

Australians' favourite herbs and spices: survey insight

24 December 2024 | News

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Herbs and spices have been a cornerstone of culinary traditions for centuries, enhancing the flavour, aroma, and appearance of dishes while offering notable health benefits. Their antioxidant properties help combat oxidative stress, reducing the risk of chronic illnesses such as cancer and heart disease. Recent systematic reviews highlight their role in lowering blood pressure and minimising cardiovascular risks. Additionally, these ingredients aid in weight management and inflammation prevention.

Given their health advantages, incorporating herbs and spices into a balanced diet is widely encouraged. Australian dietary guidelines specifically recommend them as a healthier alternative to salt for flavouring meals. This has led to research exploring the most popular herbs and spices in Australia. A survey of 400 participants identified basil as the most consumed herb over the past year, followed by pepper and garlic. Pepper, garlic, and chilli were the most frequently used daily, primarily in lunch and dinner recipes. Taste, aroma, flavour, and visual appeal were cited as the main reasons for their inclusion.

Comparisons with earlier studies reveal a gradual shift in Australians' preferences for herbs and spices, with an increasing diversity in usage. Globally, trends vary; for example, a U.S. study found pepper, garlic, and cinnamon to be the most popular choices. The nutritional content of herbs can differ between fresh and dried forms, influenced by nutrient composition and drying techniques. Regardless of form, their inclusion can significantly enhance the nutritional quality of meals.

For high-tech greenhouse growers, understanding consumer preferences is crucial to cultivating herbs and spices that align with market demand. Many Australians also prefer growing their herbs, reflecting a strong interest in fresh, home-grown, and sustainable produce. This trend highlights opportunities for growers to cater to health-conscious and environmentally aware consumers.