



Cooking with Essential Oils

Guest: Lindsey Dietz

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Samantha: Hi, Lindsey. Welcome, how are you?

Lindsey: Hey, Sam. I'm great. It's good to be here.

Samantha: Yeah, it's great to see you. I am excited to talk about essential for cooking. This is one of my favorite topics when it comes to essential oils because it makes it so practical and attainable for people who think they don't know essential oils or think they have to know so much to use them, when really it is so simple to just incorporate it into your kitchen.

Lindsey: Yeah, totally. If you are afraid to get your feet wet with using them medicinally, cooking with them is a great way to start.

Samantha: So, for those who don't know you, Lindsey, you are the founder and creator of *All the Nourishing Things*, a website devoted to uncomplicated, real food and holistic living. You are also a certified health coach and you provide readers with simple, beautiful recipes and practical tips for incorporating nutrient-dense foods, essential oils and natural remedies into our busy lives. I love how your work focuses a lot on busy moms. I'm a mom and I just really relate to how true that it is, when you are busy and you're juggling all the plates. When you work from home or you work out of the home and you're juggling all the kids and the meals, it really does feel like you don't have time to do all the nourishing things. You're really here to show us that we can, and I just love that.

Lindsey: Yeah. You totally can do all the nourishing things and you don't have to lose your sanity and I really set out to prove that it can be simple. It can be inexpensive. Moms really can provide nourishing foods. They can use natural remedies and essential oils. They can incorporate all these things into their lives, even if they are busy, even if they are working, even if they have teenagers like me.

Samantha: Absolutely! Well, I want to dive into essential oils for cooking and I know this is just a small part of the work that you do. But tell us what are some reasons that someone would want to use essential oils for cooking.

Lindsey: Yeah, that's why we're here right?

Samantha: Right!

Lindsey: Yeah, so I kind of find three reasons why people would want to use essential oils in their cooking. So, the first one is just flavor. Essential oils are so concentrated, so they deliver such a punch of flavor, even more so than dried herbs and spices and ground spices and even fresh fruit. So, you can really pump up the flavor of your dishes simply by adding essential oils. And I do want to point out that you can add these flavors to both raw and cooked dishes. So people should not be afraid to cook with their essential oils and we'll talk more about that later.

Samantha: OK.

Lindsey: So, the second reason somebody would want to add essential oils to their cooking obviously is the health benefits. I mean, if you are watching videos about essential oils and cooking with essential oils, then you know that they have health benefits. So, essential oils are so good for your health and they have all kinds of properties that make them good for us. So, maybe you want to calm an upset stomach or you want to try a recipe with some peppermint oil in it or maybe you want the anti-inflammatory benefits of ginger or black pepper and you could just simply add those things to a smoothie. So, health benefits is another reason why somebody would want to use essential oils in their cooking.

I do want to go back to the raw versus cooked. So, if you are using essential oils for the health benefits, it is best to keep that recipe raw because we know that essential oils are sensitive to light and heat. And that's why they come in amber or cobalt glass bottles. That's why whenever we store them, we recommend to store them in a cool dry place away from a heat source. So, if

you are going for the health benefits of essential oils, you want to keep them in raw recipes, so salad dressings, smoothies, things like that.

Then the third reason that we want to use essential oils in cooking is for convenience. So, what happens when you run out of an herb or a spice. Now, I know for a lot of people maybe Whole Foods or a grocery store is right around the corner, but, for me, I live 65 miles away from the nearest city. So, if I run out of like ground cinnamon, it is not like I can just jump in the car and go buy some cinnamon, but I always have cinnamon essential oil on hand so I can just substitute that in a recipe. I can not tell you the number of times that I have had a bunch of avocados that I've needed to use up, so I want to make some guacamole and then I realize that I am out of limes. So, I can't just jump in the car and go buy limes so, instead, I pull out my lime essential oil. I add that instead. It really gives that right pop of lime flavor and, of course, you can't have guacamole without the lime.

Samantha: No, sacrilege.

Lindsey: Right. It totally is. So, if you are watching our screen here, I have a recipe for some lime essential oil guacamole I would like to share. So, maybe the next time you find yourself out of limes or maybe you just want to get your feet wet with cooking with essential oils. Pull up this recipe for lime essential oil guacamole and have a party.

So, another example that I have is like ground cinnamon. Any kinds of ground spices that you run out of or fruit you might be out of, like lemons or orange, all of those things, you can use the essential oil of that herb or spice or fruit as a matter of convenience, if you keep a well-stocked oils essential cabinet, which I do.

