

BASIL, FULLY



THE COOKFUL

Edited by Amy Bowen and Christine Pittman

Basil, Fully

I'm writing this on Memorial Day, the unofficial kick-off to summer. Yee haw! Don't you just love it? All the burgers and potato salad, your besties and beer, suntanning, bikinis and flip flops. I could just about live in summer forever. Oh wait. I kinda do. I live in Florida. Tee hee. But my memories of summer, and the contrast with winter, come from spending most of my life in Canada. So I get it. Summer is the best and it's time to celebrate it.

One of the things I love most about summer is that there's a whole lot of basil going on. My favorite herb starts growing in gardens and in big pots and everyone gets into it adding it to their salads and cocktails and just about everywhere. That's why we decided to do a whole ebook on basil. And this is a big ebook. Trust me. Your brain will be blown by the number of basil tips, how to's and recipes in here. Blown!

OK, grab your mozzarella and tomatoes, olive oil and sea salt, strawberries and raspberries (say what? Don't worry. You'll see) and let's get started!

I hope you have/had a fabulous Memorial Day!

Christine



THE COOKFUL

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Basil Shopping Guide

By Amy Bowen

Basil is such a versatile herb. You can use it in hors d'oeuvres, but it's just as delightful in a dessert. Here's everything you need to start cooking with basil.

Summer's here and I'm feeling that familiar itch to grow something. Except I have a black thumb instead of green. I try every single year but always end up "borrowing" fresh herbs from my neighbor who has the most beautiful gardens.

This year, my neighbor has nudged me to try growing basil. It's easy, she said. We'll see. What I do know is that there are plenty of delicious basil recipes that I want to cook. The cooking part I've got down. Here's everything you need to get started with cooking and to get into the basil mood.

I'll probably try growing [basil in a can](#). It looks easy enough, and it's just plain cute.

Once you pat yourself on the back for being a gardening goddess, dry your basil. You can go old-school and let nature do it with an [herb dryer](#). Or speed it up with a [food dehydrator](#). Or

Basil Shopping Guide

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you can just buy [dried basil](#).

Even babies can get into the craze with [basil baby food](#).

[Basil dish soap](#) makes it so easy to clean up. Plus you'll smell good. Win-win.

My sister has this [herb cutter](#). I'm going to steal it because it's awesome. I also have always wanted a mezzaluna. Or maybe I just like saying that word. [Mezzaluna](#). (If you don't know what that is, it's the half moon (get it? luna!) herb chopper in the picture on the previous page.

Daydreaming about a mezzaluna got me feeling sophisticated and extravagant, which led me to the ultimate mezzaluna cutting board, [this one by John Boos](#), of course.

Now I'd better stop shopping or I won't have money left to actually buy my basil seeds!



10 Surprising Things That Go With Basil

By Amy Bowen

Basil is such a good flavor. And it goes with so many things. Here are 10 surprising ways to take advantage of summer's favorite herb.

Nothing tastes quite like summer as basil. We know it's delicious with tomato, garlic, lemon and balsamic vinegar. But that's just the tasty beginning. Here are 10 surprising flavors that compliment basil.

BROCCOLI

The sweetness of basil is lovely with the strong flavor of broccoli. Saute the herb and broccoli together for a quick side dish.

Surprising Basil Pairings

Continued from previous page

SPINACH

OK, you've tried basil with broccoli. Now try it with spinach. Cook spinach until wilted. Add torn basil and some pine nuts for crunch.

APRICOTS

Why are apricots overlooked when it comes to cooking? They can add a flair to a meal. Try filling an apricot half with goat cheese and sprinkle with fresh basil. Delish.

AVOCADO

Basil lightens up the creaminess of avocado. Throw in some strawberries, and you have a surprising summer salad.

TUNA

I love that tuna is such a healthy protein. Basil works with it in salads and in pasta dishes.

WATERMELON

I make a mean watermelon basil salsa that I serve with cinnamon pita chips. Or make fruit kebabs, layered with watermelon, pineapple, mango and basil. Then drizzle some balsamic vinegar.

BLUEBERRIES

Blueberry is another fruit basil compliments. Try it in desserts, such as a blueberry crumble. And really, basil goes well with most other berries too. Strawberries, raspberries and even cranberries.

MINT

Did you know that basil and mint belong to the same family? That's why they work so well together. This combination works well with grilled or sauteed veggies.

Surprising Basil Pairings

Continued from previous page

CILANTRO

Make a yummy mint-cilantro chutney. You can serve it with lamb or beef kebabs. That sounds so refreshing, doesn't it?

PEANUT BUTTER

Yes, really. This is delicious. Try a peanut butter sandwich and fresh basil leaves. Throw some basil (just a bit) into peanut butter cookies. I'm getting hungry.



Cioppino

By Christine Pittman

Cioppino is a fish stew from San Fran with lots of wine in the sauce. There's also a lot of basil in there too, both dried and fresh. You have gotta try this one!

