

Basil Pesto

There are several types of basil: Purple Ruffles, Spicy Globe and Sweet Italian just to name a few. My favorite is the Sweet Italian, because the leaves are nice and big which makes them easier to pick.

For those of you who haven't grown basil before, there are a couple of things you have to know to keep your basil plant producing until frost:

1 – Pinch off the blossom spikes. You want the plant to put its energy into leaf production, not seed production.

2 – While your plant is small, pinch off leaves individually, right where the leaf meets the stem. As the plant gets larger, you can pinch off small branches to keep the plant from getting too large. You only use the leaves of basil.

Continually pinching back your plant will encourage it to grow and stay full. If you have too much basil to use right away (and your friends and neighbors have had their fill, too), harvest it as usual and freeze it! Put it in a food processor with a little olive oil, chop it up and put it in individual ice cube trays to freeze. When solid, pop them into a freezer bag and keep for soups, sauces or other recipes.

Linda's Pesto

2 cups fresh basil (washed, patted dry and slightly packed)

4 good-sized garlic cloves, chopped

1 cup pine nuts

½ to 1 cup high quality olive oil (I use about ½ cup)

1 cup grated Parmesan cheese

¼ cup grated Romano cheese

Salt and freshly ground pepper to taste

Combine basil, garlic and pine nuts in bowl of processor. Chop. While running, slowly add olive oil (amount depends on how firm you like your pesto). Scrape bowl, add cheeses and seasonings and process briefly. Refrigerate. Pesto freezes well and is still great after several months! Excellent on crusty breads, pasta or spread on bottom crust of home made pizza.

Enjoy!

Linda K