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SPICE OF THE MONTH CLUB



WHAT IS BASIL?

BASIL (OCIMUM BASILICUM) IS PART OF THE MINT FAMILY. IT HAS BEEN CULTIVATED IN INDIA FOR MORE THAN FIVE THOUSAND YEARS, BUT TODAY MOST BASIL IS EXPORTED FROM EGYPT AND THE UNITED STATES. IT IS THE VARIETY KNOWN AS SWEET BASIL THAT IS MOST POPULAR IN WESTERN COOKING. ANOTHER POPULAR VARIETY IS THAI BASIL (AKA LICORICE BASIL), USED IN TRADITIONAL THAI AND VIETNAMESE DISHES.

BASIL IS VERY FRAGRANT, WITH A TASTE THAT IS MILD BUT SLIGHTLY SWEET-WITH HINTS OF MINT, ANISE AND EVEN PEPPER. IT IS VERY WELL KNOWN FOR ITS PART IN PESTO SAUCE, POPULAR ON PASTA AND CHICKEN DISHES. BASIL IS NAMED FOR THE GREEK WORD FOR "KING," AND HAS OFTEN BEEN REFERRED TO AS THE "KING OF HERBS."

BASIL IS CONSIDERED A VERY VERSATILE HERB AND CAN BE USED FRESH, DRIED OR GROUND IN EQUAL MEASURE. DRYING CHANGES THE FLAVOR, AND GENERALLY DAMPENS ITS COMPLEXITY. THOUGH FROST AND HUMIDITY-AVERSE, FRESH BASIL CAN BE GROWN YEAR-ROUND INDOORS NEAR A SUNNY WINDOW.

JANUARY

BASIL



10 USES FOR BASIL

- **A 100 GRAM SERVING OF BASIL PROVIDES 18 PERCENT OF YOUR DAILY CALCIUM REQUIREMENT.**
- **BASIL SHINES WHEN PAIRED WITH TOMATO, MAKING IT A GREAT CHOICE FOR ADDING FLAVOR TO ITALIAN MARINARA-BASED DISHES AND SALADS.**
- **BOTH BASIL AND MINT SHARE CERTAIN PROPERTIES AS MEMBERS OF THE SAME FAMILY OF HERBS. THAT MEANS BASIL CAN BE USED AS A MINT SUBSTITUTE AND IS EVEN SWEET ENOUGH TO BE USED IN SOME DESSERTS.**
- **FRESH OR DRIED BASIL IS A GREAT TOPPING FOR PIZZA.**
- **TO EXTEND ITS SHELF LIFE, FRESH BASIL CAN BE CHOPPED UP AND FROZEN USING ICE CUBE TRAYS FILLED WITH WATER OR STOCK FOR FUTURE USE. AFTER SOLIDIFICATION, PUT BASIL CUBES IN A FREEZER BAG TO FREE UP YOUR ICE CUBE TRAYS.**
- **FRESH BASIL SHOULD BE ADDED AT THE END OF THE COOKING PROCESS, AS EXCESSIVE HEAT WILL DEplete THE FLAVOR AND MAY CAUSE IT TO TURN BITTER.**
- **BASIL, LIKE OTHER LEAFY GREENS, IS A GREAT SOURCE OF VITAMIN K AND ANTIOXIDANTS.**
- **GROWING BASIL PLANTS FROM SEEDLINGS IS THE PREFERRED METHOD PLANTING. WAIT UNTIL THE RISK OF FROST HAS PASSED BEFORE PLANTING THE SEEDLINGS 12 TO 16 INCHES APART.**
- **YOU CAN INFUSE BASIL IN OIL SUCH AS JOJOBA OR OLIVE OIL AND LET IT SIT FOR THREE TO SIX WEEKS. USE THE OIL AS A SALVE ON INSECT BITES OR RUB IT INTO SORE MUSCLES.**
- **USE BASIL IN PLACE OF LETTUCE ON SANDWICHES OR EVEN AS A WRAP.**



Add Basil to:

Fish

Eggs

Sweet Salads



***Note:** This information is meant to supplement, not replace advice from your healthcare provider and is not meant to cover all possible uses, precautions, interactions or adverse effects.*

Sources Consulted: Encyclopedia Britannica; Consumer Health Complete; spiceography.com; Gale Health and Wellness; MasterClass

TOMATO BASIL SOUP

Courtesy of: Sonja and Alex Overhiser



Yield:
4
Servings

Time:
Prep: 5
Minutes
Cook Time:
20 Total
Time: 25
Minutes

Ingredients:

- 1 medium yellow onion
- 1 red bell pepper
- 3 cloves garlic
- 1 cup basil leaves, loosely packed
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 2 tablespoons white wine vinegar
- 28-ounce can fire-roasted crushed tomatoes (with basil, if available).
- 1 quart vegetable broth
- 1 teaspoon kosher salt
- Garnish ideas: Thinly sliced basil, a drizzle of olive oil, Homemade Croutons

Directions:

1. Dice the onion and the bell pepper. Mince the garlic. Tear the basil leaves into large pieces.
2. In a medium pot, heat the olive oil over medium heat. Add the onion and red pepper and sauté for about 5 minutes, until onions are translucent. Add the garlic and cook for 30 seconds until fragrant. Add the white wine vinegar and cook until evaporated.
3. Add tomatoes, vegetable broth and salt and bring to a steady simmer. Simmer for 15 minutes. Add the basil and use an immersion blender to puree the soup until creamy (or, transfer it to a standard blender and blend.)

Slow Cooker Marinara Sauce

Courtesy of: Shannon Ketchum

Yield:

16

Servings

Ingredients

- 56 oz. tomato sauce
- 28 oz. tomato paste
- 1 yellow onion (medium, chopped)
- 6 cloves minced garlic
- 1 Tbsp. olive oil
- 1 Tbsp. dried basil
- 1 Tbsp. dried oregano
- 1/2 Tbsp. dried parsley
- 1/2 Tbsp. Italian seasoning (dried)
- 1 tsp. black pepper
- 1/2 tsp. crushed red pepper flakes
- 1/4 cup grated Parmesan cheese



Directions:

1. Add olive oil to a small skillet and add the chopped onion and sauté until they start to turn translucent then add the garlic and sauté for another 2 minutes or so, then take the pan off the heat.
2. In a slow cooker (crock pot), add the tomato sauce, tomato puree, tomato paste, basil, oregano, parsley, Italian seasoning, black pepper, crushed red pepper flakes, and parmesan cheese. Add in the onion/garlic mixture. Cook on low, stirring occasionally for a minimum of 4 hours to really let the flavors combine.
3. Serve over pasta garnished with freshly grated parmesan cheese and fresh, chopped basil.