Samantha: Right. Well, it is so much easier. It's, like you said, convenient to have that row of essential oils there as opposed to trying to keep like a kitchen stocked full of fresh herbs and spices or even dry things that run out pretty quickly. I can't count the number of recipes that I have wanted to make, and it calls for fresh rosemary or fresh sage or fresh thyme. I just, I don't have that stuff around, and I wish I had a nice herb garden outside my window, but I don't, and I don't want to have to run to the store. Having those oils on hand, it really does give that flavor of like a fresh herb much more so than a dried a one.

Lindsey: Totally.

Samantha: That's actually one of the questions I have for you is really, why is that? What's the difference between using a dried herb or an essential oil?

What's the difference in the process for what we're capturing when we compare those things?

Lindsey: That's a really great question. Before I dive into the difference, I want to speak to your example of not always having fresh herbs on hand. So, as a food photographer, kind one of the things you do in food photography, you add fresh herbs to your photos or to garnish a dish, whatever. So, I frequently find myself shopping for fresh herbs. Specifically, for this talk actually, for some of the recipes I was developing, I was shopping for some fresh herbs. Now in the summertime, I grow all of my own herbs. I have a great garden and I have that ability to do so, so it is really convenient. But whenever I was shopping for herbs, for this talk specifically, so I could take some nice photos for everyone. I was really shocked at how expensive. It's like a little one-ounce thing and it is like \$3.

Samantha: Yeah, yeah. Or more. I swear. I swear a fresh pack of basil at the grocery store here is like \$10.

Lindsey: Yeah it really is. And if you want organic it is even more. It's astronomical. But then you can buy a bottle of basil essential oil – and, by the way, the herbs I just bought, maybe three days ago I bought them and some of the leaves are already starting to turn brown. So, they are already going bad. But then you've got that bottle of basil essential oil or rosemary or oregano or thyme and, as long as you are storing it away from heat and light, that bottle is going to last you way longer than those herbs, so you are not wasting. And then, over time, you can add just a drop to a recipe as opposed to having to buy the whole \$3 thing to get the same amount of flavor. So, I do want to point out that, for people who might feel like, "Oh, my essential oils are so expensive. Isn't it a waste to put them in my cooking?" No. Because I am going to throw out a bunch of herbs that are already starting to go bad and I am not throwing away my essential oils because they are just fine.

Samantha: You might need a whole pack of fresh herbs to get that flavor with one drop of oil that costs five cents, 15 cents, depending on which oil you are talking about but usually somewhere in that price range it's like no comparison.

Lindsey: Right, exactly. So, the difference between the dried herb and the essential oil. So, obviously essential oils are made from fresh herbs. Nobody's making essential oils from dried herbs. They're steam distilling things like basil, dill, oregano, thyme, rosemary, lavender, etcetera. There is a reason why they don't make essential oils from dried herbs and the word is potency. So, once herbs are dried, they lose their potency which equals flavor very quickly. And, even if you're storing your herbs properly, your dried herbs, which is

away from light, away from heat and in airtight containers, really the shelf life of a dried herb is max about six months.

So, for a lot of people, a lot of our audience might be those people that buy herbs and spices, dried herbs and spices, in bulk or whatever and, unless, you are using those things up really quickly, you can find that that tablespoon of dill that you added to a salad dressing after you opened the package is not going to taste the same as the same tablespoon six months later because it loses its potency. And I read in numerous studies in several different places that, to get the flavor and the benefits of peppermint, for example, peppermint essential oil, you would have to drink 300 cups of peppermint tea to get what you get from one drop of peppermint essential oil.

Samantha: Wow.

Lindsey: Yeah. So, it's potency. And over time, those dried herbs – spices not so much. They'll last a little bit longer than the herbs do, but, especially, those leafy green herbs, they just lose their concentration and potency over a long period of time and essential oils don't.

Samantha: Right. Absolutely. Now what about the difference between an essential oil and an extract?

Lindsey: Yeah, so that's another really great question. For me, personally, the only extract I keep in my house is vanilla. If I want orange, lemon, something like that to really pump up the flavor, which I do this pretty frequently in my recipes at *All the Nourishing Things*, I will use the essential oil. And, just for me personally, I find that the essential oil tastes more real than the extract does. I think extracts can sometimes have a fake kind of a flavor, especially peppermint. To me, it tastes like candy cane kind of fake, but peppermint essential oil is such an herby, it is the true way peppermint as opposed to taste.

