

- Speaker 1: [00:00](#) Welcome to the old fashioned on purpose podcast. Today I'm going to tell you about some unsung heroes in my kitchen. Now these little heroes are something that have saved the day for me more than once. However, I've realized I don't really talk about them in culinary aspects as much as I should. So today I'm going to dive into the ins and outs of using essential oils in your from scratch cooking. We're talking safety, we're talking dilution, we're talking how to make sure you don't overpower your recipes. And I'll share my top 10 must have culinary essential oils.
- Speaker 1: [00:48](#) I'm your host Jill winger. And for the last 10 years I've been helping people just like you who feel uninspired by modern life. I'll show you how to create the life you really want by learning how to grow your own food and opt out of the rat race. So when it comes to the topic of cooking with essential oils, it can generate, let's just say a wide variety of opinions. So there are people out there who say, you should never cook with oils. We're going to talk about that in a minute. And there's all kinds of blog posts floating around. But let me just say in about the last eight years, I've been using essential oils a lot for everything you can imagine and cooking with them is a really wonderful way to put your essential oil stash to good use with a few considerations that we'll cover in today's episode.
- Speaker 1: [01:48](#) And the good thing about cooking with essential oils is that it is not complicated in the slightest. And I find that essential oils, most of them not all are really good additions to my kitchen cupboards. So I think the first question that comes up when we talk about this is people say, okay, fine, but why don't you just use herbs instead? And that's a very legitimate question. And honestly, I still use a ton of herbs in cooking. Like I use herbs still by far more than I use essential oils. And in many cases I prefer to use herbs over oils because generally it's a little easier to control the flavor when I'm using dried herbs. Now, that being said, there are a couple times when I'm really, really happy to have oils in the kitchen or I might even select an oil over an herb.
- Speaker 1: [02:47](#) So the first instance would be when I run out, and that's kind of a big deal for me because we live 40 miles from the closest grocery store. So when I run out of something in a recipe like having my husband run to town real quick, or having myself run to town is not an option. So I have to learn how to make do and more than once I've been out of a herb or a spice in the cabinet and I grab an oil and it works as a great substitute. Another reason that I will select an oil versus in herbs is when a recipe calls for a slightly rare ingredient and maybe rare isn't the right

word. I'm like, here's an example. I rarely keep limes in my refrigerator. I just don't buy a lot of limes. They are not exactly native to Wyoming.

Speaker 1: [03:39](#) I don't grow them, I just don't buy them. So when I have a recipe that is calling for lime zest or lime juice, the easiest thing for me is just to grab my bottle of lime essential oil and to add a drop or two, I will do this with homemade salsas, Pico de Gallo, um, tortilla soup. Basically anything that needs a splash of lime. And the same goes for other citrus as well. I use lemon essential oil a lot. I have this amazing puff pancake recipe, like a German pancake that explodes over the side of the pan and it calls for some lemon zest. So I've been making that recipe for about three years and I always use a few drops of lemon essential oil instead and it just adds a really nice lemony hint, in that dish. Another example of this would be cilantro. I seem to be cursed when it comes to growing cilantro in my garden.

Speaker 1: [04:41](#) I have literally tried it every single year. I've tried buying the plants, I've tried starting them from seed. And for the life of me, I cannot get it to grow. It's bizarre. It's like I am literally cursed when it comes to growing cilantro and when I go to the store and buy cilantro, that's fine and dandy, but as you guys probably know, it goes bad pretty darn quickly in the fridge. So more often than not, when a recipe like let's take salsa, for example, calls for cilantro, it's way easier just to grab my bottle of cilantro essential oil and use that. Now, a little caveat here before we get into the rest of this information, I want to make it extremely clear that this episode is specifically about cooking with essential oils, which is very different from actually ingesting essential oils in therapeutic doses. Now that's a whole different topic.

Speaker 1: [05:42](#) There's a whole different set of opinions and safety rules on that, and I do have opinions on that, but it's really beyond the scope of today's episode. So we're specifically talking about cooking with oils here, and the difference lies the fact that when we're cooking with an oil, it's very diluted, right? We're using a tiny drop of oil. And the difference lies in the fact that when we're cooking with an oil, it's very, very diluted, right? We're using a tiny drop of oil in a large quantity of food, almost always. And so that alone negates pretty much all of the safety concerns that swirl around the topic of ingesting essential oils. So I don't think this is controversial as people make it out to be. And again, there's lots of opinions. You can hear everything you want to hear online. But I don't think it's a big deal.

