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Basil – *Ocimum basilicum* L.

Botanical description:



We planted two kinds of basil in the herb garden: first the popular large leaf green basil var. *genovese* with slightly embossed oval leaves. Its small white flowers form inflorescences with terminal spikes. Its distinctive smell and taste are reminiscent of clove, anise and nutmeg.

We also planted small green basil, with smaller leaves that form a dome.



How to cultivate

Basil is an annual plant in Quebec. It requires heat for good growth. With the cold weather we had, the large basil has not grown much yet. Small-leaved basil has adapted a little better. Basil is very sensitive to frost. It should be watered frequently and not be too exposed to wind. It can also be grown in pots on balconies. Putting cuttings in water until new roots appear is a good method to propagate basil. Basil is the perfect companion for tomatoes.

What parts to use

The leaves are used to prepare dishes and are harvested as needed throughout the summer. Flowering tops and leaves are used for their medicinal properties.

Cooking with basil

Everybody knows *pesto genovese* or the famous tomato, basil and bocconcini appetizer. Today, we are rather offering two different and refreshing basil based recipes for the summer.



Basil herbal tea

One or two fresh basil leaves are enough to prepare a cup of basil herbal tea. Simply let the leaves infuse for 5 to 10 minutes in hot water. You can add a zest of orange peel. Cool with ice cubes for a refreshing herbal tea in summer.

Strawberry and basil sorbet

Ingredients

- A small bunch of basil leaves
- 500 ml of water
- 500 ml of ripe strawberries
- 30 ml lemon or lime juice



- Infuse the basil leaves in hot water and let cool.
- Mash the basil leaves, strawberries, citrus juice and water in a food processor.
- Pour into a bowl and cover with plastic wrap.
- Put in the freezer for 4 hours.
- Mix in the processor until grainy.
- Return to the freezer for 2 hours then mix again in the processor until smooth.
- Remove from freezer 10 minutes before serving.

ENJOY !

Medicinal uses

The main virtues attributed to basil generally concern the digestive and nervous systems. Basil may help the digestive system by reducing bloating, poor digestion and nausea. In mouthwash, it may soothe canker sores. Basil is believed to have a tonic effect on the nervous system against fatigue and depression, it relaxes and elevates the mind and improves concentration.

