The Cabrillo College farm booth at the Aptos Farmers Market offers Italian large basil year-round.

Italian large basil available year-round

You’ll need to check out the Cabrillo College booth at the Aptos Farmers Market this week. Beau grows the most beautiful tomatoes [still on the vine] but he also sells bunches of ‘live’ Italian large basil. If that doesn’t put ‘pasta for dinner’ in your head, I don’t know what will.

By ‘live’ I mean the roots are still on the basil, so when you get it home, you’re going to want to stick the bunch in a glass of water. Change the water every few days and just snip off what basil leaves you need. Known as a summer herb, basil can now be found, year-round, at the Aptos market.

I thought I would wow you with some food facts about Italy.

- Pasta is the national dish of Italy. Agriculture used to make up a third of Italy’s economy; today it’s less than 3 percent.
- The average Italian consumes approximately 56 pounds of pasta and 26 gallons of wine a year.
- The ice cream cone was invented in Italy.
- Pizza was invented in its modern form in Naples in the 1860s.
- The word ‘pizza’ is one of the few words that is understood all over the world.
- Half of a pound of bread is consumed by the average Italian every day.

Basil is an excellent source of vitamins K, A and C, and also contains iron, zinc and niacin. There is no sugars, sodium, fat, proteins or cholesterol in basil.

**HOW TO SELECT:** The ‘live’ basil is all ready bunched for you. Let Beau pick out a nice one.

**HOW TO STORE:** Place basil in a glass of water, being sure to cover the roots. Snip off fresh leaves when ready to use.

In the Bins is a weekly feature by Catherine Barr, executive director of the Monterey Bay Certified Farmers Markets. Visit www.montereybayfarmers.org. For seasonal cooking recipes and tips, see www.edibleparadise.com.