



"Bellissima" Basil Gnocchi + Five-Ingredient Tomato Sauce + Italian Vanilla Basil Sodas

By Erin Fletter

Prep Time 40 / Cook Time 15 / Serves 4 - 6

Shopping List

FRESH

13 fresh basil leaves

1/2 C packed fresh spinach

DAIRY AND EGGS

1 egg ****(see allergy subs below)****

1 C ricotta cheese ****(see allergy subs below)****

2 oz shredded Parmesan for topping, optional ****(see allergy subs below)****

3 T butter ****(see allergy subs below)****

PANTRY

1 1/2 T olive oil

1 3/4 tsp salt

1/4 tsp ground black pepper

1 C all-purpose flour ****(see allergy subs below)****

1 14-oz can tomato sauce or puréed tomatoes ****(see allergy subs below)****

2 tsp onion powder

1 T sugar

3 C sparkling water

- 1/4 tsp pure vanilla extract **** (see allergy subs below)****
- 1/2 C sugar/agave nectar/honey
- HAVE ON HAND
- water to cook gnocchi
- ice

Fun-Da-Mentals Kitchen Skills

knead: to work dough by pushing, pulling, and folding it by hand or with a stand mixer.

mix: to thoroughly combine two or more ingredients until uniform in texture.

pulse: to process just short of a purée in smooth, rhythmic bursts of power with a blender.

tear: to pull or rip apart a food, like basil leaves, into pieces instead of cutting with a knife; cutting breaks cell walls more, so herbs can discolor faster.

measure: to calculate the specific amount of an ingredient required using a measuring tool (like measuring cups or spoons).

simmer: to cook a food gently, usually in a liquid, until softened.

blend: to stir together two or more ingredients until just combined; blending is a gentler process than mixing.

pour: to cause liquid, granules, or powder to stream from one container into another.

tear: to pull or rip apart a food, like basil leaves, into pieces instead of cutting with a knife; cutting breaks cell walls more, so herbs can discolor faster.

Equipment

- Blender (or pitcher + immersion blender)
- Large mixing bowl
- Measuring spoons
- Dry measuring cups
- Wooden spoon or rubber spatula
- Large pot
- Spoon or butter knife, to cut dough rope
- Colander

- Can opener
- Small saucepan
- Liquid measuring cup

Ingredients

"Bellissima" Basil Kid-Made Gnocchi

- 10 fresh basil leaves
- 1/2 C packed fresh spinach
- 1 egg ******(for EGG ALLERGY sub 1 T ground flaxseeds mixed with 3 T water—more info below)******
- 1 C ricotta cheese ******(for DAIRY ALLERGY sub 8 oz soft tofu or canned pumpkin + extra salt to taste)******
- 1 T olive oil + more for drizzling
- 3/4 tsp salt
- 1/4 tsp ground black pepper
- 1 C all-purpose flour + more for kneading ******(for GLUTEN ALLERGY sub 1 C gluten-free/nut-free flour + 1 extra egg + extra oil if needed for slightly sticky dough)******
- 1/4 C shredded Parmesan for topping, optional ******(for DAIRY ALLERGY sub dairy-free/nut-free shredded Parmesan, like Daiya brand)******

Terrific Five-Ingredient Tomato Sauce

- 1 14-oz can tomato sauce or puréed tomatoes ******(for TOMATO ALLERGY omit sauce or use olive oil + chopped basil to top gnocchi, pasta, etc.)******
- 3 T butter ******(for DAIRY ALLERGY sub 3 olive oil)******
- 2 tsp onion powder
- 1 tsp salt
- 1 T granulated sugar

Italian Vanilla Basil Sodas

- 3 fresh basil leaves
- 3 C sparkling water
- 1/4 tsp pure vanilla extract ******(for GLUTEN ALLERGY use certified gluten-free pure vanilla extract, not imitation vanilla flavor—check label)******
- 1/2 C sugar/agave nectar/honey

☐ ice

Food Allergen Substitutions

"Bellissima" Basil Kid-Made Gnocchi

Egg: For 1 egg, soak 1 T ground flaxseeds mixed with 3 T water for 5 minutes or until fully absorbed and thickened.

