



CRAZY-GOOD CONDIMENTS

DIY Versions Add Zest and Nutrients

by Judith Fertig

While not essential to every dish or meal, condiments provide extra flavoring, final flourishes and added enjoyment to any dish. Such meal accompaniments range from vinegars to spreads and sauces, finishing spice mixtures and natural salts.

America's previous king of condiments

was ketchup. Today, according to a 2017 poll from *TheDailyMeal.com*, it stands behind mayonnaise and mustard with soy and hot sauce rounding out the top five (generic product ranking at *Tinyurl.com/Top20Condiments*).

We often take familiar condiments for granted, yet a look at their ingredients can

be startling. Many prominently include processed corn syrup and other sugars, sodium, gluten, monosodium glutamate (MSG), artificial flavors and unpronounceable preservatives, according to Dana Angelo White, a registered dietitian in Fairfield, Connecticut.

Homemade versions of condiments provide a happy alternative. They not only taste great, but can be good for us. "Certain condiments add more to your meals than flavor—some actually improve your health," says White. The potassium in homemade mustard is good for the digestive system through stimulating the flow of saliva, suggests a study in the *Indian Journal of Medical Research*. Homemade ketchup made with small cooked tomatoes is rich in lycopene, a nutrient that protects heart health, according to research published in the *American Journal of Clinical Nutrition*. White's fresh-made "THE Green Sauce," full of vitamin-rich avocado and cilantro, is replete with antioxidants (Tinyurl.com/TheGreenSauceRecipe).

Better Basics

Ketchup

Heather McClees, a plant-based nutritionist in South Carolina who blogs at One Green Planet, once loved commercial ketchup; then she read the labels. "Most ketchup is made of tomato concentrates, sugars, including high-fructose corn syrup, cane sugar, agave nectar, coconut nectar/

syrup, brown rice syrup, cane juice and cane crystals, vinegar, “spices” that is likely code for MSG, water and refined salt. All of this makes ketchup addicting,” she says.

“While you could pay for pricey organic ketchup and condiments that come without added sugars, you can save money by spending five minutes in the kitchen to make your own.” Find a recipe at Tinyurl.com/HealthyKetchupRecipe.

Mustard

Serious Eats food writer Joshua Bousel uses only six ingredients to make a deliciously easy Grainy Mustard: yellow and brown mustard seeds, dry white wine, white wine vinegar, kosher salt and an optional pinch of brown sugar. Learn how at Tinyurl.com/WholeGrainDijonRecipe.

Mayonnaise and Ranch Dressing

Eschewing eggs, J. Kenji Lopez-Alt, of San Mateo, California, uses aquafaba, the starchy liquid in a can of chickpeas, for a plant-based twist on emulsified mayonnaise. Find it at

Tinyurl.com/AquafabaMayoRecipe.

In her Mebane, North Carolina, kitchen, Kim Campbell, author of *The PlantPure Kitchen*, makes a plant-based ranch dressing with tofu for body and nutritional yeast, herbs and lemon juice to achieve the characteristic flavor. Find it at

Tinyurl.com/HealthyRanchDressing.

More Exotic Condiments

Pomegranate Molasses

Sweet and tart pomegranate molasses can be used like vinegar in salad dressings, as a marinade ingredient or as syrup over pancakes and waffles. Angela Buchanan, aka Angela Cooks, a professor at the University of Colorado, in Boulder, who blogs at SeasonalAndSavory.com, follows the Whole30 program, which bars sugar. Because she also likes Middle-Eastern food, Buchanan experimented and created her recipe for Pomegranate Molasses without added sugar (Tinyurl.com/PomegranateMolassesRecipe).

Superfood Popcorn Seasoning

Green popcorn is fun. With a spirulina powder, garlic powder, sea salt and cayenne pepper spice mix, even a movie snack can be healthy. “Spirulina is one of the most potent of all superfoods. Available in a powder form,

it’s a blue-green algae that provides protein, B vitamins and iron. It’s used as a natural energizer, digestive aid and detoxifier,” says Tara Milhern, a holistic health coach in New York City. She also likes it sprinkled on baked potatoes or vegetables as a finishing flavor. See Tinyurl.com/HealthyPopcornSeasoning.

Without preservatives, homemade

healthy condiments don’t last as long as commercial versions. McClees advises, “I store mine in a glass mason jar for one week in the fridge. I choose a half-pint-size jar, since the less empty space there is at the top of the jar, the longer it keeps.”

Judith Fertig writes cookbooks plus foodie fiction from Overland Park, KS JudithFertig.com.

DIY Condiment Recipes

Pomegranate Molasses

It takes about an hour to cook down, but homemade unsweetened pomegranate molasses is worth the time, advises Angela Cooks.

Yields: 1 cup

- 32 oz unsweetened organic pomegranate juice

Fill a saucepan with the juice and bring it to a low boil.

Reduce the heat so the liquid will stay at a low boil, and let the juice cook down to a scant cup of thick, syrupy liquid. This takes about an hour; note that it will thicken more once it is cooled. Once arriving at a desired thickness while cooking, let it cool completely.

Transfer the pomegranate molasses to a glass jar to store in the refrigerator where it will keep well for a few months.

Courtesy of Angela Cooks, who blogs at SeasonalAndSavory.com.



Plant-Based Ranch Dressing

“Ranch dressing can be dairy-free and made with tofu, making it plant-based and oil-free,” says Kim Campbell.

Yields: about 2 cups

- 2 lb tofu, about 2 (14-oz) packages
- 1½ Tbsp fresh parsley, chopped
- ¾ cup onion, finely chopped
- 2 cloves garlic
- 3 Tbsp distilled white vinegar
- 2 Tbsp agave syrup
- 1 Tbsp lemon juice
- 1 tsp nutritional yeast
- 1 tsp dry mustard
- ¼ tsp paprika
- ½ tsp celery seeds
- 1 Tbsp dried chives
- ¾ cup filtered water

Blend all ingredients in a food processor until smooth.

Courtesy of Kim Campbell, from the T. Colin Campbell Center for Nutrition Studies at NutritionStudies.org



THE Green Sauce

“This sauce is a salad dressing, dipping sauce or sandwich spread,” says nutrition expert Dana Angelo White.

“After tasting it, you’ll be putting it on everything.”

Yields: about 2 cups

- 1 avocado, peeled and seeded
- Juice of 2 limes
- 2 cups fresh cilantro (leaves and stems)
- 1 jalapeno pepper
- 2 Tbsp white vinegar
- 1 Tbsp honey
- 1 tsp kosher salt
- ¼ white onion
- 1 cup filtered water

Combine ingredients in a blender and blend until smooth. Taste for seasoning and adjust as needed. If mixture appears too thick, add a little more water.

Courtesy of Registered Dietitian Dana Angelo White

