

Pesto Recipe



Pesto was once a pretty big deal, going back a decade or two. Nora Ephron referred to it as “the quiche of the 80s” in her screenplay for “When Harry Met Sally.” Its popularity reached its pinnacle sometime during the 90s and was the go to ingredient for the folks we now refer to as hipsters. Its fall from grace notwithstanding, it’s still some pretty tasty stuff. Unfortunately, the most popular uses for it tend to be heavy on the carbs: over pasta, on all sorts of bread, and for the truly hip, as a pizza topping.

But don’t despair low carbers!

There really are some great low carb uses for it, which I’ll list at the end. But first, let’s find out how easy it is to prepare. I think you’ll be surprised. Probably the most difficult part of making your own pesto is obtaining fresh basil. But even this isn’t difficult at all.

The best way to get fresh basil is to grow your own. Basil is an extremely hardy plant and grows like a weed. It will even grow in low quality soil. Simply purchase a basil seedling from a garden supply store and plant it. You can even plant it in a pot on your deck or balcony. Plant it after the last threat of frost has passed in your area during the spring and remember to water it occasionally.

There are several varieties of basil, but the best kind for pesto, and Italian cooking in general, is sweet basil. There are also pungent varieties that are more appropriate for Asian dishes such as many of the Thai basil dishes. If you’re not the gardening type, then you can buy fresh basil in-season at your local farmer’s market or as cuttings year round at most grocery stores.

Ingredients:

- A big bunch of fresh basil (fill up a colander with cuttings)
- 1/4+ C Extra Virgin Olive Oil (EV00 in Rachel Ray speak)
- 1/2+ C Grated Parmesan Cheese
- 1-2 large cloves of minced garlic
- 1 Tbsp pine nuts (these are rather expensive – I leave them out)

Directions:

1. Pluck individual basil leaves from branches. Then pinch off the stems. You just want the leaves – not the crunchy bits.
2. Place the leaves into a food processor with a chopping blade. Fill with small batches of leaves at a time. Once chopped, the leaves will shrink down considerably.
3. Add a few tablespoons of EV00 to the food processor.
4. Add in a few tablespoons of Parmesan cheese, minced garlic, and the pine nuts if desired.
5. Replace food processor lid and pulse the mixture a few times until liquified.
6. Remove lid and stir mixture with a wooden spoon or plastic spatula. At this point, gauge how soupy you want your pesto. This will be determined by the amount of EV00.
7. Add in another batch of basil leaves and repeat steps 3-6, continuing until all the leaves have been chopped.
8. Make certain that all the leaves have been chopped. Add more Parmesan and/or EV00 depending on the consistency you're after. It takes a few times making pesto and sampling it to get the consistency that's most to your liking. The good news is it's impossible to mess it up!
9. Pesto will keep covered in the fridge for several days. Be aware that its surface will darken, but don't worry, it's still good. Simply give it a good stir to bring up the green color. You can also freeze extra pesto either

by spooning it into an ice cube tray or freezing larger batches in a plastic container. But hopefully you won't have any leftovers after trying out all the great low carb serving suggestions below!

Serving Suggestions:

- Place 2-3 Tbsps in an omelet. Also try adding a dollop of cream cheese along with it and any of the typical omelet fillings such as chopped onion, green pepper, and ham.
- Use as a salad dressing by mixing in fresh squeezed lemon juice or a dash of balsamic vinegar. Serve over salad greens or use in a Caprese salad.
- Use on top of Portobello mushrooms and top with mozzarella cheese and bake for a great pizza experience without all the carbs!
- Use wherever you'd use a marinade such as on chicken or fish. It's great on the grill!
- And of course, it's best over pasta, but you didn't hear that from me! **Tip:** if you'd like to try it over pasta, then I highly recommend a linguine made with Jerusalem artichoke flour.