Have you had Cioppino before? If yes, you know it's awesome. If no, you are in for a treat!

Cioppino is an American-Italian fish stew that originated in San Francisco. It's loaded with tons of delicious seafood all floating in a tomato and wine sauce. So good, right?

As you may know, here on The Cookful right now we're featuring all things basil. We've been giving you all kinds of tips for growing and cooking with basil and lots of delicious basil-spiked recipes too. This recipe in particular is full of basil. There's dried basil in the broth and then you add fresh basil leaves at the end when you serve it. So you get the deep warm earth dried basil flavor as well as the bright fresh flavor in this soup. It's pretty great. Enjoy!

Cioppino

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Yield: 4 servings

Prep Time: 0 minutes

Cook Time: 15 minutes

Total Time: 15 minutes

Ingredients:

2 (8oz.) bottles clam juice
1 (28 oz.) can petite diced tomatoes
1 Tbsp. olive oil
1 small onion
2 poblano peppers (or use 1 large bell pepper)
2 garlic cloves
1/2 tsp. dry basil
1/8 tsp. dry oregano
1/4 tsp. coarse black pepper
1/8 tsp. salt
1 cup dry red wine
1/2 lb. cod
1/2 lb. live mussels (buy them already debearded and cleaned)
3/4 lb. deveined large shrimp with shells on
4 fully cooked crab claws, sometimes called cocktail claws (for garnish)
12 fresh basil leaves (for garnish)

1. Pour clam juice and diced tomatoes into a large microwave-safe bowl. Heat on high for 5 minutes.
2. Meanwhile, heat oil in a large pot or Dutch oven over medium heat while you chop onion. Add onion to pot. Seed, core and chop poblano peppers and add to the pot. Peel and finely chop garlic. Add to pot along with dry basil, oregano, black pepper and salt. Stir then add wine. Increase heat to high and bring to a simmer.
3. Pour hot clam broth mixture into pot. Cover and bring to a boil. Reduce heat to a simmer.
4. While the soup is heating, cut cod into 1-inch pieces. Rinse mussels in cold water. Once the soup is simmering, add cod and mussels. Cook until mussels are open and the fish is cooked through, about 3 minutes. Add shrimp and stir occasionally until all are pink. Ladle into large bowls and top each with a cooked crab claw and a few fresh basil leaves.



No-Churn Strawberry Basil Frozen Yogurt

By Christine Pittman

Strawberries and basil are super-heavenly together. Try them in this frozen yogurt made without an ice cream maker. You just need a zip-top bag.

A few days ago we told you about [10 surprising flavors that go with basil](#). Broccoli, spinach, and peanut butter, oh my! One of the other things we mentioned was berries. Basil and berries are super heavenly together. I think it's because basil has a slight licorice flavor that makes it work well as a sweet as well as a savory. You can absolutely put basil into any berry dessert. You can even add it to cranberry sauce. Diiiiivine!

Here's I've mixed up some fresh strawberries with basil and yogurt to make frozen yogurt. You can put the mixture into an ice cream maker, if you have one. But if you don't have one, don't worry. The instructions given are to make frozen yogurt without an ice cream maker. All you need is a heavy-duty zip-top bag and you're good to go. Enjoy!

No-Churn Strawberry Basil Frozen Yogurt

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Yield: 1 quart

Prep Time: 10 minutes

Cook Time: 4 hours

Total Time: 4 hours and 10 minutes

Ingredients:

1 lb. hulled strawberries
1 lemon, zested and juiced
1/2 cup sugar
1/4 cup packed fresh basil leaves
1 and 1/2 cups whole Greek yogurt or 2 and 1/2 cups whole plain yogurt strained as described above
1 Tbsp. corn syrup

1. Put the strawberries, lemon zest, 2 tablespoons of lemon juice, sugar and basil leaves in a food processor. Pulse 5-10 times until well chopped up. Add the yogurt and pulse a few more times. Add the corn syrup and puree until smooth (I like some flecks of strawberries and basil though so not completely smooth).
2. Transfer mixture to a large freezer bag. Remove all air from bag before sealing. Lay bag flat in the freezer. After an hour, take it out and smoosh it around. Lay it flat in the freezer. Repeat every hour. As the yogurt freezes, you will want to break up all chunks when you take it out. To do so, lay the bag flat in the counter. Use your fingers to push out any lumps such that the mixture is smooth again. When it is smooth but well-frozen, it's ready to serve immediately. Or put it back into the freezer and leave it there. 25 minutes before serving, remove from freezer. Let it sit for 15 minutes then use your fingers to smooth it out again. You may want to put it back in the freezer for 5-10 minutes at this point to let it get a bit firmer again.



Roasted Asparagus with Basil and Pistachios

By Christine Pittman

Basil is besties with dark green veggies, like here in this basil and asparagus side dish. Enjoy!

