Allie's Place Cooking Tips, Lesson 7: All About Basil

Basil – Basil is a warm-weather, fragrant herb that tastes great in many dishes. It can be planted after the last frost, when the soil is warm. It needs to be constantly harvested (picked). The leaves will continue to grow back as long as the weather stays warm. Once the weather hits 80 degrees consistently, the basil really starts to grow.   Harvest with sharp scissors; it is best to harvest in the morning, before the heat of the day slightly wilts its leaves.

Preserving Basil

Drying in the Microwave – Dry the basil leaves. Sandwich a single layer of leaves between 2 paper towels. Place in microwave 30 seconds on Medium to High power. Allow to cool for 30 seconds. See if it dried, if not, go again for another 15 seconds.

Freezing – Remove leaves from the stems and blanch in boiling water for 2 – 3 seconds. You can do this in the microwave by heating the water to as hot as possible, and immersing the leaves for 3-4 seconds. (Don't use your hands – use a slotted spoon). Transfer to an ice bath (bowl of ice water). Dry completely and store in a freezer safe bag or container. Label the bag with the date. You can also freeze basil in olive oil in an ice cube tray.

Recipe: Caprese Bites

Ingredients:

- ½ Baguette (or other hard crusted bread)
- 8 oz. Mozzarella cheese
- 2 Roma tomatoes
- 12 whole basil leaves
- 1 Tablespoon Olive Oil
- 1-2 cloves of garlic, chopped (optional)
- 1-2 Tablespoons Balsamic vinegar (optional)
- Salt and pepper to taste

1) Slice baguette on a diagonal into 12 pieces.
2) Cut mozzarella into 12 pieces.
3) Slice each tomato into 6 pieces each.
4) Place chopped garlic (if using) onto each slice of bread, place tomato on top, salt and pepper to taste, then place basil leaf on top of the tomato.

5) Drizzle with balsamic vinegar (if using).

- For more tips, recipes and information, email: **culinary @hfhnyc.org**
- Also, our videos can be found at YouTube.com/HFHnyc: Go to
    - "Playlists", and see **"What's Cooking at Allie's Place."**