

# Hoosier Botanicals™

BASIL (*Ocimum basilicum*)

## In the Kitchen...

Basil has become one of the more popular herbs in recent years for good reason. Its slight anise and mint flavor is very versatile in the kitchen, enhancing both Asian and Italian dishes. Basil can be used raw or cooked. Use plenty; fresh herbs are milder than dried. Basil complements tomatoes, eggplant, potatoes, peppers, mushrooms, eggs, fish, and poultry. Add to stir-fries, fried rice or spring rolls. Blends well with oregano, marjoram, thyme, parsley and sometimes dill.

**Heirloom Tomato Salad** Slice a variety of yellow, orange, red and purple heirloom tomatoes. Arrange on a platter with whole fresh basil leaves and plain parsley leaves. Sprinkle with sea salt and fresh ground pepper, extra virgin olive oil and balsamic vinegar. Serve immediately. Experiment by substituting the parsley with marjoram, oregano or thyme.

**Pesto** Finely chop 2 cloves garlic, 3 tbsp pinenuts, and salt to taste in a food processor. Add 3 cups loosely packed washed and dried basil leaves along with ½ cup extra virgin olive oil. Add ½ cup grated Parmesan or Romano cheese until combined. Use as a condiment with bread or add to tomato soups, pasta dishes, pizzas, fresh vegetables or chicken dishes.



**Part used:** Leaves

**Condition:** Best when very fresh

**Ethnic span:** Italian, Thai, Vietnamese, and Mediterranean cooking

**Method:** Chop leaves lengthwise or tear by hand to avoid blackening

**Storage:** Freeze leaves pureed or whole in olive oil; doesn't refrigerate well. Can be dried in dehydrator.

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## In the Garden...

Basil is a good companion plant for tomatoes and eggplant. Transplant your basil into the garden after all danger of frost. Mix compost with soil before transplanting. Keep area weed free by mulching, but wait until soil has warmed up. Prune your plant regularly: before it flowers cut the main stem leaving at least one set of leaves. Continue cutting branches every 2–3 weeks to keep plant from flowering. Once basil flowers its leaves become bitter. Use your trimmings in the kitchen. When harvesting, snip top of branches just above the 2nd or 3rd set of leaves to promote regrowth. Leaves deteriorate quickly; harvest only what you will use that day.

Basil is very cold-sensitive. Before the first frost, cut the entire plant at the base of the stem and hang upside down in a warm dry room or dry leaves in a dehydrator. Remove dried leaves from stems and store in an airtight jar. Fresh leaves can be refrigerated or frozen packed in oil.

[www.hort.purdue.edu/newcrop/6pac](http://www.hort.purdue.edu/newcrop/6pac)



Mint family—Labiatae

Indian, African, and Asian origins

Annual

Full sun is best

Rich, well-drained soils with a pH of 6.0 and moderate moisture are ideal

Grows to height of 1–2'

Space 12–18" apart

Flowers in July and August

White blossoms

Propagate by seed