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Stargazer Perennials Farm and Nursery, Summerville Oregon

Fresh Basil Pesto

There is nothing like fresh basil just picked out of the garden and eaten with a drizzle of organic olive oil on top of a slice of fresh tomato and mozzarella cheese. Being absolute basil lovers at the farm, we keep our basil growing all year in our greenhouses as needed, despite freezing temperatures and heavy snow packs. But even if you don't have access to heated greenhouses, you can still enjoy the fresh taste of basil all year with these two simple tricks for storing basil:

Basil Pesto:

1 cup pine nuts
1/4 cup Parmesan cheese, finely grated
pinch sea salt
8 cups lightly packed basil leaves, stems removed and leaves cleaned
4 garlic cloves
2/3 cup organic extra virgin olive oil

Roast pine nuts on baking sheet in an oven at 350 degrees until lightly browned, approximately 10 minutes. Remove and transfer to a glass bowl, let cool.

Bring 5 cups of lightly salted water to a boil and add basil, submerging basil for 20 seconds. Remove and drain with cold water. Dry basil on paper towels or use a salad spinner to remove excess water. Next combine in a food processor nuts, basil, Parmesan cheese and garlic. Season with sea salt and pepper to taste. Process the mixture on pulse until nuts are finely chopped. With food processor on, pour oil in and continue processing until smooth.

Spoon 2-3 tablespoons of mixture into ice cube trays, cover with plastic wrap and freeze. When frozen, pop cubes out and store in zip lock bags or air tight freezer containers.

Freezing Raw Basil

- During the harvest months when basil is at its peak growth stage, harvest bunches of fresh basil leaves, removing the stems.
- Chop basil leaves up into large pieces.
- Press into ice cube trays and cover with 1 tablespoon of water. Freeze overnight.
- Pop out basil ice cubes and place in freeze bags.
- To use; drop 1-2 basil cubes into soups, stews, pasta sauce or thaw out to use in salads and spreads.

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