



Cookin' Up Leadership™

The Subtleties of Sage— Why cooking is a lot like communicating

Every language has a limited number of words and finite grammatical rules. Yet we can use them to create an endless number of sentences and tell countless stories. The same applies to cooking: The number of ingredients is limited and the number of cooking processes restricted, but the potential varieties of preparation are endless. Changing the order of a couple of words in a sentence creates a different effect; the same word in a new context can sound different. The same applies to ingredients.

The word “condiment” is like an adjective. It can easily be replaced, leading to completely different accents. This opens up a whole new world of culinary expressions. For example: Try using subtle sage instead of garish garlic.

Coat a frying pan with oil and heat it to a high temperature. Add four to 12 sage leaves. When they’ve finished bubbling, take them out of the pan and let them drain on a paper towel. Use the same oil to sauté onions, cook meat, fry an egg or add to your pizza dough, and you’ll enhance whatever you’re making with a subtle hint of sage. The fried leaves can be used in soup or on your egg, meat or pizza—or in something entirely different. You might try your hand with marjoram, cumin or lemon rind. Then again, next time, you might want to use garlic again. Here too is a parallel of language. Sometimes you need new expressions, and sometimes the same exact words do just fine.

—Elbrich Fennema. Ode Magazine, April 2008