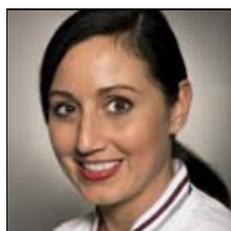


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7 Ways to Add Natural Color to Food

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This featured post is by Jackie Newgent, RDN, CDN. You can follow this blogger [@jackienewgent](#).

Before you take a bite or sip of that brightly colored delight, here's some news to chew.

Some European studies have reported links between artificial colors in food and a range of health issues. The European Union requires foods and beverages that contain any of six artificial colors to carry a warning: 'May have an adverse effect on activity and attention in children.' Here in the U.S., the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) doesn't require such a warning. But you can still limit artificial coloring in your food using these seven tips:

Vegetables

Create eye-catching appeal simply by adding vivid purple cauliflower, rich blue potatoes or fun striped beets to your plate. Or go traditional with red beets — they contain red betalain pigments.

Try this: Steam or roast red beets, puree and stir into hummus, quinoa or cheesecake batter for a gorgeous fuchsia hue.

Fruits

Some of the most beautiful colors on the planet come from fruit. Pick fruits that can stain — that's a tipoff they're excellent for "coloring" — and good for you.

Try this: Blueberries top the charts for naturally occurring blue/purple color due to anthocyanins. Blend the berries with bananas for a stunning sorbet or smoothie, or simmer with pure maple syrup for better (and blue!) pancake syrup.

Fresh Herbs

Adding fresh herbs to cuisine is often thought of as garnishing. But herbs can transform plain ingredients into gorgeous green dishes thanks to chlorophyll.

Try this: Blend fresh herbs with ingredients like beans, yogurt or eggs to create dishes like herbed bean dip, creamy basil sauce or green eggs (with or without ham)!

Spices

Spices like saffron, turmeric and paprika impart color to food with just a pinch.

Try this: Want yellow color? Try turmeric. It contains curcumin, giving this spice its noted color and inflammation-fighting potential! It provides a lovely yellow tone to rice, dips and sauces. It creates intense yellow in deviled or scrambled eggs — and makes scrambled tofu look like eggs.

Flowers

Not all flowers are edible. But when they are, such as naturally grown lavender, marigold and nasturtium, they're stunning additions to dishes, especially desserts.

Try this: Check out Gourmet Sweet Botanicals Herb and Flower Crystals for edible and crystallized flower varieties.

Natural Food Colors

There are now 100 percent natural food colors on the market! One pick: Color Garden. And others are popping up in more of our food supply. For instance, GNT provides food companies with natural, vibrant colors derived exclusively from fruits, vegetables and edible plants. Look on the labels for phrases like these: "Fruit and vegetable juice (for color);" "Raw Material (e.g., Carrot) Juice (for color);" or "Contains less than 1% of fruit juice and vegetable juice (for color)."

So do eat a rainbow of colors ... naturally, by coloring with food!

Jackie Newgent, RDN, CDN, is a chef, registered dietitian nutritionist, cookbook author and media personality. She's a recreational culinary instructor at the Institute of Culinary Education and freelance professional recipe developer. Her latest book is The With or Without Meat Cookbook. Read her blog, Tasteovers by Jackie, and connect with her on Twitter, Facebook, Pinterest, Google+, Instagram and LinkedIn.