

## Chapter 6

# Food and Beverage Product Knowledge

### ABSTRACT

*This chapter introduces and discusses some of the most common food and beverage products used in commercial foodservice operations. It includes herbs and spices and their application, beverage products, and application. It introduces the basic knowledge necessary about still, sparkling, fortified, and aromatized wines, distilled spirits, and liquors/cordials, cocktails, mineral and natural waters, coffee, tea, and cocoa within a bar operation.*

### FOOD PRODUCTS

#### Herbs and Spices

Herbs and spices have been used since civilization and during cooking. Ancient history tells that the preparation of food became an art form and a source of nourishment. Along with this history came the use of herbs and spices to season the foods. Herbs or spices are a healthy and low-fat way to enhance bland or otherwise dull foods. Therefore, chefs emphasize the use of flavorings in foods, especially those that have no flavor. The world's foods are very regional and are typically characterized by specific herbs and spices that are native to the area. Regardless of what dish may be prepared, there will be flavorings such as herbs and spices used. India and internationally dominate the flavoring industry and have become a multibillion-dollar industry.

#### Definition of Herbs

Herbs are the aromatic leaves of plants without woody stems that grow in temperate zones. An herb is a plant that is valued for flavor, scent, medicinal, or other qualities. Herbs may be classified as Culinary, Medicinal, or Spiritual. Culinarians typically use “herbs” from the leafy green parts of a plant only, either fresh or dried. Many culinary herbs are perennials such as thyme or lavender, while others are biennials

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such as parsley or annuals like basil. Some herbs such as rosemary are perennial shrubs or trees such as bay laurel. Some plants are used as both an herb and a spice, such as dill weed and dill seed, or coriander leaves “cilantro” and seeds. Also, some herbs, such as those in the mint family, are used for both culinary and medicinal purposes. To retain their full flavor and aroma qualities, both Herbs and Spices should be stored in airtight glass jars, a cool-dark place, and for no longer than six months.

## **Definition of Spices**

Spice flavoring can be strong even to hide other flavors. In the kitchen, spices made from the bark, buds, fruit or flower parts, roots, seeds, or stems of various aromatic plants and trees differ from herbs, which are leafy, green plant parts used for flavoring. Many spices are used for other purposes, such as medicine, religious rituals, cosmetics, perfumery, or for eating vegetables. For example, turmeric is also used as a preservative, licorices as a medicine, garlic as a vegetable.

Both spices and herbs should be used cautiously because, if highly concentrated could become harmful. Also, the use of herbs gathered from the wild should not be used in a commercial kitchen if not picked by a botanical expert. For example, some members of the Bay Leaf family, “laurel family,” and the unrelated species, but visually similar mountain laurel and cherry laurel, have leaves that are poisonous to humans’ livestock. While these plants are not sold anywhere for culinary use, even the display of these hers should be avoided.

## **Application of Herbs and Spices**

There are various techniques in using flavoring in food processing: for seasoning, flavoring, and flavor building.

## **Definition of Seasoning**

Within the context, “seasoning” is defined as “*the addition of substances that increase the taste of food without altering the taste or adding their flavors.*” Whenever possible, they are added at the end of cooking. They are sometimes added earlier to meat and vegetables to give the seasonings time to penetrate and bring out their full flavor.

## **Definition of Flavoring**

Within this context, “flavoring” is defined as “*the addition of a product to add its distinctive flavor to the final dish. It is the blending of one flavor into another in such a way that the two complement each other and still keep their own identity.*” Flavoring and seasoning are often confused because both are usually used in the final steps of completing a dish. Flavoring changes the dish’s taste by adding a new flavor, while seasoning brings out the flavor that is already there. When flavoring is enhanced again later, the technique is called “layering of flavors at the end of the cooking.” This process is used frequently in Italian cuisine.

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