

Herb of the Month: Basil

Ocimum basilicum is an energizing, tonifying and illuminating culinary herb famous for its versatility in the kitchen! Basil relieves headaches, chest infections, digestive problems, and sore, overworked muscles. Helpful for mental fatigue and stress. Invigorates body, spirit, helps refresh the mind allowing concentration.



Refreshing Basil Ice Cream

This wonderful ice cream shows basil's versatility. A very flavorful, yet still sweet treat, this frozen dessert is perfect after a summer meal or anytime you want a delightful and different twist on nature's essence. Using fresh and dried basil, this wonderful ice cream shows basil's versatility. The addition of fresh berries makes a very colorful presentation. (Reprinted with permission from Spice Dreams: Flavored Ice Creams and Other Frozen Treats by Sara Engram and Katie Luber (Andrews McMeel 2010).

Prep Time: 4 hours - Cook Time: 20 minutes - Total Time: 4 hours, 20 minutes -Yield: Makes about 1 1/2 quarts

Ingredients:
•2 cups whole milk
•1/2 cup plus 1/2 cup sugar
•1/2 cup packed fresh basil leaves
•2 teaspoons dried basil
•1/8 teaspoon salt
•4 large egg yolks
•2 cups whipping cream
•1 teaspoon vanilla

Preparation:

Combine the milk, 1/2 cup of the sugar, the fresh basil, dried basil, and salt in a medium, heavy saucepan. Scald the milk mixture over medium-high heat, stirring often, for 5 minutes. Remove the pan from the heat and let steep for 1 hour. Strain the milk mixture through a fine-mesh sleeve. Return the milk to a clean, medium, heavy saucepan. Scald the milk once again over medium-high heat, stirring often, for 5 minutes. While the milk is scalding, whisk together the egg yolks in a medium mixing bowl. Add the remaining 1/2 cup of sugar and whisk until the eggs are light and fluffy. Whisking constantly, add a small amount of the hot milk to the egg mixture. Gradually whisk in the remaining hot milk.

Return the custard mixture to the pan and cook over medium-low heat, stirring often, until the custard is thick enough to coat the back of a spoon, about 5 minutes. Remove the pan from the heat and place in a bowl of ice water to quickly cool the custard. Let the custard cool, stirring often, for 5 minutes. While the custard is cooling, combine the cream and the vanilla in a medium bowl. Stir in the custard mixture. Cover with plastic wrap and press the wrap directly onto the surface of the custard. Refrigerate until completely chilled, at least 4 hours or overnight. The custard may be stored in the refrigerator for up to 3 days. Freeze the chilled custard mixture in an ice-cream maker. Transfer the ice cream to an airtight container and freeze in the freezer for 2 to 4 hours before serving.



Delicious Basil Pesto

Serve pesto on the pasta of your choice, use as a dip, or try it over fresh boiled potatoes or drizzled on grilled vegetables. It is a wonderful way to work with mature basil leaves. Pesto is a sauce originating in Genoa in the Liguria region of northern Italy.

Basil Pesto makes about 1 1/4 cups. Can be prepared in 45 minutes or less.

Ingredients

- 4 cups packed fresh basil leaves, washed well
- 1/2 cup pine nuts, toasted until golden, cooled, and chopped fine
- 1/2 cup freshly grated Parmesan (about 1 1/2 ounces)
- 2 large garlic cloves, minced
- 1/4 cup plus 3 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil

Preparation

Blanching the basil is completely optional, but does make a pesto that stays green rather than turning black when stored. Have ready a bowl of ice and cold water. In a saucepan of boiling salted water blanch basil, a handful at a time, 2 seconds, transferring with a slotted spoon to bowl of ice water to stop cooking. Drain basil in a sieve and pat dry.

In a food processor purée basil with remaining ingredients until smooth and season with salt and pepper. Pesto may be made 2 days ahead and chilled, its surface covered with plastic wrap.



Basil Infused Salad Oil

This dresses any salad or tomatoes nicely! 2 cups extra virgin olive oil and 1 1/2 cup fresh basil leaves. Chop basil finely. Place basil and oil in a sauce pan, heat over medium heat for 5 minutes. Remove from heat and let basil and oil steep for at least 30 minutes. Strain mixture into a jar and keep in an air tight container for up to 1 month.



