
PESTO ALLA GENOVESE

(GENOVESE-STYLE BASIL PESTO)

True basil pesto in the style of Genova is first and foremost about the basil, then about the cheese, and finally about the olive oil; it is never an aggressively garlicky sauce, so if your garlic is strong or old, or the cloves are large, please use less than indicated below so you don't end up tasting the garlic at the forefront. Please don't make pesto unless your basil is fragrant and unblemished, and never use pre-peeled or pre-minced garlic in pesto.

To serve the pesto with pasta, spoon the pesto onto a wide serving platter. Loosen it with a ladleful of pasta cooking water to thin it out to the correct intensity of flavor and the correct fluid consistency, stir in the hot drained pasta, adjust the seasoning, and serve.

A classic way to serve the pesto is with potato gnocchi and green beans: Cook 150 grams (5 ounces) tipped green beans in ample salted water; when they are tender, add 350 grams (12 ounces) potato gnocchi, (follow our master recipe) cook until the gnocchi float, then drain and stir into the pesto along with some gnocchi cooking water.

Makes 175 grams (6 ounces) pesto

- 50 grams (1.8 ounces) fresh basil leaves, washed thoroughly and blotted dry, stems carefully removed (leaves from about 1 bunch)
- 2 young, fresh garlic cloves, peeled
- 15 grams (0.5 ounces) pine nuts
- ¼ teaspoon sea salt
- 60 grams (2 ounces) freshly grated Parmigiano-Reggiano
- 60 milliliters (1/4 cup) extra-virgin olive oil (preferably a mild one, from Liguria if possible)

1. Place the basil in a food processor. Add the garlic, pine nuts, and salt, and process using short pulses until a chunky paste forms. We are not aiming for a smooth pesto here because if we process to that point at this early step, the basil will be overprocessed and lose all aroma by the time the pesto is done.
2. Add the Parmigiano and process again until it is well combined. Add the olive oil and process again using short pulses until just a bit smoother.
3. To make pesto with a coarser texture: Do not add the Parmigiano in the food processor; stir it in by hand in a bowl.
4. The pesto can be made up to 12 hours ahead and refrigerated until needed; place a piece of plastic wrap directly over it to prevent discoloration, and return to room temperature before serving.