

Sweet Basil

HOW TO CHOOSE AND STORE

Basil is best consumed fresh. Most of its flavor comes from its essential oils, which are lost to a certain extent when the leaves are dried or cooked at a high temperature. Basil also doesn't keep well in the fridge. It can be frozen, but leaves may turn brown. Some choose to preserve basil in oil. After being cut, basil should be kept with the stems in water, like a bouquet, until eaten. Many basil lovers buy their own plants to keep in the kitchen or backyard to harvest from directly.



HOW TO USE AND EAT

Basil is an herb that is heavily used in various cuisines across the world. There are several different varieties, including dolly basil, holy basil, and Thai basil. It can be added to stir-fries, pasta dishes, pizzas, meat or seafood dishes, curry, sandwiches, and various other meals. Basil is also the main ingredient in pesto. For those who like the flavor, basil can be chopped up and sprinkled into most savory meals.

SIMPLE PESTO RECIPE

- 2 cups of fresh basil leaves
- 2 cloves of garlic
- ¼ cup of pine nuts (optional)
- ¼ tsp salt
- ½ cup of extra-virgin olive oil
- Kosher salt and pepper to taste
- Food processor, blender, or mortar and pestle

Combine basil, garlic, and pine nuts in a food processor and pulse until coarsely chopped. (Alternatively, if you'd like more added texture from the pine nuts, chop them finely with a kitchen knife and stir them into your pesto at the very end.) Slowly add in your olive oil, up to ½ a cup. Process until fully incorporated and smooth. Season with salt and pepper and store in a sealable container in the fridge. When ready to use, warm in a saucepan over medium heat and pour over pasta.

CAPRESE PANINI/TOMATO TOASTY

- Medium-to large tomato
- 3-6 basil leaves, depending on size
- Mozzarella cheese
- Baguette or some other kind of dense bread (think sourdough)
- Vegetable/olive oil, butter, or margarine

Cut 2 slices of bread. If using a baguette, cut lengthwise to achieve sandwich size. Thinly layer one piece of bread with mozzarella. Slice tomato and layer desired amount into the sandwich. Add another thin layer of mozzarella. When the tomato is not directly touching the bread, it will prevent your sandwich from getting soggy. Layer in your basil over the cheese and top with the second slice of bread. Grease the outer sides of the bread and toast your sandwich in a frying pan on the stove, over medium heat. Alternatively, you can use a toaster oven or a panini/sandwich press.

For a gluten free version of the above, many people broil tomato slices drizzled with olive oil/balsamic and layered with cheese, basil, and other herbs of choice.