

Recipe: Tomato Chickpea Basil Salad

INGREDIENTS

4 fresh tomatoes, cut into wedges, or about 20 cherry tomatoes
About 20 basil leaves, chopped
2 cups canned garbanzo beans (chickpeas), drained and rinsed
1/2 cup extra virgin olive oil
2 tablespoons vinegar, or to taste (red wine vinegar, or your favorite flavored vinegar)
1 pinch salt (optional)
Pepper to taste

METHOD

1. Prep: Combine all ingredients in a large bowl.
2. Toss until tomatoes and garbanzo beans are evenly coated.
3. Can be refrigerated or served immediately.

Makes about 8 servings.



BASIL

Basil is reputed to support the health of the immune, digestive and cardiovascular systems. The flavonoids present act as antioxidants to protect the body's cells from oxygen-based damage. Volatile oils and carotenoids present in basil may act as an antibacterial protector for cells.

In the kitchen: Basil is a highly fragrant member of the mint family whose leaves combine the flavors and aromas of anise, clove and mint. It is one of our most popular herbs and can be added to just about any dish: vegetables, pasta, soup, bread dough, omelets, or stir fry. It is especially complementary with tomatoes.

In the garden: There are many wonderful varieties! Thai basil is a diminutive plant with beautiful, delicate little leaves and later, purple flowers often used in Asian cooking. Its flavor is more stable under high cooking temperatures. Sweet, or Genovese basil is a bigger plant with larger leaves, and is more common in European cooking. It is wonderful for making pesto and other sauces. Opal basil is a dark purple cultivar of sweet basil, and is high in anthocyanins, which give it its color. It tastes like sweet basil and makes a striking color contrast in salads!



Thai basil



Genovese basil



Opal (purple) basil