

Summer 2012 Fun with Pesto...

Grilled Chicken with Spicy Pesto

For the Pesto:

1 cup chopped walnuts
2 cloves garlic, coarsely chopped
1 (2-inch long) red or green jalapeno pepper, stemmed and coarsely chopped
Cook's Note: For a milder pesto, remove the seeds from the jalapeno pepper.
2 cups (4 ounces) Asiago cheese, grated
2 teaspoons kosher salt
1 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
2 cups baby spinach
3 cups arugula
1/4 cup extra-virgin olive oil

For the Chicken:

4 boneless skinless chicken breasts
1 teaspoon salt
1/2 teaspoon pepper

For the pesto: In a food processor, combine the walnuts, garlic, jalapeno, cheese, salt and pepper. Process until the mixture is smooth. Add the spinach, arugula, and process until blended. With the machine running, gradually add the olive oil.

For the chicken: Prepare the barbecue for medium-high heat or preheat a grill pan over medium-high heat. Season the chicken with salt and pepper. Grill the chicken until just cooked through, about 5 minutes per side. Transfer the chicken to plates. Spoon the spicy pesto over the chicken and serve.

Orzo with Artichoke Pesto & Grilled Corn

For the orzo dish:

1 pound orzo pasta
1 tablespoon extra-virgin olive oil
2 ears corn, shucked and silks removed
2 cups (about 28) cherry tomatoes, halved
1 1/2 cups grated Parmesan cheese
Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper

For the Pesto:

12 ounces (about 3 cups) frozen artichoke hearts, thawed, 1 cup reserved
(FYI: jarred have vinegar and do not work)
1/2 cup walnut halves, toasted. Note: To toast the walnuts, arrange in a single layer on a baking sheet. Bake in a preheated 350 degrees F oven for 8 to 10 minutes until lightly toasted. Cool completely before using. FYI: I make a large batch and then freeze in ziplocks.
1/2 cup fresh flat-leaf parsley leaves
1/2 cup fresh oregano leaves

Zest of 1 large lemon
1/4 cup fresh lemon juice, from 1 large lemon
1 clove garlic, smashed
1/2 teaspoons kosher salt
1/2 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
3/4 cup extra-virgin olive oil

For the Orzo: Bring a large pot of salted water to a boil over high heat. Add the pasta and cook until tender but still firm to the bite, stirring occasionally, about 8 to 10 minutes. Drain and place in a large serving bowl.

Place a grill pan over medium-high heat or preheat a gas or charcoal grill. Using a pastry brush, brush the corn with oil. Grill, turning frequently, until the corn is tender, about 10 minutes. Allow the corn to cool slightly. Using a large knife, remove the kernels and add to the serving bowl.

For the pesto: In a food processor, combine the artichokes, walnuts, parsley, oregano, lemon zest, lemon juice, garlic, salt, pepper and oil. Blend, scraping down the sides of the bowl, as needed, until the mixture is thick and smooth.

Chop the remaining artichoke hearts into 3/4-inch pieces and add to the serving. Add the pesto, tomatoes, and cheese. Toss until all the ingredients are coated. Season with salt and pepper, to taste, and serve.

Recipe: Swordfish with Lemon-Basil Pesto

For the pesto:

2 packed cups fresh basil leaves
1/3 cup toasted pine nuts
2 tablespoons fresh lemon juice (from 1/2 a large lemon)
1 clove garlic, peeled and smashed
Zest of 1 large lemon
3/4 teaspoon kosher salt, plus extra for seasoning
1/4 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper, plus extra for seasoning
1/3 cup extra-virgin olive oil
1/3 cup (1 1/2 ounces) grated Parmesan cheese

For the swordfish:

4 (6-ounce) swordfish steaks
Extra-virgin olive oil
1 teaspoon salt
1/2 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
4 lemon wedges

For the Pesto: In a blender or food processor, pulse the basil, pine nuts, lemon juice, garlic, lemon zest, 1/2 teaspoon salt and 1/4 teaspoon pepper until finely chopped. With the machine running, gradually add the oil until the mixture is smooth and thick. Add the cheese and pulse until just incorporated. Season with salt and pepper, to taste. Set aside.

For the Swordfish: Place a grill pan over medium-high heat or preheat a gas or charcoal grill. Brush both sides of the swordfish fillets with olive oil and season with salt and pepper. Grill the swordfish about 3 to 4 minutes on each side for a 1-inch thick fillet. Transfer the grilled swordfish to serving plates, top with the lemon pesto and lemon wedge and serve.