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Tuscan Herb Salt <http://circle-b-kitchen.squarespace.com/>

This is a classic herb salt used in Northern Italy. Use it as an essential seasoning for roasts of all kinds, but it's also great on vegetables, beans, popcorn, potatoes, bread or eggs. It's truly wonderful on fish. The recipe calls for kosher salt, Diamond Crystal kosher salt is very good. You can use other favorite salts for this, but do not use regular table salt (too salty) or grey salt (too moist). Try as your Thanksgiving turkey rub! Yield: 2 cups

Ingredients: 4 garlic cloves; peeled
2 cups Loosely packed herbs; such as sage, rosemary, thyme
1/2 cup Kosher salt; 1/3 and 1/2 cup kosher salt

Cut each garlic clove lengthwise through the center and remove the sprout (if any) in the center and discard. Mound the salt and garlic on a cutting board. Use a chef's knife to mince the garlic, blending it with the salt as you work. Place herbs in a mound and coarsely chop them. Add the herbs to the garlic salt and chop them together to the texture of coarse sand.

Can use this immediately, or spread the salt on a baking sheet or in wide flat bowls and leave them near an open window for a couple of days to dry. Store in clean, dry jars, or for gifts, pack into cello bags and tie with a ribbon.

Peach Basil Sangria

Very refreshing and light; basil is a perfect pairing with peach. Yield: 6+ Servings

Ingredients: 1/3 cup white sugar 1 (750 ml) bottle white wine or sparkling wine
1 cup fresh basil leaves 1/4 cup lemon juice
3 1/2 cups peach nectar

In a saucepan, combine the sugar, basil leaves, half of the peach nectar and lemon juice. Bring to a simmer, crushing the basil leaves with the back of a spoon to release their flavor. Simmer just long enough to melt the sugar, then remove from the heat and allow to cool.

As soon as it is cool, strain the basil mixture into a pitcher filled with ice cubes; leaving the basil in too long will make the mixture cloudier than necessary. Pour in wine and remaining peach nectar. Stir briefly and serve over ice; garnish with fresh peach slices and basil leaves if desired.



Chilled Cucumber Soup with Fresh Herbs www.dishingupthedirt.com

A lovely, quick lunch; think of it as a smoothie! Fancy it up with some grilled shrimp and grilled bread.

Ingredients: 2 large slicing cucumbers, finely chopped 1 1/2 cups plain greek yogurt
3 1/2 TBS fresh lemon juice 3 garlic cloves, minced
1/4 cup dill, stems removed and diced 1/4 cup parsley, thick stems removed and diced
1/4 cup olive oil pinch of crushed red pepper flakes
salt and pepper to taste a small handful of ice cubes

In a blender combine cucumber, yogurt, lemon juice, garlic, dill, parsley, ice cubes and olive oil. Blend until smooth. Keep soup chilled until ready to serve. If you use ice cubes it should be ready to eat right away.

Season to taste with salt, pepper, and crushed red pepper flakes.

Sage Walnut Pesto

Toss with roasted vegetables or squash, with pasta or ravioli such as mushroom or squash-filled

Ingredients: 1/2 cup packed fresh sage leaves 1/2 cup packed flat-leaf parsley
1 cup freshly grated parmesan cheese 2/3 cup walnut pieces
3 cloves garlic, crushed
1/2 cup olive oil salt to taste

Wash and dry fresh herbs. Place in food processor with parmesan, walnuts, garlic, and salt. Process until you have a gritty, even consistency. **Stir olive oil in by hand** to desired consistency.

Pesto Chicken Meatballs www.thespruce.com

Yield: Approximately 30 meatballs

Ingredients: 2 tablespoons butter
2 cloves garlic (minced)
1 medium egg
1/2 cup breadcrumbs (panko or dried breadcrumbs)
1/3 cup cheese (Parmesan)
1/8 teaspoon pepper
1 medium onion (minced)
1 cup pesto (basil)
2 tablespoons sour cream
1/2 teaspoon salt
1 1/2 pounds chicken (ground, or turkey)

Preheat oven to 375 degrees F. In a small skillet, melt butter over medium heat. Add onion and garlic; sauté and stir until tender, about 6-8 minutes. Remove to large bowl and let cool for 5 minutes.

