



Nutrition and Aging Resource Center

Create a Flavor Station

Flavor stations are a popular concept in schools that can also be used in Older Americans Act (OAA) Title III-C programs. A flavor station allows meal participants to season their meals without adding sodium.

Salt and Sodium: Defined

Salt is a common ingredient that enhances flavor, improves texture and appearance, and acts as a preservative. While "salt," "table salt," and "sodium" are often used interchangeably, they are not entirely the same. Table salt is specific type of salt that consists of two elements: sodium and chloride. Sodium is a mineral and essential nutrient found in many foods. In excess, however, it can raise blood pressure, which is a major risk factor for heart disease and stroke.

Creating a Flavor Station

A flavor station consists of a small area in a congregate dining room equipped with a variety of salt-free or low-sodium seasonings. The display can include individual spices and herbs, salt-free seasoning blends, vinegars, and lemon or lime juice. This allows participants to flavor their food in their own way without added sodium. Depending on space and the number of participants, four to six different options can be presented. A flavor station box of individual packets can be created for home-delivered meals.

Source: [*Spice Up Your Lunchroom with a Flavor Station PowerPoint*](#) published by the Smarter Lunchrooms Movement National Office.

Flavorful Alternatives to Salt

The following is an inspiration list of dry spices and other no-salt seasonings to use on a flavor station.

- Lemon or Lime Juice
- Apple Cider Vinegar
- Balsamic Vinegar
- Rice Wine Vinegar (unseasoned)
- Red Wine Vinegar
- Cardamom
- Chili Powder
- Cilantro
- Cinnamon
- Coriander
- Crushed Red Pepper
- Cumin
- Curry Powder
- Dried Basil
- Dried Dill
- Dried Oregano
- Dried Rosemary
- Dried Thyme
- Ground Black Pepper
- Ground Ginger
- Garlic Powder
- Ground Turmeric
- Onion Powder
- Italian Seasoning
- Lemon Pepper (Salt Free)
- Nutmeg
- Smoked Paprika

Tips for Flavor Stations

- Survey participants to learn what spices and seasonings are preferred.
- Consider the menu served and which salt-free seasonings are complementary.
- Consider making your own homemade spice blends (see recipes below).
- Provide variety in the types of salt-free seasonings (dry, fresh, and liquid).
- Update procedures to include daily responsibility for cleaning and refilling containers.

Example: Provo City School District (UT) provides a cart called a “flavor station” with a variety of seasonings: “The flavor stations consist of a small cart that is equipped with 6 different salt-free spice blends and allow students to flavor their food in their own way. The six spices that will be featured are: Tikka Masala Curry, Italian Seasoning, Roasted Garlic Pepper, Sweet Chili Powder, Lemon White Pepper, and Apple Pie Spice”
Source: [New Flavor Stations Introduced in Cafeterias | Provo City School District](#).

How to Display Flavor Stations

- Use a creative name with exciting or inviting words (e.g., Spice World, Taste Lab).
- Locate the flavor station so it is easy to access.
- Label each seasoning with easy-to-read labels and graphics/photos.
- Place seasonings and spices on an attractive tray or other holder.
- Have designated spots for each seasoning.
- Keep flavor stations clean, neat, and organized.

Source: [Spice Up Your Lunchroom with a Flavor Station – Healthy Food Choices in Schools \(extension.org\)](#).