As you know, we're doing this whole series on basil right now. It's such an incredible flavor, and it goes with so many thing. Yet, for whatever reason, we tend to stick to the same old tomato, mozzarella, garlic thing. Today I'm challenging you to get out of your basil rut and try it with something new. Asparagus! Basil really brightens up asparagus. The pistachios too are a nice flavor with basil and they add some good crunch. You're going to love this side dish, really really.

Roasted Asparagus

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Yield: 4 servings

Prep Time: 10 minutes

Cook Time: 10 minutes

Total Time: 20 minutes

Ingredients:

1 lb. asparagus, trimmed

1 oz. roasted, salted
pistachios

2 tsp. olive oil

1/4 tsp. salt

12 basil leaves

1. Preheat oven to 425°F.
2. Arrange asparagus in a single layer on a large baking sheet. Shell and roughly chop the pistachios. Sprinkle them over the asparagus. Drizzle with the olive oil and sprinkle with salt.
3. Roast until bright green and tender, 12-15 minutes depending on thickness of the asparagus.
4. Transfer asparagus and pistachios to a serving plate and gently tear the basil leaves over top.



Basil, Scallop and Squash Skewers

By Christine Pittman

Did you know that basil goes deliciously with shellfish? Here's a recipe to try out. Grilled skewers with basil, scallops and butternut squash. Seriously good.

Scallops, or really any shellfish, are seriously delicious with basil. In this recipe, the basil is threaded onto a skewer between a scallop and a piece of par-cooked butternut squash. The basil flavors both of them as they get some toasty grill marks. The basil ends up wilted and soft. There's also a garlic dip with these that brings everything together to create some fabulous mouthfuls.

Basil, Scallop and Squash Skewers

Continued from previous page

Yield: 6 servings

Prep Time: 15 minutes

Cook Time: 15 minutes

Total Time: 30 minutes

Ingredients:

6-6 inch wooden skewers
1/2 of a 3 lb. butternut squash
(the narrower top half),
peeled
salt
1 tsp. sugar
1 Tbsp. grape seed or
vegetable oil
1 Tbsp. butter, melted
6-1 inch thick sea scallops
(about 1/2 lb.)
12 medium-sized basil leaves
1/2 cup Greek yogurt
1 small clove garlic, minced
1 tsp. lemon zest
1 Tbsp. chopped fresh basil
1/8 tsp. black pepper

1. Put skewers in water to soak.
2. Cut the squash into 12 cubes. Put in a medium saucepan with 1/2 tsp. salt and the sugar and add water just to cover. Bring to a boil over high heat. Reduce to a simmer and cook until a skewer goes through the middle easily, 4-7 minutes. Drain. Toss gently with the oil.
3. Preheat the grill for direct grilling over medium heat. Toss the butter with the scallops.
4. Onto a soaked skewer thread a cube of squash, a basil leaf, a scallop and then another basil leaf and another cube of squash. Repeat with remaining skewers. Grill until scallops are just cooked through, about 2-3 minutes per side.
5. Meanwhile, in a small bowl combine the yogurt, garlic, lemon zest, chopped basil, black pepper and 1/8 teaspoon of salt. Serve the skewers with the dip.



Grilled Strawberry Shortcake with Basil Whipped Cream

By Christine Pittman

Those there are some grilled strawberries nestled in basil-infused whipped cream. The shortcake part is grilled too. Can you say, Summertime? Mmmhmm.

It's true, I'm obsessed with how good basil and strawberries are together. We told you that they are delicious together over here: [10 Surprising Things That Go With Basil](#). Then we gave you a recipe for [Strawberry Basil Frozen Yogurt](#). And now, today, I'm going a step further with this grilled strawberry shortcake. You grill the strawberries too before topping it all with a basil-infused whipped cream. Yeah. I know.

You are going to love it. LOVE it.

Grilled Strawberry Shortcake

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Yield: 6 servings

Prep Time: 15 minutes

Cook Time: 5 minutes

Total Time: 20 minutes

Ingredients:

1 and 1/2 cups whipping cream
1/3 cup packed chopped fresh basil
Rind of 1 lemon, removed in strips
2 Tbsp. powdered sugar (confectioner's sugar)
a 1 lb package of Driscoll's strawberries (about 24), hulled
6 skewers
2 Tbsp. honey
12 oz. Angel Food Cake (store-bought or homemade)

1. At least four hours before serving, combine the whipping cream, basil and lemon rind in a small microwave-safe bowl. Microwave until warm, 1 to 1 and 1/2 minutes. Stir. Refrigerate until very cold, at least 4 hours. Strain and refrigerate cream for up to 24 hours.
2. Use a stand mixer or egg beater at medium speed to whip the cream for 2-3 minutes. Add the powdered sugar. Whip until soft peaks form, 4-6 minutes more. Refrigerate until serving.
3. Prepare grill for direct cooking over medium heat. Cut angle food cake into 6 wedges.
4. Thread 4 strawberries onto each skewer. Drizzle each skewer of strawberries with 1 teaspoon of honey. Use a brush or fingers to spread it around and coat berries.
5. Transfer berry skewers and angel food cake to the grill. Grill on one side until grill marks appear, 1-2 minutes. Flip and grill until grill marks appear on the other side, 1-2 minutes more. Remove from grill.
6. Serve each slice of angel food cake with a skewer of grilled strawberries and about 1/2 cup of whipped cream.

