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Spice of the Month

take and make kit

September's spice is:

Basil

Basil (*Ocimum basilicum*) is an ancient herb native to India and tropical regions of Asia and Africa. Cultivated for over 5,000 years, it was spread globally along ancient spice routes, eventually becoming a cornerstone in both Mediterranean and Southeast Asian cuisines

- **Global Folklore:** Basil's history is steeped in magic and contradiction. Ancient Egyptians used it for embalming, while in India, varieties like Holy Basil (Tulsi) are considered sacred representations of deities. In Europe, it has symbolized both enduring love and mourning, depending on the region

Culinary & Medicinal Uses

- **Flavor:** Basil is celebrated for its sweet, peppery taste with hints of mint, clove, and anise.
- **Health:** In traditional medicine, it is utilized for its antioxidant and anti-inflammatory properties. Holy Basil is also widely studied for its stress-relieving and cortisol-lowering effects.

Types of Basil:

There are over 60 varieties of basil, each offering a distinct flavor profile:

- **Sweet Basil:** The most common variety used in Italian cuisine, essential for pesto and tomato sauces.
- **Thai Basil:** Features a distinct licorice and anise flavor, commonly used in Southeast Asian curries and stir-fries.
- **Holy Basil (Tulsi):** Revered in Ayurvedic traditions for its medicinal properties and ability to reduce stress.
- **Lemon Basil:** Offers a bright, citrusy aroma ideal for teas and dressings.

Register for future kits at:
tuxedoparklibrary.org/spice

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Spice of the Month

take and make kit

Creamy Tuscan Chicken

Makes 4 servings | Time: 40 minutes

Recipe from Dan Pelosi

INGREDIENTS:

- 1 pound boneless, skinless chicken breasts, cut in half horizontally (see Tip) or 4 thin-sliced boneless, skinless chicken breasts
- Salt and black pepper
- 2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
- 2 tablespoons butter (salted or unsalted)
- 1 pint cherry or other small tomatoes, halved
- ½ small onion or 1 medium shallot, minced
- 3 garlic cloves, minced
- 1½ cups chicken broth
- 1 teaspoon dried oregano (or 1 teaspoon chopped fresh oregano)
- 1 teaspoon dried basil (or 1 teaspoon chopped fresh basil), optional
- ½ cup heavy cream
- ½ cup grated Parmesan, plus more for serving
- 2 ounces cream cheese, at room temperature
- 2 cups packed baby spinach (about 3 ounces)



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Creamy Tuscan Chicken

Makes 4 servings | Time: 40 minutes

Recipe from Dan Pelosi



INSTRUCTIONS:

1. Season both sides of the chicken breasts with salt and pepper.
2. Heat a large pan over medium. Heat the olive oil in the pan. Add the chicken and cook until golden brown (but not cooked through), about 4 minutes on each side. Remove chicken from pan and set aside.
3. Add the butter to the pan and let it melt. Add tomatoes, onion, garlic and a pinch of salt, and cook, stirring, until the tomatoes and onion have just softened and the garlic is aromatic, 1 to 2 minutes.
4. Add broth, oregano and basil (if using), and stir to combine, scraping the browned bits from the bottom of the pan, and let simmer until the liquid has reduced by about half, 4 to 5 minutes. Add the heavy cream, grated Parmesan and cream cheese, and stir, allowing the cream cheese to soften and melt, until thickened, about 6 minutes. Add baby spinach and stir until the spinach begins to wilt, about 1 minute.
5. Return the chicken breasts to the pan and simmer until the chicken is cooked through, 4 to 5 minutes. Remove from heat and serve immediately with more freshly grated Parmesan on top.

Tip

1. To cut boneless, skinless chicken breasts in half horizontally, place them individually on a cutting board, leaving a few inches in between each. Place the palm of your hand on the chicken, apply pressure down, raise your fingers up and out of the way of your chef's knife, then slice breasts in half as evenly as possible, creating two thin cutlets.

Spice of the Month

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Spaghetti Sauce

Makes 4-6 servings | Time: 45 minutes

Recipe by Dan Pelosi

INGREDIENTS:

- ¼ cup olive oil
- 1 medium yellow onion, diced
 - (about 1 cup)
- Salt and pepper
- 6 garlic cloves, minced
- ½ teaspoon fennel seeds
- Crushed red pepper
- ½ cup cabernet sauvignon or other dry red wine
- 1 pound ground beef
- 1 (28-ounce) can tomato purée
- 1 tablespoon dried basil
- 2 tablespoons dried oregano
- 1 tablespoon dried parsley
- 2 teaspoons granulated sugar
- 1 pound cooked spaghetti, for serving
- Chopped fresh basil leaves, for serving
- Freshly grated Parmesan or pecorino cheese, for serving



INSTRUCTIONS

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Spice of the Month

take and make kit

Spaghetti Sauce

Makes 4-6 servings | Time: 45 minutes

Recipe by Dan Pelosi

INSTRUCTIONS:

