



Pick a bouquet of Basil

The season's most versatile herb
will enliven your cooking.
Here's how to use it with abandon.

Recipes by Joanne Weir

Lime Basil Sorbet

A traditional salt and ice electric freezer works best for this sorbet, as opposed to a tabletop freezer, which won't freeze the mixture firmly enough. Use sweet Italian or lemon basil.

- 1½ cups sugar
- 2 cups fresh lime juice, divided (about 15 limes)
- ½ cup light-colored corn syrup
- ¾ cup packed basil leaves, coarsely chopped
- 2 cups water
- 1 tablespoon grated lime rind
- Finely grated lime rind (optional)

1 Combine sugar, 1 cup juice, and corn syrup in a medium saucepan over medium-high heat. Cook 2 minutes or until sugar melts, stirring constantly. Stir in basil. Cook 30 seconds. Remove from heat. Pour mixture into a bowl. Add remaining 1 cup juice, 2 cups water, and 1 tablespoon rind. Cover and chill. Strain mixture through a fine sieve; discard solids. Pour mixture into a freezer can of an ice-cream freezer; freeze according to manufacturer's instructions. Spoon mixture into a freezer-safe container; cover and freeze 1 hour or until firm. Garnish with finely grated rind, if desired. Yield: 8 servings (serving size: ½ cup).

CALORIES 220; FAT 0.1g (sat 0g, mono 0g, poly 0.1g);
PROTEIN 0.4g; CARB 58.7g; FIBER 0.5g; CHOL 0mg;
IRON 0.2mg; SODIUM 14mg; CALC 19mg



Phyllo Pizza with Feta, Basil, and Tomatoes

Salty cheese, tomatoes, and basil make this a savory treat. Pair with a tossed green salad for a light summer supper.

- ½ cup (2 ounces) shredded part-skim mozzarella
- ½ cup (2 ounces) finely crumbled reduced-fat feta cheese
- ¼ cup (1 ounce) grated fresh Parmigiano-Reggiano cheese
- 1 tablespoon chopped fresh oregano
- ¼ teaspoon salt
- ⅛ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
- 10 (18 x 14-inch) sheets frozen phyllo dough, thawed
- Cooking spray
- 2 cups thinly sliced plum tomato
- ⅓ cup thinly sliced green onions
- ¼ cup fresh basil leaves

- 1 Preheat oven to 375°.
- 2 Combine first 6 ingredients in a bowl.
- 3 Cut phyllo sheets in half crosswise. Working with 1 phyllo sheet half at a time (cover remaining dough to keep from drying), place phyllo sheet on a baking sheet coated with cooking spray. Coat phyllo sheet with cooking spray. Repeat with 2 more layers of phyllo. Sprinkle with 2 tablespoons cheese mixture. Repeat layers 5 times, ending with 2 phyllo sheets. Coat top phyllo sheet with cooking spray; sprinkle with 2 tablespoons cheese mixture. Pat tomato slices with a paper towel. Arrange tomato slices on top of cheese, leaving a 1-inch border. Sprinkle with onions and the remaining 6 tablespoons cheese mixture. Bake at 375° for 20 minutes or until golden. Sprinkle with basil leaves. Yield: 6 servings (serving size: 2 slices).

CALORIES 195; FAT 6.7g (sat 3.2g, mono 2.1g, poly 0.5g); PROTEIN 9.3g; CARB 24.6g; FIBER 1.9g; CHOL 11.4mg; IRON 1.7mg; SODIUM 526mg; CALC 158mg

WINE NOTE A good wine for this dish won't overwhelm the delicate phyllo but will stand up to the salty cheeses and fresh basil. A favorite that fills the bill: Veramonte Sauvignon Blanc Reserva from the Casablanca Valley of Chile. The 2008 is \$11.

—Karen MacNeil





Basil Parmesan Dip with Pita Chips

Basil and Parmesan are a classic flavor combination typically found in pesto. We've added sour cream to create a creamy alternative to snack on. Use sweet Italian or lemon basil.

- 4 (6-inch) pitas
- Cooking spray
- ½ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper, divided
- ¼ teaspoon salt
- 1 cup lightly packed basil leaves (about ½ ounce)
- ¾ cup finely grated Parmigiano-Reggiano cheese
- ¾ cup reduced-fat sour cream
- 2 teaspoons fresh lemon juice
- 1 garlic clove, minced
- Basil sprigs (optional)

- 1 Preheat oven to 375°.
- 2 Split pitas; cut each half into 8 wedges. Place wedges on a baking sheet. Coat with cooking spray; sprinkle with ¼ teaspoon pepper and salt. Bake at 375° for 12 minutes or until crisp.
- 3 Combine remaining ¼ teaspoon pepper, basil, and next 4 ingredients (through garlic) in a blender or food processor; process until smooth. Scrape into a serving bowl using a rubber spatula. Garnish with basil sprigs, if desired. Serve with pita chips. Yield: 8 servings (serving size: 2½ tablespoons dip and 8 pita chips).

CALORIES 153; FAT 5.3g (sat 3.1g, mono 0.7g, poly 0.3g); PROTEIN 6.8g; CARB 19.1g; FIBER 0.9g; CHOL 18mg; IRON 1.1mg; SODIUM 362mg; CALC 156mg

Best bets with basil

There are more than 60 types of basil, all members of the mint family. Here are three you're most likely to see at gourmet groceries, farmers' markets, and nurseries.

