

Season It !

Benson's Gourmet Seasonings Newsletter

3 Tips That Will Help A Low Sodium Diet

First Edition

Hello and Welcome Everyone,



Let me introduce myself and start to tell you the story about how Benson's Gourmet Seasonings got started. In each newsletter I will share some of my story, include low sodium tips focusing on ways to add flavor, plus a new recipe. I want to help you create more flavorful food without salt.

My name is Debbie Benson, owner of Benson's Gourmet Seasonings. My Mom (Paula), my Brother (Randy) and I started this company back in 1989. I have grown up cooking salt free (by choice) and over the years learned a lot about seasonings, herbs, spices, vegetables, fruits, cooking with wine, juices, liquors, unique ingredients, different cooking techniques and have gathered lots of tips and tricks along the way to get the most flavor without salt. I am basically a self taught cook, (no cooking schools, at least not yet) and my recipes are pretty basic, mostly one pan type cooking, using fresh ingredients and many of my recipes cook in just 20 minutes to an hour.

My first memory of cooking/baking was about the age of 5, stirring cake batter with my Mom. I come from a long line of good cooks and bakers. My great grandmother won many awards at the Iowa State Fair for her breads, my grandmother for her pies and my Mom was always been known for her cakes and my specialty was cookies. They say the best cooks, start out as bakers, because baking is so exact. With regular cooking you have a lot more leeway.

Anyway, I started cooking very young and always loved it. My brother and sister would watch cartoons and I would watch Julia Child and Graham Kerr. No, I don't have cable, so I haven't watched the food network. I know me and I would never get anything done. Cooking shows, you really can't listen to, you need to watch. When I was about 6 years old, my Mom, became a single, working Mom. She was raising 3 kids, so I learned to cook in self defense as most of the baby sitters couldn't cook.

Mom

Mom, always had low blood pressure and when she became a working Mom, she needed to wake up and get going quicker in the mornings. The doctor said to eat more salt and saltier foods, to raise her blood pressure to a more normal level. No problem. It wasn't long and she had her first heart attack at about the age of 26 or 27 and her third heart attack just before she turned 30. She almost didn't make it. She said if she kept listening to the doctors, her children would be orphans. These heart attacks, kept taking her by surprise because, no one in her family had ever had a heart attack or stroke. She blamed the heart attacks on working too much and the stress of raising 3 children. Well, now she said "No more salt". Guess what? No more heart attacks and she was never on any heart or blood pressure medications.

I saw firsthand at a very young age what salt could do and learned not to cook with it. We used a lot of herbs (always had herbs growing, not always in a garden, but in a pot or here and there in the yard). We grew different kinds of garlic, some vegetables, especially different types of tomatoes, and used wine and cooking techniques to get flavor. This is where I learned a big flavor difference between home grown and store bought.

I have chosen to stay salt free because I love flavor, not just saltiness. It's not that I am so anti-salt, it's just that I don't think salt belongs in seasonings. You add salt to taste, to the dish while it is cooking. Sometimes, you may need more than other times, but if it is already in the seasoning, you have no choice. You have already salted the dish. Over time, your taste buds become addicted to the salt taste and your food becomes saltier and saltier. You cannot taste anything but salt. I call it, salt callouses on the tongue. That is one of the main reasons when someone first goes on a salt free diet, the food tastes bland. Even if it is a very well seasoned dish, it would taste bland because it wasn't salty. It takes time, maybe a few weeks or a few months, to wear down those salt callouses, so that you can taste food again. Another reason food tastes bland, is that most seasonings have salt, so when someone or even the hospital cooks a low sodium meal, it tastes bland because it is. Most seasonings, already have salt in them, so you or the hospital must cook without any seasoning at all. Does this make sense?

In the upcoming newsletters, my goal is to give you information to help you get flavor into your food, and share those helpful tips and tricks that can really make a difference.

