



## Italian Vanilla Basil Sodas

By Erin Fletter

**Prep Time 5 / Cook Time / Serves 4 - 6**

### Fun-Da-Mentals Kitchen Skills

**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)
- Liquid measuring cup
- Measuring spoons

### Ingredients

#### 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

## Italian Vanilla Basil Sodas

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

## Instructions

### 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 "Saluti!" ("Cheers!")

## 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.