1. In a large skillet or medium pot, heat olive oil over medium. Add onion with a pinch of salt and cook, stirring occasionally, until soft and translucent, 3 to 4 minutes. Stir in garlic, fennel seeds and a pinch of red pepper flakes. Cook until aromatic, 1 to 2 minutes. Add red wine and cook down by about half, about 2 minutes.
2. Adjust heat to medium-high and add ground beef in large chunks, then season with 1 teaspoon each of salt and pepper. Cook beef, stirring occasionally and breaking it up with a wooden spoon, until lightly browned and almost cooked through, 4 to 5 minutes. Use a spoon to skim off and discard any excess beef fat that has risen to the surface, as desired.
3. Stir in the tomato purée, the dried basil, oregano and parsley and the granulated sugar. Bring to a boil, adjust heat to low and simmer 20 to 25 minutes, stirring occasionally. Add more salt and pepper to taste.
4. Serve warm over spaghetti with fresh basil and grated Parmesan, or let cool and store in the refrigerator up to 5 days or freezer up to 6 months.

Spice of the Month

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Lobster Chowder

Servings: 12 | Time: 50 minutes

Recipe from Dick Bridges | Adapted by Molly O'Neill

INGREDIENTS:

- 8 tablespoons (1 stick) unsalted butter
- 1 medium onion, chopped in ½-inch dice
- 3 large russet potatoes, peeled and cut into ½-inch cubes
- 6 cups lobster broth (or cold water)
- ½ teaspoon sea salt
- ¼ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
- 5 pounds steamed and shucked lobster, claws intact, tails cut in large bite-size pieces
- 3 cans evaporated milk
- 1 teaspoon dried basil
- 1 cup milk or cream, if necessary



INSTRUCTIONS:

- In a large pot over low heat, melt 2 tablespoons of the butter. Add the onion, stir, and cook until soft, about 5 minutes. Add the potatoes and 6 cups broth or water, and bring to a simmer. Season with salt and pepper. Cook for about 30 minutes, until potatoes begin to soften.
- Meanwhile, in a large skillet over medium-high heat, melt 2 tablespoons of the butter. Add about a third of the lobster and sauté for about a minute or so. Set aside. Repeat with the remaining lobster and butter.
- Add lobster to onion and potato mixture; stir over medium heat. Add canned milk and basil, taste, and adjust seasoning with additional salt and pepper. If mixture is too thick, add milk or cream. Serve.

