

Pesto



Plan Z Phase: This is a Z3 (ZReboot) recipe. Pine nuts in large quantity can be hard to find. I have seen in some restaurant menus that chefs have made pesto with walnuts, so I decided macadamia nuts must work too. Now I can attest. They not only work, it tastes great!

Ingredients:

- 3 cups basil leaves
- 1 cup pine nuts (or any other kind of nut)
- 1 tsp salt
- 2 Tbsp chopped garlic (jar garlic is fine)
- 1/4 tsp cayenne pepper
- 2 cups shredded Italian cheese (Parmesan, Asiago and/or Romano – your choice)
- 3/4 cup olive oil

Instructions:

Harvest the branches of the basil. Pluck any flowers off the top if you've let them grow. Slide the green leaves off the branches. You don't have to be delicate about this. I just yank and grab leaves in bunches. If I get a few stray, narrow stems, that's fine. Make sure you remove the woody parts in your pesto.

Wash the leaves in a water bath or use your salad spinner. When I'm in major pesto manufacturing mode, I have a lot more than three cups of basil leaves. That's when I fill my sink with water and put them all in and slosh them around. Then I drain them on dishtowels while the nuts are roasting.

Speaking of roasting nuts: pour them on a cookie sheet or any other metal pan that's oven proof. Roast the nuts at 350 degrees for 10 to 12 minutes. Watch at the end. Pine nuts are rather delicate. They can brown some, but don't let them burn. Remove the nuts from the oven and let them cool down.

In your food processor, press in your three cups of basil leaves. Add the pine nuts, salt, garlic and cayenne (to taste). I like my pesto to have a little zip, but cayenne is optional. You can leave it out if you want to. Next, add your cheese. Turn your processor on to chop up the basil, etc. Stop the processor to scrape down the sides if you didn't get an even chop. Then add the oil through the top of the processor in a stream while it's running. It's like you are making salad dressing. When the whole smear is moving around the bottom, you're ready to package your pesto.

You can put your pesto in jars like you would if you were canning jams, but for me, that's too much in one container. A little pesto goes a long way. It doesn't do well sitting in your refrigerator for weeks or months after opening, so I use small packages. I use small, sandwich-sized plastic freezer bags (regular sandwich bags will do in a pinch). The zip-top kind work best. Put three heaping tablespoons of pesto in the bottom of each bag. Place the bag on the counter. Press the pesto so it stays toward the bottom of the bag. Then, with the pesto at the bottom, roll up the bag like a cigar, squeezing out the air as you go, and then just zip the end shut. Visualize the little cigar-shaped packages all in a row. Your pesto is ready to

freeze. I keep it in the freezer until the day I want to use it and then thaw in the fridge or the microwave. Voila! A batch of pesto in just a few minutes.

Enjoy!

Cheers,