Add pesto, egg, sour cream, breadcrumbs, cheese, and salt and pepper to onion mixture and stir to combine. Add ground chicken or turkey and mix with hands until just combined. Form into 1-1/2" meatballs.

Place on baking sheet with sides. Bake for 22-27 minutes or until an instant read thermometer registers 165 deg. F. Use in recipes, or cool completely, then freeze.

Fresh Mint Chocolate Chip Cookies www.food52.com

Tender crisp cookies with a brown butter and mint flavor. Try the butter technique in your favorite sugar cookie recipe, too. Yield: 24 medium size cookies

Ingredients: 1 stick (8 tablespoons) unsalted butter, cubed
1/2 cup granulated sugar
1 egg
1 1/2 cups flour *
1/2 teaspoon salt
1/2 cup (heaping) chopped chocolate (whatever kind you'd like)
1/2 cup tightly packed, freshly chopped mint
1/4 cup packed light brown sugar
1 teaspoon vanilla extract
1 teaspoon baking soda

Add the butter and mint to a small saucepan over medium heat. Once the butter is melted, continue to cook for 2 to 3 minutes, until the mint is very fragrant. Set aside for 30 minutes, butter should still be melted, but cool.

Use a fine mesh sieve to strain the butter into the bowl of a stand mixer. Press the mint with a spatula or the back of a spoon to release all of that butter! Add the sugars and mix on medium-low speed until creamy and fluffy, 3 to 5 minutes. Add the egg and vanilla and mix until completely combined.

In a small bowl, whisk together the flour, baking soda, salt, and ginger, if using. Add most of it to the bowl of the stand mixer and mix on low until just combined. *Dough should not be crumbly; add remaining flour mix as needed to get a soft cohesive dough. Stir in the chopped chocolate, then scoop onto a nonstick cookie sheet and pat out to 1/2" thick rectangle and chill for 1 hour.

Heat the oven to 350° F and line two sheets with parchment paper. Cut the dough on the sheet into equal portions, and pinch slightly to make rounds. Space balls on each cookie sheet (the cookies will spread a bit), then bake for 8 to 11 minutes, rotating the pans halfway through and pulling when golden on edges and still pale in center.

Let cool on the baking sheet for 2 minutes, and then transfer to a cooling rack to cool completely.

The Best Pesto <http://www.seriousseats.com/recipes/2014/07/best-pesto-recipe.html>

If using a food processor, scoop basil mixture into a bowl after adding just 1 tablespoon of the olive oil; stir oil in by hand to avoid a bitter taste.

Ingredients: 4 medium cloves garlic
Generous pinch coarse sea salt
3 ounces basil leaves (from about a 4-ounce bunch)
2 tablespoons (30g) pine nuts
2 1/2 tablespoons (1 ounce) grated Parmigiano Reggiano
2 1/2 tablespoons (1 ounce) Pecorino
1/2 cup plus 2 tablespoons (150ml) mildly flavored extra-virgin olive oil

Using a mortar and pestle, combine garlic and sea salt and grind to a paste.

Add basil leaves, a handful at a time, and grind against the walls of the mortar; it's easier to use a circular grinding motion than to try to pound the leaves with the pestle. Continue until all basil leaves have been crushed to fine bits and have released their green liquid. Add pine nuts and gently crush with pestle, then work into a paste with basil and garlic. Add both cheeses and continue to use pestle to grind into a paste.

Slowly drizzle in olive oil, working it into the pesto with a wooden spoon until incorporated. Pesto can be served with pasta right away, or transferred to a jar, covered with a small layer of olive oil, sealed, and refrigerated.