



NEWSLETTER

Herbs, spices, and health

New studies show good flavors also good for you!



It might be enough to enjoy the flavorful pleasures that spices and herbs add to our food, but more research is showing that these joys are not just aesthetic.

For example, a UCLA study in the *American Journal of Clinical Nutrition*, published in May reported that herbs and spices (oregano, rosemary, ginger,

black pepper, etc.) added to hamburger reduced the carcinogenic compounds that form when grilling meat.

Other studies (sponsored by spice company McCormick's Science Institute) found antioxidants in herbs and spices. (From May 30, 2010 *Scientific American online*)

SO THAT'S WHY FARMERS ARE SO SMART

While we're on the subject of recent research, here's another tidbit, from the May 24 online *Scientific American*.

It seems that the same bacterium that makes you feel good when you are out in nature may also increase a person's ability to learn. At least it has that effect when it is fed to mice.



Farmers always tell people how farming "gets in your blood," and how much we enjoy getting our hands in the soil (or "playing in the dirt," if we really want to be honest). Little did we know it was the *mycobacterium vaccae* in the soil that was making us feel good, and better at working our way through mazes as well!

What are we doing?

As I was mowing the living mulch in the asparagus patch, a 1990's Traffic song played at random on my Ipod: "What are we doing to this holy ground?"

Since I take very special care to nurture the holy ground on which I grow vegetables and fruit, normally I would just let the song go as another lament about the state of the world. Yet here I was running a mower on gasoline. My son was driving the small tractor mowing mulch, also running on gas, and in the background the pump at the pond was irrigating some of the crops--also running on you-know-what.

Even as we do our part to farm ecologically, and participate in a growing local food movement whose goal is to reduce the amount of petroleum-based transportation and bring the scale back down to a human size in the food system, it is impossible to ignore how heavy our addiction to oil really is. What are we doing? Is it enough?

-Stu Shafer