How to Dry and Store Basil

By Amy Bowen

Drying your freshly grown basil is easy peasy. All you need is a pot of fresh basil and some time. Then you'll enjoy this herb all year.

Summer's growing season is here, and growing basil is super easy (for most people, anyhow. My thumbs are a bit black but I'm trying!). There's absolutely every reason to dry your own herbs this year.

AIR DRYING YOUR BASIL

Let's air dry some basil. All you need is basil (of course), some string, a plastic bag and two eye hooks. I bet you already have these in your house.

Cut your basil and wash it. Let it soak for a few minutes and swish it around (my toddler LOVES doing this). After you pat it dry, look at your basil. Toss the leaves with holes or any that look weird. Now, gather your basil in even bunches, with the cut ends of the stems at the top. Tie the string around the top of the bunches. Make sure you tie them very tight because the basil will shrink as it dries. Make a loop with the string at the top so you can hang it up.

Choose a space in a cool, dry place and hang your basil. Hang your eye hooks and string. You can use a paper clip to hang up your basil bunches. Just thread it onto your loop of string.

Limp basil is gross. You need a month to dry your basil. You'll know the basil is ready when it's dried and crisp when you break it. If it's limp, hang it back up. Once it's ready, store in a plastic bag.

OVEN DRYING

Don't want to wait four weeks? Use your oven. You'll need parchment paper and a cookie sheet.

Clip and clean your herbs as before. Dry in a salad spinner or in between two clean kitchen towels.

Cut the basil into 1/4-inch sections. Line a cookie sheet with parchment paper and place your basil on it.

Preheat your oven to the lowest possible temperature. Place the cookie sheet on the top rack and cook for 2-4 hours. You'll know it's ready when you can crumble it.

How to Dry and Store Basil

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STORING

Do yourself a favor. Take an extra 10 seconds to label and date your freshly dried herbs. I'll be honest, I never do this for my herbs. And I always regret it after I find a forgotten bag of some kind of herb buried in the abyss that is my spice drawer.

If you store your herbs in a cool, dry place, you can keep those suckers for years. Although it's recommended to keep dried herbs for one year for best taste.

CRUMBLE

You can chop or cut the basil when it's dried. Store in an air-tight container. Here's a tip: Store your basil leaves whole. Crumble them right before cooking for best flavor.



Carrot, Basil and Cream Cheese Salad Dressing

By Christine Pittman

Who knew that carrots and basil went so well together? We did! That's why we put them into this glorious salad dressing. This recipe is courtesy of [Produce for Kids](#).

Basil has so much amazing flavor and we all love love love eating it with tomatoes and mozzarella. But, did you know that it goes well with tons of other things too? Like carrots! Who'd have thought that basil and carrots taste so amazing together? But they do. They really really do.

Next time you're eating one of those baby carrots that aren't actually baby carrots but are big carrots that are peeled and cut into baby carrot shapes, wrap a small basil leave around it and crunch in. Flavor explosion!

Carrot, Basil and Cream Cheese Salad Dressing

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Or, to taste that flavor combo, whip up a batch of this simple carrot and basil salad dressing. It has cream cheese in it too so you know it's gonna be good!

Yield: 6 servings

1. Add cream cheese, lemon juice, carrot juice, basil, salt and pepper to a blender. Blend until smooth.

Prep Time: 10 minutes

Cook Time: 0 minutes

Total Time: 10 minutes

Ingredients:

1/2 cup low-fat cream

cheese, softened

2 Tbsp. lemon juice

1/2 cup 100% carrot juice

2 Tbsp. fresh basil, chopped

1/8 tsp. salt

1/8 tsp. black pepper



10 Tips for the Best Pesto

By Christine Pittman

Learn everything you need to know to make the best pesto ever, plus get our perfect pesto recipe. Your pesto will be better than ever.

Pesto is a simple and delicious thing but sometimes it doesn't go well. Here are our 10 best tips for perfect pesto.

