

taste buds

chef Larry
JanesGrow basil
for pesto,
spaghetti

What started as a tiny seed has blossomed into a leafy green mass on my kitchen windowsill.

ALREADY MY basil leaves are the size of bay leaves, and will continue to prosper in the warm southern exposure until a transplant beckons after the last frost.

Basil, like parsley, is one of those trendy kitchen herbs that thrives well in tiny pots on the kitchen windowsill, or in the garden.

GREEN THUMBS are not required. All that's mandatory is some dirt, a draining pot, sunshine and a little water.

A variety of basil seeds ranging from common garden to purple opal are available wherever garden and flower seeds are sold.

FOR THOSE of you who have never tried fresh basil made into pesto, let me conjure up a vision: a vision of a rich, thick, vibrant blend of pine nuts, garlic, sharp cheese, olive oil and of course, fresh basil.

Dressing a plate of fettuccine or simply accompanying ripe tomatoes and mozzarella cheese, basil performs its wanders with an aroma that makes you feel like you're wandering down the Villa Piazza in Roma.

Pesto literally means "pounded," and the term really refers to any paste traditionally made with a mortar and pestle. Pesto has as many variations as there are parts of call in the Mediterranean.

With today's modern culinary conveniences like food processors and blenders, making pesto is a snap. As a matter of fact, you will probably find yourself spending more time preparing the ingredients than making the pesto.

However, don't be fooled by modern technology. My Italian "miso" wouldn't think of adulterating pesto in the plastic work bowl of a food processor, or having it wreck havoc with the metal blades of a blender.

Tradition calls for the making of pesto in marble mortars. Cheaper replicas made of ceramic and porcelain can be made do; but never use wood or teak. The residual odor and flavor will remind you of basil every time it is used.

A FIRM circular motion with the pestle is needed to incorporate all the delicate flavors and oils which are pressed out of the leaves and give pesto its characteristic flavor and aroma.

For some odd reason I have yet to discover, you seem to get better results by grinding the ingredients against the sides of the mortar rather than the bottom. This seems to yield a "press" rather than a "mash."

After the pesto has been made, it can be stored in the refrigerator or freezer if placed in a jar and covered with a shallow film of olive oil on top to prevent the sauce from drying out and becoming moldy.

Simply mix in the oil when ready to use, but remember, for optimum flavor, always bring the chilled pesto mixture to room temperature before serving.

IF YOU don't have a fresh herb garden, and can't wait to grow basil from seed, year-round supplies are available at the Eastern market, most good Italian groceries and at many of the so-called "super" grocery stores.

If pesto doesn't suit your fancy, fresh basil can be snipped into everything from spaghetti sauce to salad fixings. Of course, making pesto is not simply limited to the use of basil.

I have included a recipe that calls for using tarragon and even fresh oregano can be substituted for a totally different flavor and aroma.

See recipes inside.

Sprouts

Nutritious, crunchy, fun to grow

By Linda Ann Chomlin
special writer

T IRED OF lifeless meals on cold dreary days? Put some green into your menus with home-grown sprouts.

Crunchy, nutritious, tasty sprouts are easy to grow and inexpensive. A pound of seeds, beans, or grain sells for 89 cents or less.

Slumbering seeds plump up after an overnight soak. A white shoot peeks out from under the hull and grows before your very eyes.

In three to five days, a handful of seeds, beans or grain, about one cup, will yield one quart of sprouts.

"I DON'T think there's anything more nutritious than sprouts," said Sandra John, manager of Good Food Company in Livonia.

"They're full of vitamins, minerals and enzymes, the necessary catalysts to all living things."

Vitamins A, B complex, C, and E increase up to 300 percent or more in the sprouting stage depending on the seed, grain or bean. Calcium, iron, phosphorus, magnesium, potassium, zinc and protein present in sprouts serve to keep the body functioning properly.

I started growing sprouts nearly 20 years ago because they weren't available in stores. I liked the taste, and it was nice to have something fresh and green in the middle of winter.

Bonnie Blair of Farmington Hills sprouts mung beans and alfalfa seeds in her kitchen using old mason or mayonnaise jars covered with muslin or cheesecloth secured with rubber bands.

"I started using sprouts because it seemed very healthy for you and inexpensive, and there are no preservatives," she said.

"IF YOU do several different beans at once it's easy, and it's cheaper than buying them in the store. I have a recipe for mung beans and rice. The others I use in a salad or sandwich instead of lettuce."

John said eating sprouts can help lower

blood cholesterol, and they're low in calories too. One full-packed cup of sprouts contains only 16 to 70 calories.

Sprouts also have an anti-cancer effect. John likes to pour sprouted sunflower seed sauce over a pizza bread sandwich.

Blair enjoys a quick and easy melted cheese sandwich with alfalfa sprouts and a few drops of Italian dressing sprinkled on top.

