

Basil Pesto with Summer Squash

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Prep: 20 minutes / Cooking: 10 / TOTAL: 30 minutes]

[Serves 4 dinner sized portions]

- 2 cups packed basil [washed and picked off the stem]
- 2 cloves garlic
- 1/2 cup extra virgin olive oil
- 3 tablespoons butter [softened and cubed]
- 2 tablespoons pine nuts
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1/2 cup grated Parmesan cheese [finely grated]
- 2 tablespoons Romano cheese [finely grated]
- 1lb package of pasta [I used Bucatini]

Grilled Summer Squash

[Prep: 3 minutes / Cooking: 6 / TOTAL: 9 minutes]

- 1-2 yellow summer squash [washed and sliced 1/3 inch thick]
- 2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1 teaspoon black pepper or about 5 grinds in the mill

To start take out the butter so that it can soften and come to room temperature, it will get mixed into the pesto with the grated cheese at the end. If you are using long pasta, fill up a large pot with about 5 quarts of water - or until water is about 3 inches from the top. [Why so much water?](#) Salt generously - at least 1 tablespoon - cover and set heat to high. This amount of water will take about 10 minutes to boil.

Now onto the star of this meal, Basil. So how do we prep this noble green? Simple, just pick it off its stem and wash it. Some basil is dirtier or sandier than others depending on how it's been packaged or grown. An easy way to wash it is to put the leaves in a cold water bath for a few minutes and let any grit settle on the bottom. Pay careful attention to the next few steps, you won't want to miss them...pack the basil into a blender [or food processor] add the olive oil, garlic cloves, pine nuts and salt. Blend until incorporated - it should be a nice smooth texture but not a liquid - and...you're done. [If you are using a blender you may need to stop and use a spoon to push the ingredients down off the sides once or twice.] If you are really adventurous you can use a mortar and pestle.

The water should be boiling by now and ready for the pasta. I chose to use bucatini because it's fun, hearty and has a nice bite to it - it turns this dish into a meal. It looks like thick spaghetti but has a hole going down the center. In general I like to use long pasta when making pesto, but that's really just a personal preference. Bucatini should boil for about 9 minutes, until al dente.

Transfer the pesto to a medium sized bowl and add the softened cubed butter. With a fork mush the butter in until mostly mixed. Grate the cheese, Parmesan and Pecorino Romano, and incorporate into the pesto sauce in batches. The Pecorino is saltier than Parmesan and is a nice addition to the sauce. The pesto will come out ok without it.

Before straining out the pasta, save some of the water. Toss the bucatini in a large bowl with 1 tablespoon olive oil and mix in half of the pesto sauce with a little of the reserved water. This creates a nice base and all of the pasta should be coated in the sauce. The rest should be served on the table and your guests can add more as they please. I also leave out the block of Parmesan so everyone can top off their dishes with a fresh grate!

The last step to this meal was grilling up some summer squash and topping off the pasta with it. This took less than 5 minutes and could easily be done in the oven. However, this is not a necessity, I just had a yummy lone squash hanging out in the fridge. See [this recipe](#) on how to grill it!