

Is That for Fun or Is That Your Job?

“I see your Instagram posts of plants, flower, vegetables, people, food, travel ... is that for fun or is that your job?” This question comes from both people I’ve known for a long time and just recently met. I have to laugh when I respond with,

“Both!” Most people, no matter their age, cannot imagine a world where their career is also one of their passions and hobbies, but for most horticulturists we are living proof.

BRINGING “WORK” HOME

Cooking is one of my favorite hobbies; I love feeding people and I’ll use any excuse to try a new recipe. Lucky for me, cooking and eating are part of my job as a horticulturist! One of my favorite summer “tasks” is to bring home new varieties of vegetables and herbs from our breeding teams and test them in the kitchen.

My favorite recipes this summer included Fermented Primero Red Habanero Hot Sauce — a great way to showcase rich habanero flavors. Newton Basil Lime

Cooler became a fan favorite this year at California Spring Trials with the bright and fresh aroma of basil balancing the acidity of lime. I’m currently testing Stuffed Baked Autumn Frost Squash — cornbread, sage and sausage stuffing melding with rich and flavorful winter squash. It’s a scrumptious and delicious process, but someone’s gotta do it.

CONSUMER OUTREACH

Food and horticulture have been a gateway to connecting another passion of mine, outreach and education. In the last year we taught over 1,000 people about the nuances of Genovese basil through basil oil tastings, from California Spring Trials to the Flower Trials in The Netherlands and even at the Chicago Botanic Garden!

Did you know that ‘Everleaf Genovese’ basil is great for cooking? The slight bitterness and astringency will hold up to higher heat and maintain aroma and flavor over a longer period after cooking. Basil varieties with light vegetal and floral aromas are great for fresh eating. Try adding ‘Everleaf Emerald Towers’ to a salad or using the large leaves of ‘Newton’ basil as a wrap for grilled shrimp or chicken satay. Be sure to sow only two to three seeds per plug of late-flowering basil varieties, such as ‘Everleaf Emerald Towers’ and ‘Everleaf Genoves’e, to gain full advantage of high-yield potential and long-season enjoyment.

Hosting these food tastings helps consumers and horticulture professionals alike learn how to differentiate the flavors, aromas and textures of their vegetables, and ultimately how to use these varieties in the kitchen. Tastings also provide a great opportunity to teach how much fun a career in horticulture can be. Share



Cheni Filios is global product manager – vegetables for PanAmerican Seed and a member of GPN’s 40 Under 40 Class of 2019. She can be reached at cfilios@ballhort.com.



BASIL OIL RECIPE

- 4 cups basil (packed into dry measuring cup)
- 1 cups canola oil*
- 1/2 teaspoon salt

Add basil to blender or food processor.

Sprinkle salt over top of basil.

Turn on machine and slowly trickle oil over basil. You might need to stop and push down the basil every few seconds.

After all oil is added, continue to run machine until basil is very finely chopped. Do not run so long that the oil starts to congeal.

Pour oil into food safe bottle or jar for serving.

Basil oil can be stored in the refrigerator for up to one week after processing.

Shake and/or stir prior to serving as the basil and oil will separate over time.

**Canola oil is suggested as it provides little to no flavor, allowing you to taste the aroma and flavor of the basil. Olive oil is not recommended for basil oil tastings as it has a strong flavor and will overpower vegetal and floral aroma of the basil.*

your experience with your audience while you’ve got them captive chomping down on tasty homegrown food.

Hop over to the new PanAmerican Seed HandPicked Vegetable Collection website for videos and information on great new vegetable varieties (www.panamseed.com/handpicked).

Check out the PanAmerican Seed blog for more recipe ideas (www.panamseed.com/Blog). [gpn](https://www.gpn.com)