Speaker 1: [06:41](#) Additionally, we already are eating essential oils and even the, the loudest critics of essential oil ingestion are eating essential oils, whether they know it or not, because herbs and citrus zest and all sorts of foods already have, or not all of them, but a lot of them have essential oils in them naturally because obviously that's where our oils come from in the first place. And a lot of food companies have been using oils as flavorings or additives for many, many years. So essential oils in the food we eat is not a new concept, right? It's just a little bit different now because we have them in bottles. Whereas 15 years ago there really wasn't a thing. Now, one little note here, I want you to understand because sometimes there's confusion when we get talking about different essential oil companies and the different claims they make. There are certain oils that you should never ingest no matter what company they come from.

Speaker 1: [07:48](#) So an example of this would be wintergreen essential oil, and this one throws a lot of people off because we associate winter green as a flavoring and a food additive. Surprisingly, wintergreen contains a constituent in very high levels that is very similar. It's basically aspirin, right? So it's fabulous for using it topically. That's what makes wintergreen such an amazing analgesic. We can use it topically with some dilution. It soothes muscles and soothes joints, but we do not want to ingest it. If you were to ingest large quantities of winter green, it would be similar to overdosing on aspirin, which we know is not a good idea. So because of that, I would always avoid ever ingesting wintergreen. It's just not one you need to be eating. Right? Peppermint's one you can put in your food but skip the wintergreen. And there are a few other examples of that.

Speaker 1: [08:45](#) In the essential oil world, it's not about brands or purity of the oil, it doesn't really matter. It's just because of how the chemical makeup of that plant operates. So the way that I personally know my oils are the ones you know, which ones I can cook with and which ones not to cook with, the brand of oils I use, which is doTERRA, they have little FDA supplement labels on the bottles of any oil that is considered to be generally regarded as safe for using as a food additive or ingesting. Right? This does not mean they're FDA approved. And I really want you to understand this. There's some misinformation out there. There is no such thing as an FDA approved essential oil. It does not exist, but there is a list and you can find it on the FDA website or somewhere online.

Speaker 1: [09:42](#) That has a generally regarded as safe list. And if an oil is on that list, it's considered to be appropriate for ingestion. Does not mean you should overdose. It does not mean you should, uh,

take, you know, chug the bottle and go crazy. But it means that there's not a concern associated with it. Like there would be with wintergreen, if that makes sense. Okay. So there's all my little caveats and safety warnings and all that fun stuff. So let's switch gears a little bit. Let's talk about efficacy because one question I get a ton when it comes to cooking with oils is people are like, okay, hold on. I know that heat can negate the benefits of an essential oil. So what is cooking in an oven going to do? Legit question, right? Because we know that we're not supposed to heat essential oils. We're not supposed to leave them in a hot car.

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We don't want to put them in a sunny window. We don't want to diffuse them using one of those heated wax warmers. Essential oils are at their very best when they're kept cool and in dark places. They last longer, they're more potent. So yes, when we are putting them in a soup or sticking them in the oven in a dish, there's a pretty good chance that those high temperatures are going to destroy some of the therapeutic benefits. Now it's a little bit fuzzy. I haven't seen definitive research as to how much is negated or how much is left after the cooking process. But here's my thought on this. When I'm cooking with an oil, I'm really just using it for flavor. It's not really about a therapeutic benefit for me at that point. I just want the salsa to taste like cilantro or the brownies to taste like peppermint, so I'm not super worried if the oil might not be at its highest potency when it comes out of the oven.