Growing sprouts at home allows you to choose from a variety of seeds, beans and grains with different flavors and textures.

Radish sprouts add spice to everyday salads. The most nutritious of grain

sprouts, wheat, tastes sweet and nutty.

The lowly lentil bean sprouts into something fabulous. Lentil sprouts taste peppery when raw, and sweet and nut-like when cooked.

In Biblical times, lentil sprout soup was a staple in the Middle East.

ONE OF my favorites along with wheat sprouts is sunflowers with black hulls intact. They supply significant amounts of calcium and iron, as well as protein. The shoots stay in good condition in the salad compartment of a refrigerator for up to four days.

Home-grown alfalfa sprouts treat taste

buds to flavor never found in store bought. Alfalfa sprouts make a cream cheese sandwich on a fresh bakery bun fantastic.

Fenugreek seeds have a flavor similar to curry, which gets milder as the sprouts mature. They are rich in protein, iron and Vitamin A. They can be eaten raw in salads or added to casseroles and stews.

Sir-fried as a main dish, sautéed and served on the side, or added to bread, soup, casseroles and sandwiches, sprouts will perk up your winter meals, and add natural color.

See recipes, and growing methods inside.



It's easy to grow sprouts on your kitchen counter (left). All you need is a jar with a lid and bowl. Sandra John (below) grows wheat seeds on dirt in trays. The sprouts form small plants producing an abundance of salad greens in five to seven days.



photos by JIM JACQUEL/Star photographer



Chef caters to nutrition

By Keely Wygonik
staff writer

Best buds since 1924—partners in life, Monte and Paul Morn, a Professional Golfers' Association Golf Pro at Novi Oaks Golf and Sport Center, recently bought Mary Ann's Kitchen at 2711 N. Woodward in Bloomfield Hills. Restaurant hours are 7 a.m. to 3 p.m. Monday through Saturday, 332-0088.

THE SMALL restaurant specializes in fresh, nutritious foods and offers dine in, carry out, and full service hot and cold catering. The menu includes items that meet American Heart Association dietary guidelines.

"About one third of our business is catering. In the restaurant we serve breakfast and lunch, and offer three specials a day. Everything is homemade, said Settlemoir 32, who will be celebrating his 33rd birthday March 9.

He received his culinary training at Mountain Jack's Culinary School, and from certified master chef Dan Hugbeler, an instructor at Schoolcraft College in Livonia.

Who does the cooking at your house?

"I share cooking responsibilities with my wife, Linda. She likes to cook as much as I do. We have two children, Monte III, 2½, and Tiffany, 2 months."

What's a normal dinner at your house?

"Usually we have a full dinner like breaded pork chops, fresh vegetable, green beans almondine is my favorite, baked potato and salad made with lettuce, onions, mushrooms and scallions."

Favorite food:
Filet mignon, medium rare.

Worst experience as a chef.

"I've been lucky. I haven't had many bad experiences. Once I was running late for a catering job, and the orange juice spilled all over the van. I had to run out and buy some."

Best experience as a chef.

"While I was working at Win Shuter's in Rochester we had a \$100 plate fund-raiser for a hospital. I got dressed up in my chef suit and had a good time serving people knowing that we were raising money for people at a hospital."

Favorite herb or spice.

Tarragon. "It brings out the flavor of food. You either like it or you don't. I like to use it in chicken salad and soup."

Favorite piece of cookware at home and at work.

"I like a good rubber spatula. There's nothing worse than not being able to scrape everything out of a pan or bowl."

Name five things in your refrigerator at home:

Plain low fat yogurt, fresh fruit, oranges, grapes, bananas, two percent milk, whipping cream, broccoli, cauliflower and carrots. "I use the yogurt in salad dressing, and the whipping cream to thicken pasta sauces."

If you could cook dinner for anyone, who would it be and what would you serve them?

Settlemoir loves watching sports on television, and said he would make dinner for Isham Thomas of the Detroit Pistons. Menu would consist of breaded fillet mignon rubbed with Dijon mustard and served with plum wine sauce, green bean, almondine, baked potato, fresh salad and carrot cake for dessert.

Take your time in the kitchen. "A lot of inexperienced cooks rush food and put the heat on too high. It ruins the food. Take your time. Turning up the heat won't make food cook faster."

See recipe inside.

Look for Chef's Secrets on the first Monday of the month in Taste. To nominate a chef to be featured in this column, call or write: Keely Wygonik, Taste editor, Observer & Eccentric, 36221 Schoolcraft, Livonia 48150 - 3531. Chefs must live and work in the communities the Observer & Eccentric cover.



DAN DEAN/Star photographer
Chef Monte Settlemoir II of Mary Ann's Kitchen presents Ginger Shrimp Toast, an often requested appetizer.