

Pesto Sauce

Make authentic Italian pesto sauce with fresh basil, pine nuts, and Parmesan. This classic recipe creates bright, aromatic pesto perfect for pasta.

15 min

PREP

15 min

TOTAL

4

SERVINGS

Easy

DIFFICULTY

Pesto Sauce

Ingredients

- 1 sprig basil
- 2 tbsp pine nut
- 2 tbsp parmesan cheese
- 2 clove garlic
- 1 cup sunflower oil
- 1 tsp salt
- 0.5 tsp black pepper

Instructions

- 1 Prepare ingredients**

Remove basil leaves from 1 sprig and wash gently in cold water. Pat completely dry with paper towels.
- 2** Toast 2 tablespoons pine nuts in a dry skillet over medium-low heat for 2-3 minutes, stirring frequently, until fragrant and lightly golden. Transfer to a plate and cool completely.
- 3** Grate 1 cup Parmesan cheese using a fine grater or microplane until you have fluffy, fresh cheese shreds.
- 4 Make the pesto**

Add 2 cloves garlic and 1 teaspoon salt to food processor. Pulse 8-10 times until garlic is finely minced.
- 5** Add cooled pine nuts to processor. Pulse 6-8 times until nuts are roughly chopped but not powdered.
- 6** Add basil leaves in two batches, pulsing 10-12 times after each addition until leaves are finely chopped and no large pieces remain.
- 7** With processor running, slowly drizzle 2 tablespoons olive oil through feed tube until mixture forms a smooth paste that holds together.
- 8** Add grated Parmesan cheese and pulse 4-5 times just until combined. Taste and add remaining 1/2 teaspoon salt if needed.

Tips

Toast pine nuts in a dry skillet over medium-low heat for 2-3 minutes until fragrant and lightly golden—this intensifies their nutty flavor and prevents them from turning bitter during processing.

Remove basil stems completely and wash leaves gently in cold water, then dry thoroughly with paper towels or a salad spinner to prevent water from diluting the pesto's consistency.

Process garlic first with a pinch of salt to break it down completely, then add pine nuts, followed by basil leaves in batches to ensure even distribution and prevent clumping.

Add olive oil gradually while processing to create a smooth emulsion—too much oil at once can make the pesto separate or become overly thin.

Grate Parmesan cheese fresh rather than using pre-grated varieties, which contain anti-caking agents that can affect the pesto's texture and flavor.

Store homemade pesto with a thin layer of olive oil on top to prevent oxidation and color loss—this protective barrier keeps it bright green for days.

When freezing pesto, use ice cube trays to create portion-sized amounts that thaw quickly and can be added directly to hot pasta or other dishes.

If pesto seems too thick, thin it with a tablespoon of pasta cooking water when serving over noodles—the starchy water helps the sauce cling better to pasta.