Spice of the Month

take and make kit

Caprese Pasta Salad

Servings: 12 | Prep: 15 Min | Cook: 20

Recipe from Belle of the Kitchen

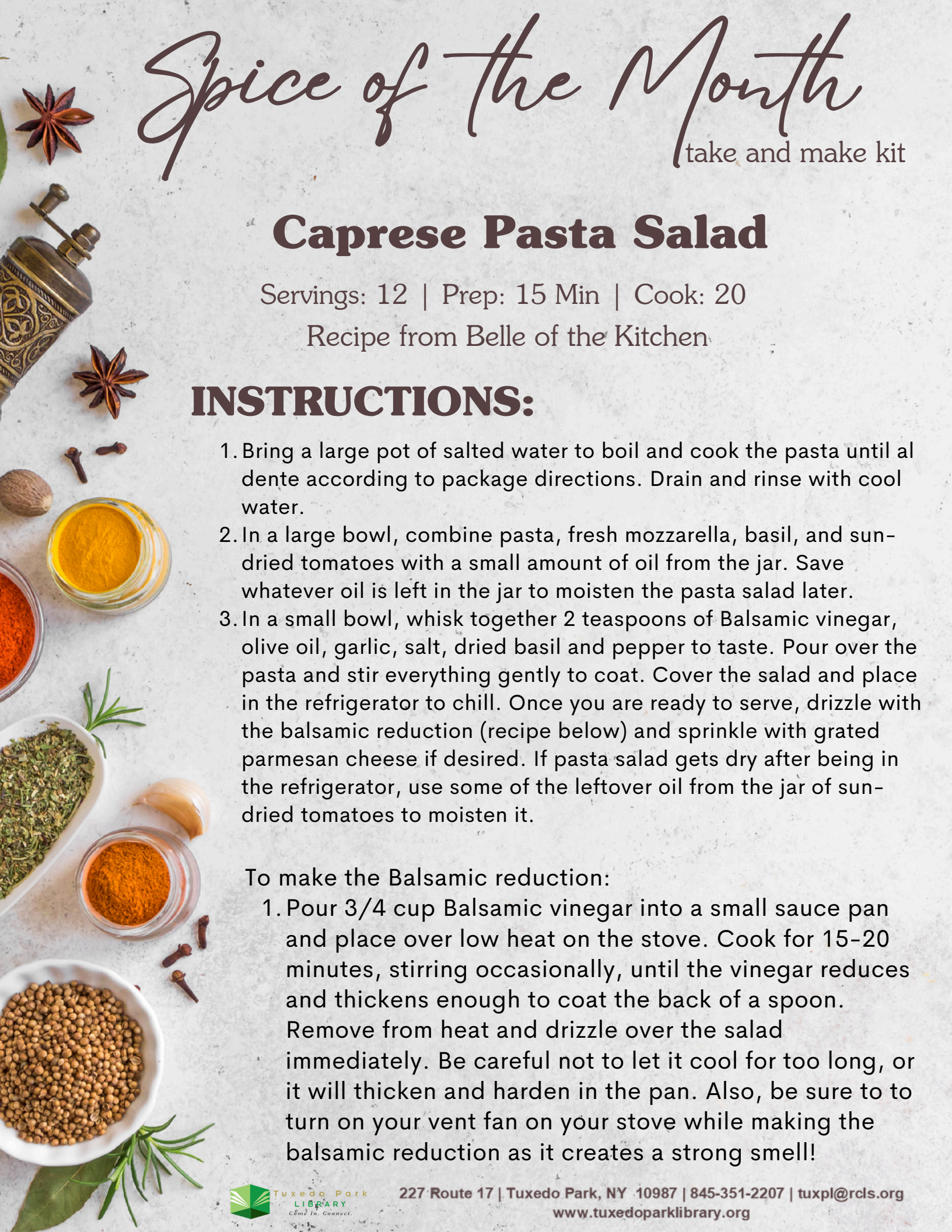


INGREDIENTS:

- 16 oz bowtie pasta
- 8 oz fresh mozzarella cheese, chopped into small pieces
- 1/4 cup fresh basil, chopped into ribbons
- 1 (8 oz) jar julienne cut sun-dried tomatoes packed in oil with herbs
- 2 teaspoons + 3/4 cup Balsamic vinegar, divided
- 2 teaspoons olive oil
- 1 1/2 teaspoons fresh minced garlic
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1 1/2 teaspoons dried basil
- fresh black pepper, to taste
- grated Parmesan cheese, to taste (optional)

INSTRUCTIONS

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A decorative background featuring various spices and kitchen items. On the left, there is a brass mortar and pestle, a whole nutmeg, a small jar of yellow powder, a bowl of red powder, a bowl of green herbs, a bowl of brown seeds, and a small jar of orange powder. Scattered around are star anise, cinnamon sticks, and fresh rosemary. The text 'Spice of the Month' is written in a large, elegant script at the top, with 'take and make kit' in a smaller, sans-serif font below it.

Spice of the Month

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Caprese Pasta Salad

Servings: 12 | Prep: 15 Min | Cook: 20

Recipe from Belle of the Kitchen

INSTRUCTIONS:

1. Bring a large pot of salted water to boil and cook the pasta until al dente according to package directions. Drain and rinse with cool water.
2. In a large bowl, combine pasta, fresh mozzarella, basil, and sun-dried tomatoes with a small amount of oil from the jar. Save whatever oil is left in the jar to moisten the pasta salad later.
3. In a small bowl, whisk together 2 teaspoons of Balsamic vinegar, olive oil, garlic, salt, dried basil and pepper to taste. Pour over the pasta and stir everything gently to coat. Cover the salad and place in the refrigerator to chill. Once you are ready to serve, drizzle with the balsamic reduction (recipe below) and sprinkle with grated parmesan cheese if desired. If pasta salad gets dry after being in the refrigerator, use some of the leftover oil from the jar of sun-dried tomatoes to moisten it.

To make the Balsamic reduction:

1. Pour 3/4 cup Balsamic vinegar into a small sauce pan and place over low heat on the stove. Cook for 15-20 minutes, stirring occasionally, until the vinegar reduces and thickens enough to coat the back of a spoon. Remove from heat and drizzle over the salad immediately. Be careful not to let it cool for too long, or it will thicken and harden in the pan. Also, be sure to turn on your vent fan on your stove while making the balsamic reduction as it creates a strong smell!

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Cheesy Basil Roasted Vegetables

Servings: 6 | Time: 45 Minutes

Recipe from: Oh Sweet Basil

INGREDIENTS:

- 2 Medium Carrots, peeled, sliced
- 2 Small Zucchini, sliced
- 2 Small Yellow Squash, sliced
- 3/4 Cup Low-Moisture Part Skim Mozzarella Cheese, divided (reserve 1/4 Cup of the cheese)
- 3/4 Cup Parmesan Cheese, divided (reserve 1/4 Cup)
- 1/4 Cup Basil, chopped or 1-2 Tablespoons dried basil (reserving a little fresh basil for garnish)
- 2 Cloves Garlic, minced
- Extra Virgin Olive Oil
- Salt and Pepper



INSTRUCTIONS:

- In a large bowl, add all of the vegetables:
- Drizzle about 1/4 Cup Olive oil over the vegetables. Just enough to slightly coat them.
- Place everything in a 9×13 inch pan.
- Bake at 400°F for 20-30 min, or until the vegetables are tender and the cheese is browning and bubbly.
- The last 10 minutes add the remaining cheese.
- Before serving garnish with fresh basil or fresh parsley if desired.