

Short Order #3—Pesto

Continuing to cook at home with the need to improvise and easily make do with what you have on hand, yes! Summer season, basil abounds, yes! Think pesto, think pasta, think pesto alla Genovese—a meal in under 30 minutes that you will be happy to cook and enjoy eating.

Pesto can have multiple personalities, which I discussed in one of my earliest posts, *Pesto—A Perspective, An Approach*, October 2014. However, when mentioned, the pesto that most often comes to mind is the Genovese style made with basil, garlic, pine nuts, Parmigiano-Reggiano, Pecorino Romano, olive oil, and a pinch of salt and pepper.

In Genoa, the capital city of the Ligurian region (aka the Italian Riviera) in the northwest corner of Italy, squeezed between the south of France and Tuscany, basil pesto is most often tossed with Trofie pasta, a short twisty shape. Sometimes the dish can include sliced green beans, or cubes of potatoes, and more often than not some of both. I've prepared all three—they are easy and they are all tasty.



Trofie pasta with basil pesto



Trofie pasta, green beans, potato with pesto

But pesto alla Genovese is not limited to solely being tossed with Trofie pasta. If you find that you don't happen to have a package of Trofie pasta in your pantry, then by all means substitute Farfalle, Fetuccine or Tagliatelle, Fusilli, Linguine or Spaghetti, Penne, or Rigatoni since they are all fine options.

Pesto alla Genovese



Ingredients (enough to serve 4)

1 pound pasta of your choice (1/4 pound per person)

1/3 packed cup basil leaves

1 garlic clove, germ removed

1 generous tablespoon pine nuts, lightly toasted

1/2 cup total mix of grated Parmigiano-Reggiano and Pecorino Romano

1/2 cup olive oil

Pinch salt and pepper to taste

Method

Heat a large pot of salted water to the boil and cook the pasta to package directions.

This classic version of basil pesto is made using a mortar and pestle, however the use of a food processor is easier and saves time.

Add the basil, garlic, pine nuts, and the salt and pepper to the work bowl of the processor. Pulse the processor a few times to combine the ingredients, stopping to scrape down the sides of the work bowl as needed with a rubber spatula. Drizzle the olive oil down the feed tube until all incorporated and a creamy textured pesto is formed.

I prefer to add the cheese when tossing the pesto sauce with the pasta, because I believe the heat of the pasta integrates the cheese better and punctuates the flavor more rather than whipping it in the food processor, however it is your call as either way will work.

Also, don't heat the finished pesto sauce before tossing with the pasta, let the heat of the pasta do its work. If the sauce seems too dense, adding just a little pasta water will soften the sauce. Finally, don't overwhelm the pasta with the pesto sauce,

a little goes a long way and you want to taste the flavor of the pasta. A small dollop of pesto can be placed on top of the pasta when plated if more is desired.

Place the sauced pasta in warm bowls or plates, sprinkle a little more cheese and perhaps some minced parsley over the top and serve. A perfect solution as a way to enjoy the abundant crop of basil growing at this point in the season.



Proceed as the way opens, some paths do not become apparent until you travel a ways down them.