1. Wash the greens very well. You don't want any bits of grit in your pesto. For sure.
2. When washing your greens, use cold water, not warm. Warm water will wilt them. Dry them well in a salad spinner or between layers of kitchen towel.
3. Cut the amount of basil you use down a bit and add parsley to fill in the rest. This will add a lighter note that we know you'll love.
4. Think carefully about how much garlic you add. The recipe below calls for 1-2 cloves. If you go in with 2, it will be a garlicky pesto. If you stick with 1, it will be milder and more

10 Tips for the Best Pesto

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balanced. If it's more balanced with 1 though, why suggest the possibility of adding 2? Well, I like garlic more than I like balance. My pesto is always really garlicky. I even perhaps have been known to go in with THREE cloves. Yowzers!

5. Pine nuts are traditional in pesto but they're pricey. You can absolutely use walnuts or pecans instead. Whichever nut you choose, make sure you toast them first. Get out a small pan, add your nuts, put it over medium-low heat and cook, stirring often, until you can smell them.
6. Choose an olive oil that you like the flavor of on its own. If you're not sure, pour the olive oil onto a plate, sprinkle with salt and pepper and then dip in some bread. Ask yourself if you'd happily eat that in a restaurant prior to a meal while sipping on a glass of pinot. If the answer is yes, you've got a good olive oil. Go for it.
7. Don't just put everything into the food processor and whiz it up. This bruises the basil leaves and causes the nuts to release too much oil, which will make the sauce kind of pasty. Instead, chop up the basil, nuts and garlic really well first. Then put them into the food processor with the olive oil, salt and pepper (not the cheese). Pulse just a few times. Pesto is supposed to be a bit chunky, not super-smooth. Let it be that way.
8. You don't have to use Parmesan if you don't want to, but you do need a hard, salty cheese here. Like, don't try to add mozzarella or brie. They're just not going to mix in right. The other cheese tip is to not put it into the food processor with the other ingredients. Instead, grate it finely and stir it in at the end.
9. The main issue to be concerned with when it comes to storing pesto is that it can turn brown. If your pesto is nice and thick, as it should be, pour a layer of olive oil on top to prevent air entering and oxidizing it. Alternatively, you can press plastic wrap right onto the top of the pesto. Then seal the container and store in the fridge for up to 5 days.
10. Pesto freezes beautifully. You can go the ice cube tray route, if you have enough ice cube trays. Just fill the trays with pesto and freeze. Once frozen, pop the cubes out and seal them in a freezer bag. What I usually do instead of ice cube trays is to transfer the unfrozen pesto into a freezer bag. Lay it flat in the freezer and go and squidge it around every hour or so. When it is nearly fully frozen, I break it into pieces inside the bag. Then those pieces are the future pesto portions. (If you forget to go in and break up the pesto before it freezes solid, don't worry. Take it out and defrost it a bit. Then break it up and put it back into the freezer).

Well, now you're ready to make best ever pesto.

The Best Pesto

By Lyndsay Burginger

Yield: 1 cup

Prep Time: 10 minutes

Cook Time: 0 minutes

Total Time: 10 minutes

Ingredients:

1 and 1/2 cups loosely packed
fresh basil leaves

1/2 cup loosely packed fresh
parsley leaves

1/3 cup pine nuts, toasted

1-2 cloves garlic (depending
on their size and how
garlicky you want it)

1/2 cup tasty olive oil

1/2 tsp. salt

1/4 tsp. coarse black pepper

1/4 cup finely grated
Parmesan

1. Wash and dry the basil and parsley well.
2. Using a knife, chop the basil, parsley, pine nuts and garlic. Put them in a food processor. Add the olive oil, salt and pepper. Pulse until well-chopped but not smooth. Stir in the Parmesan cheese.



Melon, Feta and Basil Salad

By Christine Pittman

You knew that watermelon and feta went together, but what about the other melons. And what happens if you add basil to the mix? Yummers!!!

I think by now we all know that feta and watermelon are insane together. It's actually true that all the melons taste good with feta though, which is why this salad also has cantaloupe and honey dew melon. It's so colorful and you get slightly different flavors with each mouthful.

Topping off this salad is some nice fresh basil. Basil and sweet fruit like melon are great together. And basil and feta? I mean, come on!

A quick basil tip: The basil is not chopped in this recipe but is instead torn using your fingers. Why? Unless your knife is super-sharp (as it should be but, if you're like me, rarely is) chopping the basil will bruise it. Bruised basil gets brown at the edges and does not look nice on a salad. When you instead tear basil, it rips cleanly and does not get the bruised appearance. You also get nice bit pieces, which is great in a salad like this.

Melon, Feta and Basil Salad

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Yield: 4 servings

Prep Time: 10 minutes

Cook Time: 0 minutes

Total Time: 10 minutes

Ingredients:

1 cup chopped cantaloupe
1 cup chopped honeydew
1 cup chopped watermelon
2 tsp. lemon juice
4 large leaves basil, torn
2 tsp. feta, crumbled
1/2 tsp. salt
1/4 tsp. black pepper

1. In bowl, place melon. Toss in lemon juice. Sprinkle with basil and feta. Sprinkle with salt and pepper.



The Ultimate Caprese Salad

By Christine Pittman

Find out why we skipped the balsamic vinegar reduction in our Ultimate Caprese Salad recipe.

