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Keys to making good pesto

By Lori Gysel & Gerry Kentner

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Today's recipe calls for pesto. Pesto is one of the simplest things to make and so versatile.

With a jar of homemade pesto in the fridge, you may have to fight off your friends who try to steal it when claiming to make a trip to the fridge for another drink!

Seriously though, you can add a spoonful of pesto to a salad dressing, you can use it as a spread on your sandwich, you can toss freshly cooked pasta with a few spoons of pesto for an instant sauce, you can toss roasted vegetables with pesto for a delicious side dish, you can use as an accompaniment to cheese, you can add a spoonful to a bowl of chicken noodle soup (not the kind out of the can—the homemade kind), or you can use as a sauce on a homemade pizza.

Traditional pesto is made from fresh basil leaves, toasted pine nuts, fresh garlic, parmesan cheese (the real kind, not the pre-grated in a can kind), olive oil, salt and pepper. All you need is a food processor. Into the food processor place two giant handfuls of fresh, clean basil leaves (the machine should be fairly full), then add a good-sized



What's Cookin'

handful of toasted pine nuts, then one or two cloves of fresh garlic, a good sized handful of freshly grated parmesan cheese and a sprinkle of coarse salt and freshly ground black pepper. Place the lid on the machine and process. Once the herbs are ground nicely, then start drizzling in the olive oil through the feed tube, while the machine is running. Stop when you get to the consistency that you want. Sometimes you might be looking for a fairly thick pesto and sometimes you might want something a little looser. Your choice. Now enjoy.

While the paragraph above describes traditional pesto, you can really make pesto from all kinds of combinations. One of the best pesto recipes I ever had was from a local cooking instructor by the name of Deborah Palmer-she made a cilantro and pistachio pesto to die for.

So use your imagination to change up the herbs, the nuts, the cheese, just keep the proportions and the basic procedure the same.

Have fun and keep cooking!

Pesto Pinwheels

INGREDIENTS

Makes 15

• 1 roll PC Butter Puff Pastry

(there are two rolls in each box)

- 1/2 cup plain cream cheese, softened
- 1/4 cup pesto
- 1/3 cup chopped sundried tomatoes in oil, drained

METHOD

- 1. Blend cream cheese with pesto.
- 2. Unroll the puff pastry sheet, keeping it on the parchment paper it is wrapped in.
- 3. Spread cream cheese mixture over the pastry to the edges.



- 4. Sprinkle chopped sundried tomatoes over
- 5. Roll up from the long side (roll tightly) and chill before cutting into 15 slices.
 - 6. Lay slices on the parchment, flat side down.
- 7. Bake in a preheated 400 degree F. oven for 15-20 minutes until golden brown.