So, I have a recipe, for those who are watching on their screens, a recipe for a chocolate peppermint milkshake. And we know that chocolate and peppermint go so well together, and this milkshake is super easy. You just throw everything in your blender. You add peppermint oil to taste. For two servings, I used two drops of peppermint oil because that is about as pepperminty as I wanted it to be. But, if you really love that peppermint flavor, don't be afraid to add another drop or two. And everyone has their own taste preferences, so some people will want more, some people will want less. That doesn't just go for the peppermint oil, that goes for all of the essential oils that you are using for flavor.

But then for extracts, I also find that about – and again this depends on the quality of the essential oils that you are using. If you are using the lower quality essential oil, it may take more of the oil to get the same flavor that you are going for, but, for me, about 15 drops is equal to what a teaspoon of extract would be.

Samantha: OK. That's good to know. I like the topic you bring up of how those extracts can taste a little bit fake sometimes, and I just wanted to point out that that's probably because they are. They are probably made in a laboratory somewhere because the science of smells – it's really cool, it's really fascinating. Like I think it would be fun to work in those labs where you are recreating those scents out of petrochemicals or whatever. I mean, there's all sorts of crazy things that they use to make those smells. I don't want to know --.

Lindsey: Right.

Samantha: But it is so interesting how in these laboratories they can recreate these flavors and these smells without actually using the plant that it comes from.

Lindsey: It is interesting, but it's kind of scary.

Samantha: It is kind of cool and fascinating but, at the same time, you do have to be aware that just because something has the word orange extract or even vanilla extract, we know. That's why there's the \$3 bottle of vanilla extract at the store to the \$20 bottle because the \$20 bottle is probably actually going to have actual vanilla in it.

Lindsey: Right. As opposed to the artificial flavor.

Samantha: Exactly, exactly. It's just a difference there to be aware of. And the same with essential oils. You've got to know where you are buying your oils from and you want to make sure that those are being made from actual plants and not made in a laboratory somewhere.

Lindsey: Totally. That's a great point. Yeah.

Samantha: So, let's talk about safety for a little bit. I know a lot of people worry about the safety of using essential oils in their cooking because there is a lot of mixed information out there about the safety of adjusting essential oils. What's your take on that?

Lindsey: Absolutely. So, lots of experts have established that it is safe to ingest essential oils; however, it is also wise to be mindful of how much you are ingesting. So, from what I have studied, anywhere from 2 to 4 drops per day in raw recipes is fine. And raw recipes being if you are adding it to water, if you are putting it in a smoothie, a salad dressing. I have a recipe for some pumpkin spice no-bake macaroons. It is a raw recipe. They are not baked. So, it's got cinnamon, nutmeg, and clove essential oils in it but there are like five total drops for the total recipe and it makes 16 macaroons.

So, you could eat like three macaroons and you wouldn't even be ingesting one whole drop. So, I say anywhere from 2 to 4 drops a day in raw recipes. Then again, if it is in a cooked recipe like muffins or a cake or something like that, you have lost the health benefits basically and what you are maintaining there is the flavor. So, for that, I don't really count that as essential oil ingestion. But, of course, we want everyone to make the decision that is right for them and to do their own research and find out what they feel is best for their body.

It is also wise to keep in mind that, if you are cooking with essential oils and ingesting them in raw recipes, be mindful of what you are using essential oils for medicinally. So, for example, if you are taking raw oregano in capsules for candida or for whatever else, count that in your total daily amount of oils you are ingesting. So, just include whatever medicinal oils plus whatever raw recipes, 2 to 4 drops per day and you're probably going to be fine. That doesn't mean that, if you ingest more than 4 drops, that something bad is going to happen or anything crazy is going to happen to your body. But we do have to respect the oils. They are powerful and potent and, so, it is wise to approach them with just a level of care and respect.

Second, we need to keep in mind that a lot of essential oils can have really powerful effects on our microbiome. And by microbiome, I'm talking about our gut. So, we know that like up to 80% of our immune system is in our gut. We know that most of body serotonin production happens in the gut. And we also know that we can use essential oils to, you know, kill things. You just need to be aware that consuming essential oils can have a powerful effect on your microbiome. These oils, especially, would be like oregano, lavender, rosemary, thyme, and lemon and orange, but there are others, too. And then take steps to keep your microbiome in balance, such as consuming bone broth and fermented foods and then also taking a really high-quality probiotic supplement, as well.

Samantha: Those are things that everyone should be doing even if they are not ingesting oils.