Purple Opal

What to know: Its large, dark purple leaves offer mildly spicy hints of clove, licorice, mint, and cinnamon.

Best uses: Its complexity shines in salads, baked goods, and beverages.

Sweet Italian

What to know: This selection (aka Sweet Genovese) is the most common variety of basil, known for its licorice-clove flavor.

Best uses: Its clean, bright flavor makes it an ideal match for fresh tomatoes, or use it in Italian or Thai dishes.

Thai

What to know: Small, pointed leaves with serrated edges have peppery anise flavor.

Best uses: A hint of spicy heat makes this basil at home in Asian dishes.

PRODUCE TIP

Save the bounty

Fresh basil is best used within a couple of days after harvest. You can dry it, but these methods better preserve its flavor:

- Puree basil with a little olive oil in a food processor (or prepare pesto). Freeze in ice cube trays; store the pesto cubes in a heavy-duty zip-top plastic bag in the freezer for up to 3 months.
- Layer whole leaves in a jar, sprinkling each layer with a little salt, and cover with olive oil. Refrigerate up to 3 months.

Sicilian Pesto

Pesto is a sure sign of summer in Italy's Liguria region, where sweet basil grows in fragrant fields. Farther south, in Sicily, the locals add crushed red pepper and chopped tomatoes to their pesto. It's nice served with crusty bread or tossed with hot pasta and shrimp or poultry.

- ¼ cup pine nuts
- 3 garlic cloves
- 4 cups loosely packed basil leaves (about 2 ounces)
- ¼ cup extra-virgin olive oil
- ½ teaspoon kosher salt
- ¼ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
- ⅛ teaspoon crushed red pepper
- ½ cup (2 ounces) grated fresh Parmigiano-Reggiano cheese
- 2 cups chopped seeded tomato, drained (about 2 large)

1 Heat a small skillet over medium heat. Add nuts to pan; cook 4 minutes or until lightly toasted, stirring constantly. Remove from pan.

2 Combine nuts and garlic in a food processor; process until minced. Add basil, oil, salt, and peppers; process until blended, scraping sides occasionally. Add cheese; process until smooth. Spoon into a bowl; fold in tomato. Yield: 20 servings (serving size: 2 tablespoons).

CALORIES 51; FAT 4.6g (sat 0.8g, mono 2.7g, poly 0.9g); PROTEIN 1.4g; CARB 1.5g; FIBER 0.6g; CHOL 1mg; IRON 0.4mg; SODIUM 82mg; CALC 41mg

Purple Basil Lemonade

In this recipe, basil is crushed with sugar to release the oils. If you don't have a mortar and pestle, process the basil, sugar, and about ¼ cup of the water in a food processor or blender.

- 4 cups water
- ½ cup fresh lemon juice
- ½ cup loosely packed purple basil leaves (about ¼ ounce)
- 6 tablespoons sugar
- 4 cups ice
- 4 purple basil sprigs

1 Combine 4 cups water and juice in a large bowl. Place ½ cup basil and sugar in a mortar; pound with pestle until a paste forms. Add sugar mixture to juice mixture; stir until sugar dissolves. Strain mixture through a sieve over a bowl; discard solids. Place 1 cup ice in each of 4 glasses. Pour about 1 cup lemonade into each glass; garnish each serving with 1 basil sprig. Yield: 4 servings.

CALORIES 82; FAT 0g; PROTEIN 0.3g; CARB 21.6g; FIBER 0.4g; CHOL 0mg; IRON 0.2mg; SODIUM 5mg; CALC 16mg

Purple Basil Parmesan Biscuits

Chopped purple basil flecks these biscuits with color. Standard sweet Italian basil would do, as well. For tender biscuits, stop cutting the butter into the dough when the mixture has pea-size nuggets.

- 9 ounces all-purpose flour (about 2 cups)
- 2 tablespoons sugar
- 4 teaspoons baking powder
- 1 teaspoon salt
- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup chilled butter, cut into small pieces
- $\frac{2}{3}$ cup chopped fresh purple basil
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup (2 ounces) finely grated Parmigiano-Reggiano cheese
- $\frac{2}{3}$ cup fat-free milk
- 1 large egg
- Cooking spray

- 1 Preheat oven to 425°.
- 2 Weigh or lightly spoon flour into dry measuring cups; level with a knife. Combine flour, sugar, baking powder, and salt in a medium bowl, stirring with a whisk. Cut in butter with a pastry blender or 2 knives until mixture resembles coarse meal. Stir in basil and cheese. Combine milk and egg in a small bowl, stirring with a whisk. Add milk mixture to flour mixture; stir just until moist. Turn dough out onto a floured surface; pat to 1-inch-thick circle. Cut with a

2-inch biscuit cutter into 12 biscuits. Place biscuits on a baking sheet coated with cooking spray. Bake at 425° for 15 minutes. Remove from oven, and cool. Yield: 12 biscuits (serving size: 1 biscuit).

CALORIES 145; FAT 5.4g (sat 3.2g, mono 1.3g, poly 0.3g); PROTEIN 4.6g; CARB 19.5g; FIBER 0.7g; CHOL 31mg; IRON 1.3mg; SODIUM 448mg; CALC 156mg ♡

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