Dairy: For 1 C ricotta cheese, substitute 8 oz soft tofu or 8 oz canned pumpkin + extra salt to taste. Substitute dairy-free/nut-free shredded Parmesan, like Daiya brand, for optional Parmesan cheese.

Gluten/Wheat: For 1 C all-purpose flour, substitute 1 C gluten-free/nut-free all-purpose flour + 1 extra egg + extra oil if needed for slightly sticky dough.

Terrific Five-Ingredient Tomato Sauce

Tomato: Omit recipe or use olive oil + chopped basil to top gnocchi, pasta, etc.

Dairy: For 3 T butter, substitute 3 T olive oil.

Italian Vanilla Basil Sodas

Gluten/Wheat: Use certified gluten-free pure vanilla extract, not imitation vanilla flavor.

Instructions

"Bellissima" Basil Kid-Made Gnocchi

wash + tear + crack + pulse

Wash and shake dry **10 basil leaves** and **1/2 cup of spinach leaves**. Tear the basil and spinach leaves into tiny, tiny pieces. Combine in a blender. Then crack **1 egg** and add it to the blender, too. Pulse until spinach and basil are broken down a bit and blended with the egg.

scrumptious science

Pigments like chlorophyll are molecules that absorb specific wavelengths of light and reflect others, giving plants their green color. Chlorophyll absorbs sunlight, providing energy that converts carbon dioxide and water into glucose and oxygen. Other pigments, such as carotenoids (yellow, red, and orange) and anthocyanins (red, purple, and blue), help absorb additional light wavelengths and protect plants from damage. Chefs can use these pigments to color foods any color of the rainbow!

scoop + measure + add + mix

Scoop the basil, spinach, and egg mixture into a mixing bowl. Then measure and add **1 cup ricotta cheese, 1 tablespoon olive oil, 3/4 teaspoon salt,** and **1/4 teaspoon black pepper,** and mix well to combine. Then gently mix in **1 cup flour.**

boil + knead

Bring a large pot of water to boil. Meanwhile, pour the gnocchi dough onto a floured surface and knead, adding a bit more flour if necessary. The dough should be slightly sticky.

roll + cut

Divide the dough into quarters or halves. Roll each lump of dough into long ropes with your hands. Kids love doing this! The dough ropes should be about 1 inch thick. Use a spoon or a butter knife to cut 1-inch pieces of gnocchi from the ropes.

edible education

Did you know there are about 350 pasta shapes?! The Chinese, Arabs, and Italians have all claimed they were the first to make noodles and pasta, but the oldest written recipe comes from China, around 2,000 years ago. Noodles have been a staple food in many parts of the world for at least that long, but in 2005, the oldest noodles were discovered inside an overturned, sealed bowl buried under three meters of sediment in Qinghai, northwest China. Scientists determined the 4,000-year-old, long, thin yellow noodles were made from broomcorn millet and foxtail millet and show a fairly high level of food processing and culinary sophistication. Wow, talk about being well-preserved!

boil + drain

Adult Steps: Carefully drop the gnocchi into boiling water and let cook. Watch for the gnocchi to bounce to the surface. Once all gnocchi have floated to the top, drain in a colander and drizzle with olive oil.

top + serve

Top with **Terrific Five Ingredient Tomato Sauce** and optional **1/4 C Parmesan cheese.** "Bellissima" or "Beautiful" in Italian! (If not using tomato sauce, top with olive oil, shredded basil, and Parmesan cheese.)

Terrific Five-Ingredient Tomato Sauce

measure + add + simmer

Measure and add **1 can tomato sauce, 3 tablespoons butter, 2 teaspoons onion powder, 1 teaspoon salt,** and **1 tablespoon of sugar** to a small saucepan. Bring to a simmer and cook until the butter melts, at least 5 minutes. Pour sauce over cooked pasta or gnocchi, like our **"Bellissima" Basil Kid-Made Gnocchi.** Or, you can also spoon it over our **Italian Itty-Bitty Calabrian Ricotta "Polpette" Meatless Balls.** It's great topped with shredded basil and parmesan cheese!

