



Basil Pesto Recipes

Learn more about pesto, get some recipes and other creative pesto ideas.

Article and photos by Kate Savage

Did You Know: Some Basil & Pesto History

Is there anything more evocative of warm summer days than the heady smell of sweet basil?

We associate it with big, juicy tomatoes and Italian cuisine, but in fact the original herb was from India and it's used a lot in cooking throughout the Asian world.

The word "basil" is derived from an old Greek word meaning "royal," which reflects the ancient culture's attitude towards a herb they considered noble and sacred.

The tradition of reverence has continued in other cultures. In India, basil was cherished as an icon of hospitality, while in Italy, it was a symbol of love.

Whatever your sentiments are towards it, by the month of August we are overwhelmed by it's bounty.

Save Some For Later...

How to capture this abundance for the rest of the year so we can enjoy a little whiff of summer in the dead of winter?

Make pesto and freeze it in an ice cube tray.

It freezes beautifully; that way whenever the winter doldrums grab you in its chilly fingers, you can pop out a pesto cube, whip up a favourite dish and conjure up the memories of summers past or the dreams of summers yet to come.

Other Pesto Possibilities: Combine 2 T. pesto with 4 T. mayonnaise to make a superb sandwich spread

Whisk 1 T. of pesto into 4 eggs before scrambling

Add to any stir-fry, especially those with eggplant and tofu

Use as a spread or a topping on tomato bruschetta

Brush onto chicken or salmon before grilling

Dollop a spoonful into a favorite soup, such as tomato bisque, and add toasted chopped walnuts

TopPesto is typically made with sweet basil leaves, but it can be made with other ingredients such as sun-dried tomatoes, cilantro, artichoke hearts and even spinach. However, the base ingredients remain the same: garlic, olive oil, cheese and pine nuts. (Don't miss this treat: Basil Chicken and Garlic Sauce!) Some recipes may even suggest using cashews or walnuts as a substitute for the pine nuts and I have vegan friends who omit the cheese and swear it's just as delicious!

Traditionally, pesto is made by hand using a mortar and pestle. The ingredients are placed in the marble mortar and ground to a fine paste or sauce.

The word "pesto" is derived from the word pestle, which in turn is derived from a word that means to pound or to grind.

Nowadays, most of us are into time and energy-saving methods, so this recipe uses the food processor for ease and speed.

Classic Basil Pesto

Makes about 1 cup

Ingredients 2 cups fresh basil leaves 3 large garlic cloves, peeled ½ cup freshly grated Parmesan cheese ¼ cup freshly grated Pecorino Romano cheese ¼ cup pine nuts, toasted ½ cup olive oil Salt and freshly ground pepper

Preparation

Combine the basil, garlic, cheeses and nuts in a food processor or blender. Process to mix. With the machine running, add the olive oil in a slow drizzle. Season to taste with salt and freshly ground pepper and continue to process adjusting the consistency as desired. Let it stand 5 minutes before servings.



Pesto Chicken with Garlic Sauce

Serves 4

Ingredients 4 skinless, boneless chicken breasts ½ cup basil pesto ½ cup buttermilk 1 cup crushed crumbs or other coating 4 garlic cloves, unpeeled ½ cup mayonnaise ½ cup milk 2 T. lime juice Salt and freshly ground pepper

Preparation

Pound chicken breast to flatten. Spread 2 T. basil pesto on each breast, roll up and secure with a toothpick. Dip chicken in buttermilk, then coat with crumbs. Preheat oven to 350 degrees F. Place chicken and garlic cloves on a baking sheet coated with oil or vegetable spray. Remove garlic after 30 minutes, it will be used in the sauce. Cook chicken a further 15 minutes or until tender.

Sauce: Combine mayonnaise, milk, lemon juice and pepper. Squeeze roasted garlic into sauce and cook over low heat stirring constantly until warm. Place chicken onto a plate and pour warm sauce over.

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