

BASIL PESTO

MAKES ¾ CUP; ENOUGH FOR 1 POUND PASTA

Pesto's most familiar application is dressing pasta, but a dollop of its bright, nutty flavor can enliven everything from soup to stew to chicken, sandwiches, and steamed potatoes.

WHAT CAN GO WRONG: The sharpness of raw garlic can overpower more delicate, aromatic basil. The basil also quickly turns a drab, unappealing dark green.

HOW WE FIXED IT: To mellow the garlic's flavor, we briefly toast the whole, unpeeled cloves in a dry skillet before chopping and processing. A small amount of parsley, which doesn't discolor as easily as basil, helps keep the pesto green. Finally, pounding the herbs before pureeing them releases more of their flavorful oils so that they stand up better to the garlic.

- 3 garlic cloves, unpeeled
- 2 cups fresh basil leaves
- 2 tablespoons fresh parsley leaves
- 7 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
- ¼ cup pine nuts, toasted
- Salt and pepper
- ¼ cup finely grated Parmesan or Pecorino Romano cheese

1. Toast garlic in small, heavy skillet over medium heat, shaking pan occasionally, until fragrant and color of cloves deepens slightly, about 7 minutes. Let garlic cool slightly, then peel and chop.

2. Place basil and parsley in heavy-duty 1-gallon zipper-lock bag. Pound bag with flat side of meat pounder or rolling pin until all leaves are bruised.

3. Process oil, pine nuts, ½ teaspoon salt, garlic, and herbs in food processor until smooth, scraping down sides of bowl as needed, about 1 minute. Stir in Parmesan and season with salt and pepper to taste.

TO MAKE AHEAD: Pesto can be covered with thin layer of oil (1 to 2 tablespoons) and refrigerated for up to 4 days or frozen for up to 1 month.



Toast garlic; add parsley.