

Pesto

Basic Basil Pesto:

- ½ Cup Toasted Pine Nuts
- 2 TBS Fresh Lemon Juice
- 1 small Garlic Clove
- ¼ tsp Sea Salt
- Freshly Ground Black Pepper
- 2 Cups Basil Leaves
- ¼ Cup Extra Virgin Olive Oil (EVOO)
- ¼ Cup freshly grated Parmesan or Pecorino cheese

- In a food processor, combine the pine nuts, lemon juice, garlic, salt and pepper and pulse until well chopped.
- Add the basil and pulse until combined.
- With the food processor running, drizzle in the olive oil and pulse until combined. Add the cheese if using and pulse to briefly combine.

Notes:

- Pine nuts are traditional (but expensive), feel free to use other nuts! I often use cashews (not the roasted/salted ones), walnuts, pumpkin seeds, whatever I've got on hand. I would recommend toasting whatever type of nut you use.
- Lemon juice is traditionally called for because it keeps the pesto from turning dark. I don't really love the taste of lemon juice in my pesto, so I leave it out and my pesto isn't as bright green.
- Sometimes I do a quick cook of my garlic before adding it.

Creating a pesto variation is all about experimenting with the **building blocks** of a classic pesto: **herbs, nuts, cheese, and oil**. Start by swapping out the traditional basil for other leafy greens or herbs like **arugula, cilantro, parsley, or kale** for new flavors. Nuts can also be changed—replace pine nuts with **walnuts, almonds, cashews, or pistachios** to add a different richness or texture. For cheese, instead of Parmesan, try **Pecorino, Asiago, or even a tangy goat cheese** to bring new depth. By mixing and matching these components, you can create endless unique variations while maintaining pesto's classic garlicky, savory character. Here are some ideas to get you thinking:

Cilantro Pesto: Replace basil with cilantro, maybe combine with lime juice for a zesty flavor.

Arugula Pesto: Use peppery arugula for a spicier, bold twist. (arugula, parmesan, walnuts)

Kale Pesto: Incorporate nutrient-rich kale, often with a milder, earthier taste. (kale, walnuts, garlic, lemon juice)

Sun-Dried Tomato Pesto (Pesto Rosso): Blend sun-dried tomatoes with herbs, resulting in a rich, tangy sauce. (sun-dried tomatoes, pine nuts, herbs)

Spinach Pesto: Use spinach as the base. (spinach, almonds, garlic, parmesan)

Mint Pesto: Use fresh mint leaves, perfect for pairing with lamb or lighter dishes. (mint, parsley, lemon zest)

Parsley Pesto: Use parsley, maybe pair with lemon zest for brightness.

Walnut Pesto: Swap pine nuts for walnuts, giving it a richer, nuttier flavor.

Carrot Top Pesto: Utilize carrot greens instead of basil, creating a unique, waste-free pesto.

Avocado Pesto: Add creamy avocado for a smooth and velvety texture, with a subtle flavor.