

Basil is nutritious and full of flavor

We are all tired of how the virus has changed our lives. Stay the course. Please continue to follow the mask guidance and mandates, wash your hands, be vaccinated or tested frequently, eat healthily and be physically active so all can lead healthy and enjoyable lives.



KATHY KOLASA

I started cooking at home during COVID and now want to learn more about spices and herbs. Several recipes I am considering call for basil. Can you tell me about it? KM, Winterville

Congrats on cooking at home. There continues to be more evidence that those who eat at home more often are better able to manage their weight, diabetes, high blood pressure, other chronic conditions and save money. Erika Hines, a senior ECU dietetic student, shares her love of cooking with basil with you. Here is what she wants you to know.

Fresh basil is a popular herb to culinarians and home cooks for the unique flavor that it adds to dishes. One of my favorite ways to use basil is by making pesto. Pesto is a blend of fresh basil, pine nuts, garlic, parmesan cheese and olive oil. It takes about 1 ounce of fresh basil to make one tablespoon of pesto which has 84 calories with the basil contributing only 1 calorie.

Pesto can be used in many ways like spicing up morning eggs or dressing salad. You won't find a Nutrition Facts label on the basil package but a serving size of around 1 ounce, or approximately five leaves of fresh basil, contains about 9 percent of your Vitamin K and 4 percent of your daily calcium need. Vitamin

A, C and manganese also are present in amounts to meet about 1 percent of your daily need.

Basil pairs very well with fresh tomatoes. A favorite breakfast of mine is avocado toast with fresh tomatoes topped with pesto. The pesto can be modified to your liking as well. You can substitute other nuts like walnuts or pecans for the pine nuts or add hemp seeds. Hemp seeds come from the hemp plant cannabis sativa but do not contain psychoactive properties like the cannabis plant. Hemp seeds are rich in essential fatty acids like omega-3 and omega-6, which are heart-healthy.

Fresh basil is used for Mediterranean dishes to garnish pasta or blend into a soup. Basil is an herb of the mint family and is most popular for its aromatic leaves. It's relatively easy to cultivate, grows quickly, and can be harvested in as little as three weeks when grown from seeds. Unfortunately, with fall upon us, the basil harvest season is over, but you can buy both fresh and dried basil at your local grocery. Usually, recipes call for about 1/2 cup to 1 cup of chopped basil, but dry basil can be used. One cup of fresh basil is equivalent to around 1/3 cup of dried basil. Loosely packaged organic basil sells for about \$3 for half an ounce, as well as packaged "lightly dried" basil for around \$4 near the fresh

See **BASIL**, A5

Edible vessels: when the dish is the dish

There is something supremely satisfying about consuming an entire dish, including, well, the dish itself. Presenting food in food, or edible vessels, is not only efficient and no-waste, but it's often highly decorative.

Certain foods lend themselves to standing in for a bowl or a container. A prime example is winter squash. These hardy vegetables have a hard, tough skin or shell that often gives way to vibrant, vitamin- and antioxidant-rich flesh.

When the squash is halved and seeded, then roasted in the oven, the outer shell softens yet retains its shape, while the flesh becomes tender and sweet, thanks to ample natural sugars. As a result, the half becomes a whole meal when stuffed with grains, such as rice and bulgur, or protein-rich quinoa seeds.

The stuffing is versatile and can be spiced and enhanced with other ingredients, such as sauteed aromatics (onion, celery, garlic), dried fruit, nuts, cheese or ground meat.

There are a number of squashes that love to be stuffed, including butternut, acorn, sweet pumpkin and kabocha. If the squash is small, you can serve it with its top as a lid — or if it's very large, you can quarter it and spoon the filling over the dinner plate to catch the overflow. No matter how



LYNDA BALSLEV/TASTEFOOD

Stuffed squash with quinoa and goat cheese

you cut it, your stuffed edible vessel will look stunning and taste delicious.

Stuffed Squash With Quinoa and Goat Cheese

Active time: 20 minutes
Total time: 1 hour and 20 minutes
Yield: Serves 4
Ingredients:
2 acorn squashes, halved horizontally
Olive oil
Kosher salt
Freshly ground black pepper
1/2 small yellow onion, chopped, about 1/4 cup
3 garlic cloves, minced
1 teaspoon thyme
2 tablespoons fresh orange juice
2 cups prep-cooked quinoa (or wild rice or bulgur)
1/3 cup dried cranberries

1/3 cup coarsely chopped pecans or walnuts
2 tablespoons chopped Italian parsley leaves, plus more for garnish
1 teaspoon finely grated orange zest
1/2 cup crumbled goat cheese, divided

Steps:
Heat the oven to 400 degrees. Brush the squash flesh with oil and season with salt and pepper. Arrange on a baking tray lined with parchment, cut sides down, and roast until tender, about 45 minutes. Remove from the oven and reduce the oven temperature to 375 degrees.

While the squashes are roasting, heat 1 tablespoon oil in a skillet over medium heat. Add the onion and saute until soft, 2 to 3 minutes. Stir in the garlic and thyme and cook until fragrant, about 30 seconds, then add the

orange juice to deglaze the pan. Remove the pan from the heat and stir in the quinoa, cranberries, nuts, parsley, orange zest, 1 teaspoon salt and 1/2 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper. Taste for seasoning and add more salt if desired. Gently stir in 1/4 cup goat cheese.