Angel's Mist Basil Essential Oil

This is a spicy, sweet and enriching essential oil steam distilled from the green leaves of this herb. It is prized in Ayurvedic medicine for its ability to strengthen compassion, faith and bring clarity.



Tulsi or Holy Basil

Tulsi or Holy Basil (Ocimum sanctum, O. tenuiflorum) belongs to the Lamiaceae family of herbs. It's famous as an adaptogen, antibacterial, antidepressant, antioxidant, antiviral, carminative, diuretic, expectorant, galactagogue (promotes the flow of mother's milk), and immunomodulator.

Holy basil is found throughout the lowlands of India. Holy basil is classified as a Rasayana, an herb that nourishes a person's growth to perfect health and promotes long life.

Holy basil is sacred to the Hindu god Vishnu and is used in morning prayers to insure personal health, spiritual purity, and family well-being. Strings of beads made from the plant's stems are used in meditation to give clarity and protection. The ancient ayurvedic texts, the Charaka Samhita (appx. 200 BCE) and Sushruta Samhita (400–100 BCE) both mention the use of this herb to treat people with snakebites and scorpion stings.

Find this herb in ground or whole form here:
http://www.peacefulmind.com/ayurveda.htm#Whole Herbs

Basil:

Botanical name: Ocimum basilicum
Use: Relieves headaches, chest infections, digestive problems, antispasmodic, sore, overworked muscles. Helpful for mental fatigue and stress. Invigorates body, spirit, helps refresh the mind allowing concentration.
Perfume Note: Top
Blends well with: Lavender, Bergamot, Clary Sage, Geranium, Black Pepper
Source: flowering herb, leaves
Production method: steam distillation
Aromatherapy benefits: soothing, energizing, toning, illuminating
Aroma type: spicy, camphore-like undertone
Warning: Do not use Basil during pregnancy, can be a skin irritant.
Safety Information: use recommended dilution or less

Here are 10 favorite uses for basil:

(as posted in Andrew's free online Health Community: Alternative Answers, author: Wellness Mama)

Basil has taken over my garden so I am in the process of preserving and storing it now. Fortunately, it can be used for so much more than just cooking! Basil is most known for its culinary uses and if you have used my meal plans, you've probably noticed that I add it to everything. My husband's Italian heritage has rubbed off on me and I absolutely love the sweet and fragrant addition of Basil.

What isn't as well known are the various other herbal uses of Basil. It is a traditional remedy that has been used in various cultures for hundreds of years for many uses besides cooking. These are my top uses:

1. **Basil Pesto**- This culinary use is one of Basil's most popular uses and variations of this are used in cultures around the world. At our house, we add pesto to everything from eggs, to meats to slices of fresh cucumber. (See recipe above).

2. **General Cooking**- Dried basil can be easily added to practically any dish. Basil is used around the world in many different cuisines with good reason. It adds a depth and flavor that is not rivaled by other herbs.

3. **Calming the Stomach**- The Italians may be on to something with adding Basil to everything. It is thought to have a calming effect on the stomach and 1/2 teaspoon of dried or fresh Basil Leaf in water can often help sooth indigestion and alleviate feelings of fullness.

4. **Coughing and Colds**- The Amish use Basil leaf to help alleviate coughing and colds. They chew fresh leaves to calm coughing or make a calming tea of dried basil to help sooth illness.

5. **Facial Steam for Headache**: A facial steam with dried basil leaf can help alleviate a headache. Add a tablespoon of dried basil leaf to 2 cups of boiling water in a large pot. Carefully lean over the pot, cover head with a towel and breathe in the steam for 5-10 minutes until headache starts to subside. Bonus, you get to smell like an Italian restaurant for the rest of the day.

6. **Antibiotic properties**: According to Web MD: "European scientists are investigating the use of basil oil as treatment for antibiotic resistant infections with Staphylococcus, Enterococcus, and Pseudomonas."

7. **Stings and Bites**: If you are working outside and get bitten or stung by an insect and don't have any Plantain growing nearby, chewing up a basil leaf and applying to the bite will help relieve the pain and draw out the venom.

8. **Ear Infections**: The essential oil is antibacterial, and drops of basil oil may relieve ear infections.

9. **Blood sugar**: There is some evidence that Basil can help level out blood sugar if consumed regularly and drank as a juice or tea.

10. **Stress Reduction**: Herbalist suggests adding 2 cups of strong Basil Leaf tea to a warm bath to help reduce stress and facilitate relaxation.