

FOUR PESTO RECIPES

Make as much as you want.

By Dennis W. Viau; modified from traditional pesto

Pesto doesn't need to be made the same way every time. You can experiment with different combinations of flavors. In this recipe I make traditional pesto with basil, garlic, olive oil, Parmesan cheese (I prefer Romano) and pine nuts. I also make black olive pesto, mint pesto, and fresh herb pesto. I used these to make four roast legs of lamb for my Lazy Man Meals. All were delicious.



Ingredients:

For each kind of pesto:

4 ounces (113g) pine nuts (almonds or roasted pecans can be substituted)

2 to 2½ ounces (57g to 71g) fresh basil leaves; stems removed

2 to 3 large cloves of garlic

½ cup (118ml) olive oil (1 to 1½ cups for a pesto to be used on pasta)

1 cup (113g) grated Parmesan or Romano cheese

For black olive pesto:

Add about 30 black olives, pitted (I prefer Italian sun dried black olives, which have a strong flavor)

For mint pesto:

Add about ½ ounce (14g) of fresh mint leaves

For herb pesto:

Add about ½ ounce (14g) of fresh cilantro

½ ounce (14g) of fresh Italian (flat leaf) parsley

1 to 2 tablespoons fresh rosemary needles

Directions:

If using pine nuts, place the pine nuts in a skillet over high heat and toast, stirring often, about 2 minutes until they start to take on a golden color. Remove to a bowl to cool. If using almonds or pecans, place in a baking dish and roast in the oven about 10 minutes at 350°F (178°C).

Place the basil leaves, pine nuts, garlic, and any extra ingredients you choose to use, in a sturdy ziplock bag. Press to remove most of the air and seal. Using a smooth mallet, such as a rubber or wooden mallet (a meat tenderizing hammer is okay if it is smooth), hammer the ingredients in the bag until the basil is well crushed. Work carefully so as not to damage the bag.

Place the crushed ingredients in a food processor with the oil and cheese. Blend until smooth.

I use a small amount of oil—½ cup (118ml)—when making pesto to coat a leg of lamb for roasting. I like a sticky pesto to hold to the sides of the lamb. When making pesto for pasta I use more oil to let the pesto drizzle down through the pasta and coat it with all the delicious flavors. You can also toast slices of French bread to make croûtes and spread them with pesto and Brie cheese for a snack or for canapés.

The step-by-step photos were removed. See the video for the preparation.