Here are 3 tips that can make a BIG difference in a low sodium diet:

1. Fresh Lemons. These are so key to a salt free diet/low sodium diet. Always have fresh lemons around. The basic lemons like Eureka work better than the Meyer lemons here. Your tongue has trouble telling the difference between salt and sour. Lemon is Mother Nature's sour salt. A squeeze of fresh lemon juice will brighten just about any dish, especially soup. Salt free soup is a challenge. Take some of your soup in a bowl and add a few drops of lemon juice. Stir, and taste. Maybe, a few more drops and taste. You will really notice the saltiness you pick up from the lemon juice. Easy though, you want the edge of saltiness not lemon soup. If you are have salt cravings, try a lemon wedge and suck out the juice. Follow with some water so the lemon juice doesn't eat the enamel off your teeth. At first, you might think I am crazy, but it

works. The cravings start going away. Be careful when adding lemon juice to dairy, as it can cause curdling.

2. Freshly Ground Black Pepper. Most salt free people become pepper people, even if you aren't one right now, you may become one. The key is the pepper must be freshly ground, not out of the can or pepper shaker. The flavor difference is huge. Peppercorns, still have the oil in them, which makes them way more flavorful. No you won't sneeze. You just get real pepper taste and it doesn't take much. Most of the canned pepper or especially the pepper in your pepper shaker is old. The oils have dried up. Air is one of the worst things for spices and pepper shakers might be convenient but they are the worst way to store pepper.

3. Fresh Minced Parsley. This must be Italian Flat Leaf Parsley, not French Curley. Most folks think of parsley just to make the food look pretty. Not true. Freshly minced parsley, adds a fresh, brightness to food, as well as making food look pretty. Fresh herbs can be somewhat delicate, so add this towards the end of your cooking, and you can sprinkle more on top when serving.

Note: Use only the parsley leaves, not the stems, as the stems are usually too tough. Add the stems to water you are boiling for pasta, or rice or potatoes, soup, etc., as they will help add flavor to the water.

New Recipe: Gremolata



Here is a new recipe many of you may not have heard of called **Gremolata**. This is a classic Italian condiment/relish, that is very flavorful. It has a citrusy, fresh garden brightness, that is a little spicy because of the garlic. It's made with fresh Italian parsley, fresh lemon zest, fresh garlic, freshly ground black pepper and our Table Tasty. It's not cooked, so anyone can prepare this. You only need a little sprinkled on top of your dish, after it's cooked.

Gremolata is probably most well known for being sprinkled on Osso Buco (braised veal shanks). This condiment goes especially well when braising, roasting, or grilling meats, beef, lamb, pork, chicken, seafood, even grilled vegetables including tomatoes, corn-on-the-cob, roasted potatoes, asparagus, even a little on soups. Experiment, with just a little, you can add more. It's very flavorful, so I hope you try it. Note: Many countries have their own version of this type of condiment. These will be discussed in future newsletters.

GREMOLATA

*The Classic Italian Condiment**

- 1 small bunch fresh parsley, (about ½ cup coarsely chopped leaves, no stems)
- 1 lemon, zested or peeled in strips (lemon peel only the yellow part no white pith)
- 2 cloves fresh garlic, chopped**
- 1/8 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper, or to taste
- 1 teaspoon [#103 Table Tasty salt substitute](#), or to taste

On a cutting board mince the parsley leaves, lemon rind and garlic until finely minced. Add to a small bowl. Add freshly ground pepper & Table Tasty to taste. Stir, now it's ready. Makes about 3 Tablespoons. Serves 6-8. Usually, just lightly sprinkle on top of foods, at the table or just before serving. This condiment adds a great boost of flavor.

*Use sparingly, don't eat it by itself as it is too strong.

**Some folks don't use garlic in this recipe. I use garlic in just about everything. Not only for flavor, but also for it's health benefits, especially for the heart. ♥

In my next newsletter I'll tell you a little more about our company and give you some specific ideas about effectively using garlic in your cooking.

I hope this information is helpful to you.

Thank you for subscribing and reading this newsletter.

Click this link for the next [Season It Newsletter](#) which includes helpful tips & information about garlic.

Sincerely,

Debbie

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