For National Nutrition Month® this year, the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics encourages everyone to experiment with new combinations of herbs and spices as you "Savor the Flavor of Eating Right."

Discover new and exciting tastes while trimming fat and sodium from your cooking. Many popular foods take a wide variety of flavors from herbs and spices that can be enjoyed in all sorts of combinations, while still following a healthful eating pattern. Herbs, like basil and oregano, grow in most areas of the United States and are the fragrant leaves of plants. Spices, like cumin and paprika, grow in tropical areas and come from the bark, buds, fruit, roots, seeds and stems of plants and trees. Innovative use of herbs and spices offer a real flavor advantage, especially if your goal is to cook with less fat and sodium. Every culture has it’s favorite herbs and spices:

- China: Low-sodium soy sauce, rice wine, ginger
- France: Thyme, rosemary, sage, marjoram, lavender, tomato
- Greece: Olive oil, lemon, oregano
- Hungary: Onion, paprika
- India: Curry, cumin, ginger, garlic
- Italy: Tomato, olive oil, garlic, basil, marjoram
- Mexico: Tomato, chili, paprika
- Middle East: Olive oil, lemon, parsley
- Morocco/North Africa: Cinnamon, cumin, coriander, ginger
- West Africa: Tomato, peanut, chili.

Keeping a basic assortment of dried herbs and spices on hand for all types of cooking is recommended. Some good ones to have in the cabinet to make low fat and low sodium dishes include: oregano, garlic powder, thyme, paprika, cinnamon, nutmeg, chili powder, Italian herb seasoning blend, thyme and rosemary.

After getting comfortable with the basics, go explore new flavors such as curry powder, turmeric, cumin, clove and bay leaf and experiment with new flavor combinations. Remember to store dried herbs and spices in airtight containers in a cool, dark cupboard or pantry.
Black Bean & Corn Pitas

1 (15-ounce) can low-sodium black beans
1 cup frozen corn, thawed
1 cup fresh or no salt added canned tomatoes
1 avocado, chopped
1 clove garlic, finely chopped
1 tsp. chopped fresh parsley
1/8 tsp. cayenne pepper or more to taste
2 tsp. lemon juice
1/2 teaspoon chili powder
2 medium whole wheat pitas
1/3 cup shredded part-skim Mozzarella cheese

1. Drain and rinse beans. In a medium bowl, combine beans, corn, tomatoes, avocado, and garlic. Add parsley, cayenne pepper, lemon juice, and chili powder.
2. Cut pita bread in half to form 4 pockets, and spoon equal amounts of filling into each half. Top with cheese and serve.

Sources: www.eatright.org; Everyday Healthy Meals Recipe Book from Champions for Change Network for a Healthy California retrieved 02/29/16

For Information on Eat Smart Idaho classes or how to eat well for less, contact the Nutrition Advisor in your county:

Benewah, Kootenai & Shoshone 446-1680
Bonner & Boundary 263-8511
Latah 883-2267
Clearwater or Nez Perce 799-3096
Idaho or Lewis 983-2667

To contact the Eat Smart Idaho Coordinator: Kali Gardiner, RD, LD
Phone: 446-1680
E-mail – kalig@uidaho.edu
Web: www.eatsmartidaho.org

This material was funded by USDA’s Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). SNAP provides nutrition assistance to people with low income. It can help you buy nutritious foods for a better diet. To find out more, contact your local food stamp office, or call 1-800-221-5689 for Idaho’s toll-free number. The University of Idaho is an equal opportunity/affirmative action employer, provider and educational institution.