When we set out to come up with a perfect Caprese Salad, there was instantly a debate about whether balsamic vinegar should show its face here. I was adamantly opposed. [Lyndsay](#) was adamantly in favor. I'm the editor-in-chief though, so I win.

JK! We did a bit of research and found that the purists on Caprese Salad all say to skip the balsamic, that it is not a required core element of a Caprese Salad. In fact, as is my own opinion, the balsamic reduction is so sweet that it dims the sweetness of the tomatoes. To taste their sugar, you don't want any other sweet flavor on the plate.

Now, if you want to ignore me and my argument about sweet-tomato-love, that's fine. There's nothing stopping you from making our recipe below and then drizzling with burgundy syrup. But I'd ask you to please try the salad as it is, without the syrup, first. Taste those sugary

The Ultimate Caprese Salad

Continued from previous page

tomatoes with the creamy cheese and fresh basil. See how the flavors are so simple and go together so well. Then come to the obvious conclusion that...hmm...Christine is right, as always. It's sweet enough as it is. ;)

Yield: 4 servings

Prep Time: 10 minutes

Cook Time: 0 minutes

Total Time: 10 minutes

1. Arrange tomato and mozzarella slices in a single alternating and overlapping layer on a serving platter. Sprinkle with olive oil, sea salt salt and coarse pepper.
2. Using hands, tear up basil leaves and let them fall onto the salad. Do not add a balsamic vinegar reduction.

Ingredients:

2 Beefsteak tomatoes, sliced

1/2 cup grape tomatoes,
halved

8 oz. fresh mozzarella, sliced
in 1/4 inch slices

1 tsp. olive oil (taste it first
and make sure you like the
taste of it. [See Tip #6 here](#)
[for tasting the oil](#))

1/2 tsp. coarse flaky sea salt

1/4 tsp. coarse black pepper

8 fresh basil leaves



11 Creative Uses for Leftover Pesto

By Amy Bowen

We're all used to pesto on pasta, but what else is it great with? Let's look at some delicious and new ways to use all that glorious sauce.

So you made a batch of [our best ever pesto](#) and didn't use it all? You can totally freeze it for later. Better yet, keep it in your fridge for a few days because we're going to show you that you can grab that jar of leftover pesto and use it in a whole bunch of new ways.

1. Try it with baked brie. Talk about elegant. Spread a line of pesto over the top of the brie. Serve with fancy crackers.
2. Upgrade your omelet. Add some pesto to the top of your favorite omelet. Sprinkle some cheese on top of the omelet. It's a breakfast dish worthy of Instagram.
3. Pizza can get creative with using pesto as the sauce. Top with fresh mozzarella, tomato and chicken. Or, having pizza delivery? Dip the crusts in pesto, on its own or mixed with mayonnaise, sour cream or Greek yogurt.

11 Uses for Leftover Pesto

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4. Add it to your bread recipe. Add the pesto to your bread dough and bake. Serve with any delicious Italian meal.
5. Skip the mayo and spread pesto on your sandwich. I like it with turkey, provolone and spinach.
6. Use it as a marinade for your meats. Marinate for at least 30 minutes. Use on poultry or red meats. You can even add it to your ground sirloin to make pesto burgers.
7. Add it to vegetables. It's good mixed with butter and spread on corn on the cob. It's delicious with green beans. My son likes a little pesto on his peas.
8. Talking about vegetables, top your salad with pesto. It's amazing mixed into a Caesar salad dressing. Do top the salad with lots of Parmesan cheese.
9. Go breakfasty. Top toast with pesto, mozzarella and a poached egg. It's filling and easy.
10. Try it with creamy salads. Mix it in with egg salad, potato salad and chicken salad.
11. Make pesto hummus. Mix 2 teaspoons of pesto with 1 cup hummus. Serve with thick slices of Italian bread.



Chicken with Raspberries and Basil

By Christine Pittman

More berry and basil love. I don't need to say anything else.

Are you getting tired of me saying that basil goes with berries? I really don't care. It is too true and too delicious. So here I go again. (And just so you know, I will be doing it one more time before our Basil Series is over).

This time I'm coming at you with a recipe from [Produce for Kids](#). It's for chicken breasts that are baked with raspberries, brie and fresh basil leaves. Yeah, think of that baked brie kind of flavor situation going on all over your chicken. Then before serving, garnish with more fresh raspberries and lots of fresh basil. It's killer.

