



Linguine With Pesto and Green Beans

In summer, one of my greatest joys is preparing meals that rely almost entirely on produce from the garden. Of these, many of my favorite menus start with pesto.

For this pesto, I recommend using a mortar and pestle. Although you can also make it in a food processor, the mortar-and-pestle method is easy and it produces the best pesto I've ever eaten. I usually pick the basil an hour or so before preparing the pesto. Then I wash and thoroughly dry the leaves, wrap them in an absorbent towel (I especially love the towels made of flour sac material) and chill for 10 or 15 minutes just to keep them cool. (This is especially important if you have a very hot kitchen.) In our home, Jim is my Number One Pesto Man. He pulverizes the leaves until they're thick and have a creamy consistency, which only takes about 5 to 7 minutes!

There are as many pesto recipes as there are people who love pesto, but for me, this one is hard to improve on! Serve with crusty bread, a platter of sliced heirloom tomatoes and a garden salad to follow.

5 to 6 handfuls	fresh basil
	Coarse salt (kosher or sea salt)
2	cloves garlic, peeled
2 tbsp	pinenuts, lightly toasted
1/4 cup	freshly grated Pecorino Romano cheese
2 to 3 tbsp	extra-virgin olive oil
1 lb	linguine, fettuccine or other ribbon pasta
1/4 lb	fresh green beans, ends removed
	Freshly ground pepper
	Extra Pecorino Romano for passing

To wash basil, place in large bowl of cold water. Remove leaves from stems and place in salad spinner. Spin until dry. Place on tea towel and wrap loosely. Refrigerate for about 5 to 10 minutes or while preparing the other ingredients.

To make pesto: Place 1 teaspoon of coarse salt and about 6 basil leaves in a mortar and crush with the pestle. Add the garlic and then more basil leaves, a few at a time, pulverizing one batch before adding the next. Add pinenuts and crush until mixture is smooth. Remove to a mixing bowl and fold in cheese. Add olive oil and mix with a wooden spoon until mixture is thick and has a creamy consistency. Taste and adjust salt and cheese if necessary. Set aside.

In large pot of boiling salted water, cook pasta until tender but firm. About 1 to 2 minutes before pasta is finished cooking, add green beans and let them cook with the pasta. Drain well, reserving about 1 cup of the pasta cooking water, and transfer pasta and beans to large pasta bowl.

Add about 1 or 2 teaspoons of the reserved cooking water to the pesto and mix lightly just to "loosen" the pesto a bit. Add pesto to pasta and mix well, until the pasta is evenly coated (this may take a minute or two). If necessary, add a little water to any little "clumps" of pesto to help loosen them. Taste pasta and add more cheese if desired. Season with salt and pepper to taste. Serve immediately with a chunk of extra cheese and a hand grater.

Makes 4 servings.

Jim White: Because pesto originates on the Ligurian coast of Italy, I often opt for wines of that, or an adjacent, region. Among whites, Arneis, Gavi or Pinot Grigio make an excellent mate for this plate; among reds, I like a young Dolcetto or Chianti (made from the Sangiovese grape) If your cellar is heavy on California wines, try pairing with a not-heavily-wooded Sauvignon Blanc (of course, I recommend the Sauvignon Blancs in the ilovenapa.com family: Orin Swift, Waugh Cellars, or Emmolo), or try a Pinot Grigio (Long Vineyards makes a stunner). Forget most Chardonnays; there's usually too much wood and butter in them to marry properly to pesto. A youthful, not heavily oaked Zin will work, too, though most have too much alcohol for this dish, which requires a lighter wine.