Fresh Herbs

Quick Facts

- Adding fresh herbs to your diet is a great way to boost the flavor of your food (without adding extra fat or calories) and improve your health at the same time. Using fresh herbs when you cook can help reduce the chance of getting allergies, heart disease and Alzheimer’s.

- Fresh basil contains vitamin K, vitamin A, manganese and magnesium. The amount of vitamin K found in basil is a healthy dose to help your blood clot.

- Rosemary helps stimulate the immune system, increase circulation, reduce inflammation and improve digestion. The increased circulation to the head and brain can help to improve concentration.

- Oregano contains a high amount of antioxidants that help protect the cells in your body from being damaged (the common pathway for cancer, aging and a variety of diseases). One teaspoon of oregano contains as many antioxidants as three cups of broccoli!

Shopping & Preparing

Fresh herbs can be found at nearly every grocery store in the refrigerated produce area. Some commonly used herbs include: cilantro, dill, rosemary, parsley, basil, peppermint, oregano and thyme. If you want your herbs to be as fresh as possible, it is best to grow them at home. You can buy herb seeds and start from scratch or you can buy the plant itself. Herb seeds and plants can be found at stores like Home Depot/Lowe’s, gardening stores, the lawn and garden section of most big box stores and some grocery stores. The best part of doing it yourself? You can grow herbs all year round! Some herbs that grow well inside include: basil, chives, oregano, parsley, rosemary, sage and thyme. Visit the link in the resources section below to get more information about growing herbs indoors.

Whether store-bought or home-grown, storing herbs can be a challenge because different herbs demand different storage techniques. For basil, parsley and cilantro: trim the ends and place in a glass with about an inch of water. Store on the counter at room temperature (the leaves will turn black if refrigerated) for no more than a week. For chives, thyme and rosemary: wrap them loosely in plastic and store in the warmest part of the refrigerator (a door compartment works well). Be sure not to wrap the plastic too tight or mold can form prematurely. If you have more herbs than you can use, either dry them or freeze them. Throw fresh herbs away when the leaves turn dark or the stems begin to show traces of mold.

Super Recipe – Chilled Basil tomato Red Pepper Soup

Serving Size
Makes 6 servings (1 cup each) & 12 slices garlic toast
Ingredients

- 1 large red bell pepper
- 2 lbs ripe tomatoes, cut in chunks
- 1 cup spicy tomato juice
- ½ cup low-fat, low-salt chicken or beef stock
- 1 tbsp lemon juice
- Pinch of sugar
- 10 whole fresh basil leaves
- Salt and pepper to taste
- Low-fat sour cream for garnish
- 10 chopped basil leaves for garnish
- 1 whole-grain baguette, sliced
- 1 large garlic clove, minced
- ¼ cup olive oil

Preparation

1. Preheat oven to 375°F. Roast bell-pepper in oven until charred and soft (about 10 minutes). Peel and seed pepper then cut into chunks.
2. Puree the bell pepper, tomatoes, tomato juice, chicken or beef stock, lemon juice and sugar until well combined. Add the 10 basil leaves and continue pureeing until smooth.
3. Cover soup and chill for 2 to 3 hours or overnight.
4. Serve cold soup with a garnish of sour cream and chopped basil.
5. To prepare the garlic toast, sauté garlic in olive oil until golden, 3 to 4 minutes.
6. Brush baguette slices with garlic oil and toast in a 375°F oven for 5 to 7 minutes or until golden brown. Serve immediately with chilled soup.

Nutritional Information Per Serving (1 cup soup & 2 slices garlic toast)

- 265 calories (calories from fat: 41%)
- 12g fat (1.8g saturated fat)
- 0mg cholesterol
- 403mg sodium
- 32g carbohydrates
- 5.5g fiber
- 8g protein

Resources

http://www.webmd.com/food-recipes/features/beautiful-basil
http://www.med.umich.edu/pfans/docs/tip-2013/cookingwithherbsandspices-0513.pdf
http://www.webmd.com/food-recipes/features/how-antioxidants-work1?page=2