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Now on the flip side, if I'm using oils in my diffuser or I need it for respiratory support for my kids or I'm trying to, you know, use it therapeutically, then I'm not going to heat the oils. I'm going to make sure my bottles are kept in cool dark locations and I'm using a cool air diffuser. And all of that, but I just don't worry about it too much in cooking and even though cooking will sometimes reduce the flavor just a tad, I've made many a pan of brownies that still have a really fantastic peppermint or orange flavor even after 30 minutes of baking. So I wouldn't get hung up on this too very much. Okay, let's talk quality for a minute because the whole essential oil landscape has changed versus when I started, people didn't even know what they were and that was like seven or eight years ago and now you can get essential oils in the bargain bin at Walmart, or I even saw some on the clearance shelf at TJ max the other day.

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Like it's just a different world. So essential oils are everywhere. They're way easier to get than they were a decade ago. They're really mainstream. However, just because you can find them at Walmart and T J Maxx for two bucks a pop doesn't mean you

should get those. There is a lot of adulteration and let's just say sketchy stuff that happens in the essential oil industry, and there's a whole lot of test results that have been done by third party consumer groups or different laboratories that shows that these bargain bin oils are not what they say they are. So adulterating is a big thing because essential oils are precious and they are an investment. So a company will often dilute a higher quality oil with a different whale that kind of smells the same, but it's not the same. So an example of this would be peppermint. You can go to some of these bargain bins, get a bottle that says 100% pure peppermint oil, but if that bottle is tested, it will come out.

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That is actually something called corn mint oil. Not true peppermint. It does not have the same therapeutic effects, not the same thing as a false labeling, but there's no regulatory agency here. So the companies can get away with it and make money on people who think they're getting a deal. Unfortunately. So because of this deception, like there's a lot of different ways companies will cheat the system. I don't get the bargain oils, I will never ingest those. I do not cook with them because I don't know what I'm getting. So it's really important that if you are going to cook with an oil, please be sure you're getting a high quality oil that you can trust that what it says on the bottle is what it actually is. Um, it's not worth putting stuff in your food that you don't know what it is or you know you're being lied to on the labels.

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Really, that's no different than just going to the store and getting the processed foods with all the junk in it. So don't ruin your good food with a bad oil. Personally, like I mentioned, I use doTERRA. That's the only company I've used. If you'd like more information on that, I will drop a link in the show notes and I have some information on why I went with them and why I have continued to use them for I think about eight years now. Alrighty. So quantity. This is a big, big part of cooking with essential oils. Quantity is everything. And by quantity I mean the right amount, not too much, not too little because um, you can easily overdose your food with essential oil. Sometimes even one drop is too much. So you want to be really careful that you don't ruin your food with this potent oil, like a little bit goes a very, very long ways.

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I wish I had a tried and true formula so you would know exactly how much oil to use in every single recipe. But it really depends. It depends on the oil you're using, the recipe you're making, the type of food it is, whether it's going to be cooked or not cooked. So here's my best rule of thumb for you. If you're making a large

bowl or a pan or a nine by 13 or a pot of something, start with one single drop of essential oil taste and then go from there. If you're making a small serving like a cup of beverage or a smaller bowl of salsa, I would recommend you actually go with less than a drop. And the way I do this is I will take a toothpick, I will stick it down into the bottle and then dip that toothpick in the food and swirl it around in there.

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So I'm just getting a hint in into the food and not an entire drop that is going to be your best bet in preventing you ruining something with us in soil. So the rule always start small. Okay. I've found that usually one drop is plenty, especially with a stronger oil like oregano or cilantro. They are potent. I would not overdo the cilantro. The same goes for oregano. The citrus oils are ones I've found I can be a little more liberal with my addition on can add a little bit more. Um, but go easy and go from there. Also, one other little note, if the recipe you're making is going to be cooked or baked, you did really can add a bit more oil because it seems as though the heat mellows out flavor a little bit. So an example would be brownies that I referenced earlier.

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I love adding peppermint oil or orange oil because orange and chocolate is magical. I love adding that to my brownies. Like if I have a nine by 13 pan, I might add four or five drops to that because it goes in the oven, the heat kind of mellows it out. But don't be afraid to taste the batter before you pop it in the pan and stick it in the oven just to be safe. Okay, so I'm going to go this through this pretty quickly, but I want to tell you my top 10 essential oils for cooking. And there's lots of oils you can use for cooking. So this is not comprehensive, but these are the ones I use the very most. These are the ones I feel like our truest to their herb flavor. One little anomaly I have discovered is sometimes an essential oil won't taste like the herb because it's so much more potent.

