@font-face { font-family: "Times New Roman"; }p.MsoNormal, li.MsoNormal, div.MsoNormal { margin: 0in 0in 0.0001pt; font-size: 12pt; font-family: "Times New Roman"; }table.MsoNormalTable { font-size: 10pt; font-family: "Times New Roman"; }div.Section1 { page: Section1; }

Sweet basil fills up a long row in the garden. I eat it with tomatoes, but until a few years ago that's all I ever used it for. Now, thanks to my Italian friends, I know what to make with it- pesto.

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Paul came to the farm with two different kinds of cheese, romano and parmesan. He grinds them up in a food processor. Then he adds a small amount of pine nuts and a large amount of garlic. Then he adds more garlic.

Italian cooking requires a lot of garlic, I guess. We are making the pesto in the outdoor shed, with hundreds of pound of garlic hanging up all around us. We have no problems with vampires.

Olive oil is added to the blend, and the processor is about half-full. Leaves of sweet basil are taken off the stems, washed, and get ground up with everything else. Fingers dipped into it tells us how it tastes. Yum! Get some noodles boiling!

We put the finished pesto into ice cube trays and stick them in the freezer. After its frozen, I run hot water over the back of the tray and twist it over a bowl. The cubes are then sealed in a freezer bag, labeled, and put back in the freezer.

When we want some later, we open the bag and get however many cubes we need for the meal. Pesto goes good with pasta, rice, or spread on a baked potato. I love it on a warm piece of sourdough toast, topped off with as much tomato as I can pile on.

There are many kinds of basil; purple, thai, cinnamon, lemon, ruffled and a whole lot more. We grow Italian Large Leaf because it has superior flavor and makes the best pesto. A wild basil grows as a weed around here. It's called perila and is purple. In Japan it's called shiso and is used in making sushi.

Basil is easy to grow. We direct seed it in early May and it is a bit slow growing at first. But once it takes of it soon makes a three foot tall plant that wants to bloom. We kept it cut back as much as possible so that it keeps making leaves. About 10 bushels get sent to Nashville every week for our customers.

I use sweet basil when I can tomato sauce. As the sauce finishes cooking, I dip in a few big stalks into the pot for about 10 minutes. I remove the basil but the flavor stays.

Basil and tomatoes not only taste good together, they are companion plants and like to grow next to each other. In our garden it’s a tight fit in late summer between the row of basil and the row of tomatoes. Both are doing well and it’s nice to take a bite of tomato and then a bite of basil. I don’t think I have Italian in my ancestry, but you couldn’t tell it by the way I eat.