Berry and Barley Spinach Salad Recipe

- 2 cups cooked and cooled barley
 - 1 tablespoon olive oil
 - Juice and zest of 1 lime
 - 5 ounces (4 cups) fresh baby spinach
 - ¼ cup red onion, finely chopped
 - 2 tablespoons fresh basil, chopped
 - 1 avocado, diced
 - 2 cups fresh or defrosted berries (strawberries, raspberries, blueberries or blackberries)
 - Optional: Salt and pepper, to taste
- Directions

Before you begin: Wash your hands.

1. In a large bowl, gently mix together barley, olive oil, lime juice and zest, spinach, red onion, fresh basil, salt and pepper.
2. Gently fold in avocado and berries.
3. Serve salad immediately or chill and serve within 2 hours.

Source: <https://www.eatright.org/recipes/salads/berry-and-barley-spinach-salad-recipe>
<https://www.eatright.org/food/food-preparation/cooking-tips/enhancing-the-flavor-of-your-meals>