Lindsey: Even if you don't use essential oils, you should be drinking bone broth, eating fermented foods, and taking a high-quality probiotic. So, we need to be taking care of our guts anyway. The other thing that I would suggest to people who intend to consume essential oils on a regular basis and who want to make sure that they are doing it safely is to just rotate the oils that you are ingesting. Maybe you don't do oregano oil everyday for 30 days. Keep your oils that you are medicinally varied and keep the oils that you are using in your cooking varied. Variety is healthier anyway. We should eat a variety of foods, a variety of fruits and vegetable, a variety of grass-fed meats. Variety is healthier anyway and the same thing goes with essential oils.

Samantha: Right. Absolutely. Yeah. Well, I think that some of those very potent ones that you mentioned, like oregano, I think of the herbaceous ones, herbs like sage, rosemary, thyme, oregano, they are so strong in their essential oil form that they are very self-regulating in a way, especially when it comes to cooking. Like, there is no way I am going to add 10 drops of oregano to anything because it is way overpowering.

Lindsey: Yep.

Samantha: It would be hard to overdo it in cooking and ingesting. Now, I know that some people will make pills and capsules of essential oils. I've taken 4 drops of oregano in a pill before and that was very strong and I've kind of gone down to more just like one drop before – and I will do that for a couple of weeks, especially if I am fighting off something or really wanting to boost my immune system. But then I take break and give my body a break. Like you said, rotating is very important. Everyone is going to have their own comfort level. Some people are comfortable ingesting 20 drops of oil a day and that's their comfort level and then other people say that's not my comfort level and that's OK.

Lindsey: Yep. You have to do what's right for you. Everyone is encouraged to research. That's what I do before I do anything new, before I take a new supplement, before I try whatever the latest superfood is that everybody is talking about. I always do my research and I always make an informed decision for myself and my family.

Samantha: Yeah. Absolutely. Well, Lindsey, let's talk a little more specifically about essential oils for cooking. Do you have a favorite list of oils that you often go to in the kitchen and ones that you use frequently in your recipes?

Lindsey: Yeah. So, before I share what my top 10 favorites are, just for people who are wondering who have never cooked with essential oils. Think about the dried herbs and spices you are already using. There's an essential oil for pretty much everyone, cinnamon, ginger, nutmeg, clove, black pepper,

oregano, basil, rosemary. We could go on and on. Then we've got our citrus fruits like lemon, lime, orange, tangerine, grapefruit. Some of those oils, like lemon oil, for example, is really inexpensive, so it is a great one to get started with. You could easily add a drop to a smoothie or something like that just to start experimenting.

But my personal top 10 favorites and these aren't really in particular order by favorite. They are more in order by how often I use them, so number one would be peppermint. Like I already mentioned, I've got that chocolate peppermint milkshake that I want to share with everyone. Two would be orange, then lime, and then cinnamon. Speaking of cinnamon and those kinds of fall spice flavors, we have got those no-bake macaroons that I shared earlier and I also want to share a chai spice latte. And that one's going to use cinnamon clove and nutmeg and ginger essential oil. So, clove also. Sixth for me would be oregano, then basil, thyme, lemon, ginger and I couldn't just cut it off at 10, so I'm going to give lavender and rosemary honorable mentions.

Samantha: OK, I love it. I am going to add lemongrass to that list, too.

Lindsey: Oh yeah! Lemongrass is a good one. And then I've got something really cool that you can do that I want to share with everybody. Anytime you have an empty bottle of an essential oil or maybe it's got that little bit of liquid left and you just can't get it to come out – I think we have all had that experience – I like to make flavored salt with those oils. Think about lime salt on the rim of a margarita or in some salsa or lemon salt for fish or rosemary or thyme salt for chicken. So, basically, all you do is you just take either the empty bottle or the bottle that just has like the little bit that's left that won't come out, you fill the bottle with salts, like a high-quality Himalayan salt or a Celtic sea salt, and you just let it sit for a day. Then that salt gets infused with the vapors of that essential oil, and it is flavored. Then you can use it as a finishing salt or, like I said, on margarita, in some salsa, fish, chicken, whatever. So that's another way that you can really make those essential oils like good to the last drop or the last vapor and, also, spice up your cooking.

Samantha: Great! Now how about as far as much oil to use for people who aren't used to cooking with oils? What are your basic guides and tips for knowing how many drops to use in a recipe?

Lindsey: Yeah! That's a great question because I bet our audience isn't finding a whole lot of recipes that call for essential oils in their searching. Maybe a few here and there but, hopefully, we'll see more. So, let's talk about the ground spices first, like cinnamon, clove, nutmeg, ginger, black pepper, those types. I find, and again this depends on the quality of oil you are using, so if you are using a super high-quality essential oil, you are going to need less than you

would if you were using a lower quality or cheaper oil, but I find that one to two drops subs well for each teaspoon of ground spice that a recipe calls for. Always start with one drop and taste and then, if you feel like you need more, then add more.