Chicken with Raspberries and Basil

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Yield: 6 servings

Prep Time: 10 minutes

Cook Time: 30 minutes

Total Time: 40 minutes

Ingredients:

6 boneless chicken breasts

1/4 tsp. salt

1/8 tsp. black pepper

6 oz. brie, sliced

12 basil leaves, plus more for garnish

12 oz. raspberries, divided

1 Tbsp. balsamic vinegar

1. Preheat oven to 400°F.
2. Spray 13x9" baking dish with cooking spray. Add chicken in single layer, sprinkle with salt and pepper. Top with brie, basil, half of raspberries and balsamic vinegar. Bake for 30 minutes, until chicken is cooked through. Mash cooked raspberries with fork, add remaining fresh raspberries and more basil for garnish.

Best Tips For Growing Basil On Your Window Ledge

By Amy Bowen

So you want to try growing your own pot of basil. Even if you have a black thumb, you can be a gardening goddess. Here are best tips for growing basil on your window ledge.

The weather is beautiful. Gardens are taking root. And fresh herbs and produce are in abundance. Except if you're not a gardener, a large garden might be overwhelming. But even you can grow a pot of basil. It's easy. Let's walk through it.

POT

If you're going to grow basil on your window sill, you need two things. A pot that offers drainage. And it has to be cute. Let's start with the drainage. Basil likes water, but too much H₂O stresses it out. The pot needs some kind of drainage. Luckily, most pots have this.

Make sure your pot has a hole in the bottom. This will drain excess water. If you don't have a hole, but love a pot, drill small holes in the bottom. That's best. If you worry you'll drill your finger instead of the pot, do this. Water your plant in the sink and wait a few minutes. Then gently tilt the pot to it's side for a minute. This will eliminate extra water. Or put pebbles or packing peanuts in the bottom of the pot, under the soil. Water can sit down there instead of saturating the soil.

So let's talk about making it cute. You might like this [black and white striped number](#). I like this [white pot](#) that looks like wavy ribbons.



Tips for Growing Basil Indoors

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SOIL

Don't just dig up some dirt from your yard. You need a coarse growing mixture for best luck. This will help your basil flourish.

SEEDS/PLANT

Nurseries have lots of basil plants ready for planting. Honestly, I always buy plants and never seeds. It's just easier. I always rely on the great knowledge of nursery workers when I'm buying. Workers are usually garden enthusiasts, and they know their stuff. Nursery workers are your friends and they love to help.

If you're going old school and starting from seed, fill the pot with soil. Place the seeds in the pot and cover with 1/4 inch of soil. Keep the soil moist (not soggy). It should sprout within a week. Your new baby should have D-shaped leaves, with the flat sides of the leaves facing each other.

If you're starting from a plant, just transfer it to your pot. Make sure your soil is moist and loose (don't pack it down too much) and that you have enough soil to keep the plant upright.

SUNLIGHT

Basil likes around six hours of sunlight. The plants will do best when set on a south-facing window sill.

UPKEEP

First, watering. A good rule, you should water it every other day. But check the soil first. This is completely unscientific, but it works. Stick your finger in the soil. If it's wet, hold off. Dry? Add some water.

Next, pruning. Remove any leaves that have seen better days. Plus you want to remove any flowers. This will keep your plant healthy and under control, but also, once a basil plant starts flowering the leaves no longer taste as good. Flowers are bad. If it gets to the point where you can't prune off the flowers quickly enough, your plant has reached the end stage and you'd better make a big batch of basil to use up the last of your leaves. [Here's our best ever pesto recipe.](#)

Tips for Growing Basil Indoors

Continued from previous page

Finally, you might want to invest in a good indoor fertilizer. Do this once a month and your basil plant will continue to give you lots of love.

There you go. Now you can grow your own basil. Just remember to take a picture of your pretty plant for all your Instagram followers.

Raspberry and Basil Canapes

By Christine Pittman

A simply pretty appetizer with so much flavor. These little mouthfuls are a crowd-stunner. No doubt.

Ummm...have I mentioned my love of berries and basil? Erm...yes. I know. So there was the Chicken with Brie, Raspberries and Basil, the Grilled Strawberry Shortcake with Basil Whipped Cream, the Strawberry Basil Frozen Yogurt, and now, one more time. Here we go.

This is such a pretty, and such a delicious, little appetizer. You mix together cream cheese, sour cream and balsamic vinegar and then dollop that onto a bunch of crackers. To each cracker add a fresh raspberry and a basil leave. Done. So simple, so good and that flavor combo. Heck yeah!

Yield: 6 servings

Prep Time: 10 minutes

Cook Time: 0 minutes

Total Time: 10 minutes

Ingredients:

2 Tbsp. whipped cream
cheese (you buy it already
whipped and fluffy, in a
tub right next to the regular
tubs of cream cheese)
2 Tbsp. sour cream (full fat
and light both work here. I
avoid fat-free)
1/2 to 1 tsp. balsamic vinegar
salt
20 crackers
20 fresh raspberries
20 small basil leaves

1. In a small bowl combine the cream cheese, sour cream, 1/2 teaspoon of balsamic vinegar and a pinch of salt. Taste. I find that some balsamic vinegars are more potent than others. If your mixture has a nice subtle vinegar flavor with a touch of sweetness, you're good to go. If you can't really taste the balsamic, add a little bit more and even another pinch of salt and then taste again.
2. Put a 1/2 teaspoon dollop of the creamy mixture onto each cracker. Use the sauce as a glue to stick a single raspberry and a single basil leaf onto each cracker.