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So an example would be basil. I mean, it still tastes like dried basil or fresh basil, but basil is enjoyable is, whew, it's, it's heavy duty. So, um, if I need basil flavor in a recipe, I am going to be really, really careful adding basil essential oil because it's maybe not quite what I was looking for. But these 10 oils I'm about to list out for you. They're very, very on target if you're looking for a flavor, they really bring it. Okay, number one, lemon and number two, lime. So citrus are amazing. I'm going to add them to any recipe that calls for zest: marinade, salsas, tortilla soups. Fantastic. Another citrus that I always use in cooking is wild orange. It's great for brownies or adding it to chocolate ice

cream. You churn your own ice cream. Oh my goodness. Add a couple drops of orange oil to it.

Speaker 1: [19:50](#) Fantastic. Number four is ginger. I find that I, I mean I love fresh ginger, but I don't buy it all the time or it goes bad in the refrigerator. So if I'm needing to use fresh ginger in a recipe and I don't have it, such as in my homemade chai concentrate that you can find on the blog, ginger oil's a fantastic substitute. Cardamom is what I put on this list. It's a little bit surprising cardamom if you've never smelled it. It is very chai, uh, reminiscent or reminiscent of chai. So believe it or not is really, really awesome with chocolate. So you can add cardamom to brownies just to drop or two, really fun, kind of fall-Autumn twist. It's also great in vanilla ice cream for a chai inspired vanilla. Um, as you might tell, I like chai. That's one of the flavors I really enjoy.

Speaker 1: [20:50](#) So ginger and cardamom are fantastic for that. Number six is peppermint. Talked about that already. Peppermint teas, peppermint brownies, peppermint ice cream. It's, it's pretty strong. So make sure you're going little tiny bits. Um, number seven is thyme. I have a lot of dried thyme. I use dried thyme a lot. On the rare instances I am out of it. Thyme essential oil is fantastic for marinades, stews, sauces, all those good things. Number eight is cumin. I happened to be out of ground cumin right now. I use a lot of it. So I'm substituting cumin essential oil in my taco meat, chilis and soups. And it's really, really fantastic. Number nine, this is one of my favorites. Dill. Dill essential oil is so on target with exactly how it just is like so crisp and fresh. It's everything you would want dill to be. So adding that to salad dressings or dips is fantastic.

Speaker 1: [21:56](#) It is amazing. And lastly, number 10, maybe a surprising one, but actually black pepper essential oil is really, really good for adding to meats for basting, for marinades. I will add it into uh, my Turkey basting liquid when I'm roasting a Turkey for Thanksgiving. Uh, it's really, really a little bit of spice, a little bit of savory and it's fantastic. So that was a lot of information you guys, I hope that was helpful. Just some practical takeaways when you're using essential oils, always use common sense. Don't use too much. Um, don't go crazy. Remember they're powerful little bottles, so start small and go from there. But all in all, there's no reason to be afraid of cooking with essential oils. On occasion. We're already ingesting essential oils in the food we eat. And adding them in yourself is a great way to add a little bit of flavor.

Speaker 1:

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And save yourself a trip to the grocery store and sometimes herbs are going to be the better choice. So don't feel like you have to get rid of all your herbs and only cook with oils. I think having both is your very best bet. So I know that was a ton of information and I wanted to condense it all down for you into a free download. And this little ebook I created has all the ins and outs of adding essential oils into your homesteading routine no matter what size or kind of homestead you have. And this is something that I really am proud of. Lot of good information and recipes in this ebook. It includes my DIY bug repellent formula, how to fight garden pests, how to use oils on your animals and how I use my essential oil stash to save us money every single month. So you can get this for free. Go to [theprairiehomestead.com/essential-homestead-ebook](http://theprairiehomestead.com/essential-homestead-ebook) to download it right away. Instant download and I'll drop that link in the show notes if you want to click on it there. And that my friend is all for this episode. Thanks for listening and if you have a minute, I would be so honored for you to pop over to iTunes and leave a quick review so more homesteaders can find us. Thanks for listening and I will chat with you on the next episode of the old fashioned on purpose podcast.

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podcast.