So, next the herbal oils like thyme, basil, rosemary, dill, cilantro, oregano, lavender, peppermint, we already talked about how strong those oils are. So they are like so strong, you may not even need a whole drop, so, what I like to do, is take a clean toothpick and just dip it down into the bottle and then stir that toothpick into whatever it is I am making. And then wait a minute a two to give that flavor time to kind of infuse and develop and then taste. Then if you decide, "Oh, I want more," then dip another clean toothpick in the bottle of oil and then stir it in.

I have a recipe that is a great opportunity to practice this skill for an essential oils pizza sauce, and it's a super, super easy recipe. It's going to use basil, thyme, oregano, and black pepper essential oil, and you can practice the dipping and the toothpick and then stirring it into the pizza sauce. Then, of course, you can use it as pizza sauce on pizza and back it and they you wouldn't really be eating the raw oils anymore or you could use it as a dipping sauce like for breadsticks or something. It's really delicious. So, if people are watching, that recipe will be on the screen. Yeah, just remember that those oils are really potent, they are really strong, and sometimes even a drop is too much. And once it goes in, it can't come back out again, so it is better to start small.

Samantha: Lindsey, I cannot tell you how many times I've ruined mashed potatoes because I am determined to make like rosemary mashed potatoes. And I've got this big pot of potatoes and I am thinking just one little drop, it's not going to do that much so let me just put 2, 3, oh accidentally dropped that 4th drop in there. And then it is inedible, just inedible. It is like so overwhelming and so powerful.

Lindsey: All of a sudden instead of tasting herbal like you wanted it to, it tastes medicinal.

Samantha: Exactly, exactly.

Lindsey: Yeah, I totally get that.

Samantha: Us Americans tend to like to do, more is better, but really do it a toothpick at a time for those really strong things or one drop, taste and then go from there.

Lindsey: Yeah, especially like those hot spices, too, like the black pepper and the clove and those really hot oils. You really want to be careful with those, too, because they are really, really potent. Again, it's better to start small and work your way up. You may have to do three toothpicks but that would be better than putting three whole drops in there and then finding out that you can't eat the food at all.

Samantha: Absolutely, that's a good point there. And, when you practice this, you start to learn your recipes and you learn what needs one drop and what needs a toothpick and what needs more. I find with like the citrus oils, like lemon, orange, tangerine, I tend to need more, they are just not quite as overwhelming.

Lindsey: Yep. And that was the next thing I was going to say. So, we talked about ground spices and how about a teaspoon converts to one to two drops of the oil. We talked about using the toothpick for those really strong herbal oils. And then the last one would be the citrus oils, the lemon, lime, tangerine, orange, grapefruit and things like that, I find that it takes more also. So, I have a recipe that I want to share with everyone for a lemon essential oil yogurt.

There's kind of a funny story behind this. Whenever I was a kid growing up, the only yogurt my mom could get me to eat was the lemon-flavored Yoplait yogurt from the store that was like fake lemon flavor and tons of sugar and all that. Then, as an adult, I was like, OK, I am an adult now, I've got to figure out how to eat yogurt that doesn't have sugar in it all the time. So, I figured out a way to use essential oils and then stevia which is a super sweet herb that substitutes for sugar for people who can't have sugar who are on the keto or low carb or diabetic or whatever. So, I just used literally just lemon essential oil and stevia and yogurt, plain yogurt and you whisk it together. So, I have figured out how to eat yogurt that I like as an adult without all the sugar.

Samantha: That sounds delicious. I want to try that. I think that like lavender lemon yogurt sound delicious, too.

Lindsey: Yeah, totally.

Samantha: Or orange. Or peppermint.

Lindsey: Yeah.

Samantha: It gives you so many options when you are cooking with oil to just add it into something and give it that extra special, special sauce.

Lindsey: Yeah. Yeah. You can go with the seasons, too. Like if it is fall, stir in a little bit of pumpkin and a little bit of cinnamon into your yogurt, and then you have got a fall yogurt. I mean, it's really great how versatile essential oils are.

Samantha: Well, thank you, Lindsey. This has been wonderful. I can't wait to use some of these tips in my kitchen. It is always an endless amount of experiments to be made for sure.

Lindsey: Same here.

Samantha: Well thank you so much. We really appreciate it.

Lindsey: Yeah. Of course. Thanks for having me.