Fresh v. Dried Basil

By Amy Bowen

Fresh basil is always best, but sometimes it's just easier to use dried. We explore both so you get the most out of your herb.

Fresh basil is so good. It adds a punch of flavor, smells amazing and can add another dimension to dishes. And then there's dried basil. It's easy and available in every grocery store on the planet. In fact, you probably have it in your spice cabinet.

Each has its merits. But it's not always interchangeable. Sometimes fresh is absolutely necessary (hello Caprese salad), but other times dried will do.

FRESH

Fresh basil adds to almost every recipe. It also has a more mellow flavor, so you can use more. But if you have to be picky about your supply of fresh basil, save it for salads, desserts,

Fresh v. Dried Basil

Continued from previous page

cocktails and anything served with raw ingredients. For instance, a [Caprese Salad](#) with dried basil just wouldn't work. At all.

DRIED

If you're cooking with basil, then dried will do. This will allow the basil flavor to combine with the other ingredients. Dried basil is delicious in sauces and as seasoning on chicken or other meats.

HOW MUCH

Keep this conversion handy. When using fresh basil instead of dried in a recipe, use 1 and 1/2 more than what the recipe says. Likewise, cut dried basil by the same amount when substituting it for fresh, that is, 2/3 of what is called for.

106 Basil Recipes

By Nicole Johnson

It's basil season again, and I've got alllll the basil recipes to keep you cooking all spring and summer long.

Basil is one of the world's most versatile and flavorful herbs. I love adding it to so many things, and always keep some fresh either growing in my garden or in a pot on my porch. It allows even the brownest thumb, like mine, to have the ability to grow fresh and delicious food for my family. Enjoy some of the best basil recipes the web has to offer here in this roundup that I put together featuring some of my favorite bloggers!

From The Cookful

1. [Cioppino](#)
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3. [Roasted Asparagus with Basil and Pistachios](#)
4. [Grilled Scallops, Butternut Squash and Basil Skewers with Garlic Dip](#)
5. [Grilled Strawberry Shortcake](#)
6. [Basil Pesto](#)
7. [Melon Salad](#)
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19. [Caprese Bruschetta](#)
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23. [Egg in a Hole with Basil Pesto](#)

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28. [Caprese Burger with Artichoke Pesto Sauce](#)
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- 34. [Thai Basil Veggie Stir Fry](#)
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- 58. [Basil Garlic Bloody Mary](#)
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Contributors

Many thanks to our writers for this edition of The Cookful.



Amy Bowen, editor

Amy admits that she had no clue how to cook until she became the food reporter for a daily newspaper in Minnesota. At 25, she even struggled with figuring out boxed mac and cheese. These days, Amy is a much better cook, thanks to interviewing cooks and chefs for more than 10 years. She even makes four cheese macaroni and cheese with bacon, no boxed mac in sight. Amy is also on the editorial team at The Cookful and is the primary editor for this ebook.



Christine Pittman, editor

» cookthestory.com

Christine is the Founder and Senior Editor of The Cookful. She also blogs at COOKtheSTORY where she specializes in easy healthy homemade recipes. Healthiness aside, she has been known to shred cheese onto a dinner plate, microwave it for 30 seconds, and then eat the messy goop with a spoon.



Lyndsay Burginger

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It's always entertaining when Lyndsay's in the kitchen. She's even been known to belt out Broadway show tunes while making dinner (a handy whisk as her microphone, of course). She currently writes for Cook and a Good Book, a personal blog focusing on recipes based on literature. Lyndsay is also on the editorial team at The Cookful.



Nicole Johnson

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Nicole has been blogging for 5 years at orwhateveryoudo.com, when not chasing her 7 kids around or working full time for CoSchedule. She basically lives, breathes, and eats blogging. And cookies. A pasta fanatic and dedicated tomato fan, she occasionally branches out into things like rice and potatoes. She features most recipes with a healthy smattering of easy cooking tips in to keep it real.

Nicole got a new job. Do we need to change her bio to say Mediavine, not CoSchedule?

About The Cookful

Do you love to geek-out over food and cooking? Then The Cookful is where you need to be.

We cook and write about one topic at a time, diving in deep to help you cook (and eat!) better than ever. Each topic comes with How-To's, innovative recipes, and a bunch of interesting tidbits so that you can learn all about it. Some topics we've covered are Margaritas, Quick Soups and Popcorn. Head over to [The Cookful](#) to find out what our next topic is and then get ready to go off the deep end with us.



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