Fill the squash halves with the quinoa mixture. Arrange the squashes on a parchment-lined baking tray and top with the remaining goat cheese. Transfer to the oven and cook for 12 to 15 minutes to heat through and soften the cheese. Serve warm, garnished with parsley.

Lynda Balslev is an award-winning cookbook author, recipe developer, tester and editor. Taste Food is distributed by Andrews McMeel Syndication.

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Pirate's Deli finds a home across from campus

BY CHRISTINA RUOTOLO
Hot Dish

Greenville has a fabulous variety of restaurants, coffee shops, cafes, and deli's, so there is never a lack of options for when you are hungry for a complete meal or looking for a snack or coffee. I especially enjoy welcoming new restaurants to the city, so let me introduce you to the new Pirate's Deli at 810 E. 10th St., conveniently located across the street from the ECU campus, formerly home to Mike's Deli, a food fixture in Greenville for many years.

Pirate's Deli renovated the interior with a fun, upbeat Pirate vibe with purple and gold walls, a beautiful mural and an easy-to-read menu on the three chalkboard walls set around the front of the deli. The shop opened at the end of September, just in time for football season and a new semester.

The new owner, Akram Mubarez, along with manager, Shukri Mubarak, hail from New York, where they ran New York-style deli's. They have family in the area and would come down often for visits and fell in love with Greenville



PHOTO BY CHRISTINA RUOTOLO/HOT DISH

My Night Sandwich.

and wanted to bring their Northern flavors to our community. They also love that the pace of life here is much different than Queens and Brooklyn.

Pirate's Deli is a New York-style delicatessen offering breakfast, lunch and dinner options as well as breakfast and regular sandwiches, burgers, wraps, salads and baked goods. They use high-quality Boar's Head meats and chicken. They also have a large selection of healthy fruit smoothies, juices, coffee and a tea bar. The menu features a massive variety of food to fix any craving. They also have a

few grocery items in case you want a quick bottled drink, chips, candy, cookies or other quick pick-ups.

There are a bunch of breakfast sandwiches, from the classic Becky with bacon, egg and cheese; the Pinky and Brain with eggs, Swiss cheese, bacon, avocado and tomato; or one I know I will love, the NYC B.E.C, which is bacon, egg, cheese and grape jelly. The sweet jelly just makes that sandwich wake up your sleepy mouth. For those like me allergic to dairy, you can have a tofu cream cheese bagel or a bagel with peanut butter.

Moving on to sand-

wiches, a few to note are the roast beef Philly style with thin-sliced roast beef cooked on the grill with melted Swiss cheese, sautéed onions, pepper and mayo. They also have traditional New York deli-style subs like the Ruben, Italian sub or Buffalo chicken sub. They even have one I consider an old-school Southern classic, the egg salad sandwich, but with hummus.

I sampled two of their sandwiches, starting with the crowd-favorite NY Special Chopped Cheese, featuring seasoned ground beef grilled with onions, peppers, cheese and mayo all stuffed in a thick hoagie/Kaiser style bread. The meat had a warm spice note from the mixture of Sazon and Italian seasoning. It highlighted flavors of coriander and cozy cumin with a nice crust from the grill on the outside and melted cheese, onions and peppers in the middle. The meat to soft pillowy bread ratio was worth every single calorie.

Next, I tried the My Night Sandwich, which is BBQ chicken, bacon, melted mozzarella cheese and red onions inside a hot hoagie roll. Open up the paper wrapped around the sliced

sub and gooey, melted cheese stretches out for miles. Grilled chicken and smoky barbecue sauce in bread is always a good idea. Add in some super crispy bacon and punchy red onions for zing, your mouth will thank you.

I did not sample any burgers, but the names are super fun, I will be going back to try them soon. Some are the Heart Attack burger with double the meat, double the cheese, bacon, lettuce, tomato and mayo. They also have a Die Happy burger with egg, avocado and bacon added on the patty, a Burger from Hell and a Pizza burger. From sandwiches to burgers, there are lots to try.

Now let's end the tasting with a healthy smoothie. They offer a dozen smoothies such as the Mango Pie with mango, pineapple, banana and apple juice; a Nutella smoothie; peach smoothie (yum); iced coffee smoothie with banana, almond milk and peanut butter; or maybe an avocado one with avocado, banana, kale and milk. You can even create your own by selecting three of your favorite fruits, plus a liquid option.

They also offer a variety of juice blends for dietary needs, pre- or post-work-



out. Juices are made with carrots, celery, citrus, apples, greens, beets, and ginger and lemon. I tried the Pirate's Smoothie with blueberry, raspberry, agave nectar and opted for almond milk instead of water. It was lavender purple, creamy, sweet and filling. They also sell baked goods, cupcakes, and cake slices made by The Farmer and the Dail Bakery in Snow Hill.

And don't forget to grab a complimentary piece of fruit on your way out. I love this idea of providing a free healthy snack for their customers and students. So make sure to show this new business some love and welcome them to the community by stopping by. Pirate's Deli is open 7 a.m.-10 p.m. Monday-Thursday and 8 a.m.-11 p.m. on weekends! They offer food delivery through EatStreet, Uber Eats, DoorDash and GrubHub. For more information, you can follow them on Facebook or call 252-364-8973.

Pirate's Deli

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