

Make Room for Basil

BY JESSICA BARD

I cook with basil year-round, but I'm at my most inspired and inventive during the summer, when I can harvest it fresh from my garden. Brushing against the tender leaves releases such a waft of rich, spicy fragrance that I'm instantly moved to cook something. So I'll pinch a bunch, grab some tomatoes, and head to the kitchen—the hard part is deciding what to make. The possibilities are virtually endless.

New basil varieties inspire new ways with basil. I've had a recurring summer fling with Sweet Genovese basil—its mildly peppery flavor has distinctive notes of anise, mint, and clove—but there are dozens of other basil varieties, each with its own personality. This year, in addition to my beloved sweet basil, I planted several other basil (see the facing page) so I could experiment with them.

Now that I've gotten to know some new kinds of basil, I've found delicious ways to work them into my cooking. When I'm making Southeast Asian dishes, like the ginger-coconut broth for fish on p. 50, I toss in fragrant, compact Thai basil leaves. Purple basil, I've found, make tasty, eye-catching additions to lettuce salads. And



Whether you grow your own or buy it, summer's favorite herb tastes delicious in almost any dish