Italian Vanilla Basil Sodas

tear + add + blend + pour

Tear **3 basil leaves** and add to a blender along with **1 cup sparkling water, 1/4 teaspoon vanilla extract,** and **1/2 cup sugar.** Blend! Then top with 2 cups of remaining sparkling water and taste. Add more sugar if necessary. Top with ice, pour into cups, and "Salute" (sah-LOO-teh) or "Cheers" in Italian!

Featured Ingredient: Basil!

Hi! I'm Basil!

"Ciao (chow)! I'm Basil! But you can also call me Genovese basil (that's Italian, from Genoa). My leaves are usually used fresh, added late in cooking to keep my flavor. If you combine me with olive oil, garlic, pine nuts, and Parmesan cheese, you'll have a yummy, green Italian sauce called "pesto," which is good on pasta. You'll also find me on a delicious but simple pizza from Naples, Italy, called "pizza margherita." Besides fresh basil leaves, Neapolitans (people from Naples) traditionally top this pizza with a tomato sauce from San Marzano tomatoes, fresh mozzarella cheese, a drizzle of olive oil, and a sprinkle of salt. Of course, basil is good in dishes from many countries!"

History

A long time ago, Greeks and Romans believed basil would only grow if you screamed wild curses and shouted while sowing the seeds. They also thought that if you left a basil leaf under a pot, it would turn into a scorpion!

Basil may have originated in India; there are speculations that it originally came from tropical areas spanning from Southeast Asia to Central Africa.

Ancient Egyptians used to use basil to embalm the dead and prepare for burial.

In Italy, basil is considered a token of love, and in Romania, if a girl gives a sprig of basil to her boyfriend, they are engaged.

Anatomy & Etymology

Basil is a part of the mint family. There are 50 to 150 species, including Genovese (Italian) basil (the most common), Thai basil, cinnamon basil, lemon basil, lettuce basil, spicy globe basil, and green ruffles basil! Each type of basil has a unique aroma and taste.

Leaves of the basil plant tend to be oval-shaped, shiny, and smooth-edged. Their edges cup slightly.

Basil plants can grow to be from 8 inches to 4 feet high.

Basil has seeds that can germinate after 10 years!

Basil will grow small flowers that look like spikes at the top of the plant. The flowers are edible, but we generally eat and use just the leaves.

The word "basil" comes from the Greek "vasilikos," which also means "royal." It is believed that basil was once used in royal perfumes.

How to Pick, Buy, & Eat

Basil grows best in hot climates. When harvesting basil, pinch or cut the leaves at the stem from the top of the plant down. Select a few large leaves rather than snipping the whole stem. Choose leaves that are bright and free from blemishes. Picking leaves encourages the plant to produce more leaves.

You could also try growing basil in a pot on your kitchen window sill, so it's easy to pick what you need when you need it.

Wash basil gently and pat dry. When you buy basil from the store, it will often come with its stems. Trim the ends of the stems and store in a glass of water as you would a bunch of flowers. Basil stores best at room temperature.

Use fresh basil leaves in salads, salad dressings, sauces, pasta, marinades, and sandwiches. Basil leaves in cold water make a nice summer refresher, or add some mint with the leaves to make a digestive hot tea. Basil can be dried or blanched and frozen. Dried basil enhances the flavor of tomato soup.

Nutrition

Basil contains 98% of our DV of Vitamin K1 in just one-half of a cup! Vitamin K1 is essential for blood clotting. For example, when we get a cut, we need our blood to clot so that the bleeding will stop and our cut will heal.

Basil contains carotenoids—those powerful plant-based nutrients that protect our cells from oxidation (rust) and enhance immunity.

Essential oils found in basil not only give it its aromatic and therapeutic scent but are also anti-inflammatory.

Basil has been shown to act as an adaptogen. Adaptogens are natural substances that help us respond in a healthful way to stress. So the next time you're feeling stressed, grab a handful of basil, hold it to your nose, and breathe in deeply. Then, toss it in your salad and eat it.