

COOKING | MAGAZINE

# Recipes: Four dishes that rethink pesto and rev up pasta

A handful of ingredients and a food processor add up to quick, exciting pasta dishes.

By **Christopher Kimball** Globe Correspondent, Updated January 21, 2021, 11:02 a.m.



Pasta with parsley, capers, and hazelnut pesto. CONNIE MILLER/CONNIE MILLER OF CB CREATIVES



IN THE KITCHEN WITH  
CHRISTOPHER KIMBALL  
AND THE COOKS AT  
MILK STREET

Our new cookbook, *COOKish*, is a distillation of everything we do at Milk Street. Every recipe calls for six ingredients plus a few pantry staples and flavor-building techniques to get great meals on the table fast. It was a cooking lesson in Genoa that inspired us to rethink pesto for a variety of exciting pastas that come together in minutes, not hours, any night of the week. Each nutty sauce is made in two quick spins in a food processor. Try earthy sage, walnuts, and Parmesan on rigatoni; campanelle with aged Gouda, pistachios, and rosemary; parsley, capers, and hazelnuts on fettuccine; and fusilli with roasted peppers, Manchego, and almonds.

### **Pasta With Parsley, Capers, and Hazelnut Pesto**

*Makes 4 servings*

With salty, tangy pecorino Romano as the cheese, this pesto is full of bold ingredients, but the leaves from a full bunch of grassy, verdant parsley help keep the flavors in check. Be sure to use flat-leaf parsley, as it's more flavorful than curly. We liked this with long, skinny pasta shapes.

2<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> ounces pecorino Romano cheese (without rind), chopped into rough 1-inch pieces

1/3 cup roasted or raw hazelnuts

1/4 cup drained capers

1 medium garlic clove, smashed and peeled

Kosher salt and ground black pepper

1/3 cup extra virgin olive oil

Leaves from 1 bunch flat-leaf parsley, roughly chopped

1 pound fettuccine or linguine

In a food processor, pulse the pecorino to the texture of coarse sand; transfer to a bowl. Process the hazelnuts, capers, garlic, and ½ teaspoon pepper until finely chopped, scraping the bowl. Add the pecorino and half the oil, then process until smooth. Add the parsley and remaining oil; pulse until creamy.

Cook the pasta in a large pot of salted water until al dente. Reserve 1 cup water, then drain. Toss the pasta with the pesto, adding cooking water as needed to help the sauce cling. Season with salt and pepper.

Optional garnish: Red pepper flakes or lemon wedges or both.



Pasta with sage, walnut, and parmesan pesto. CONNIE MILLER/CONNIE MILLER OF CB CREATIVES

## **Pasta With Sage, Walnut, and Parmesan Pesto**

*Makes 4 servings*

The lessons we learned in Italy on how to make classic basil pesto also apply to nontraditional pestos such as this one. Grind the cheese instead of grating it. Roughly chop the herbs before processing. Add the ingredients to the processor in stages rather than dumping them in all at once. Use pasta-cooking water to marry the pesto and noodles. In this recipe, Parmesan and walnuts add rich, meaty flavor; sage brings woodsy, earthy notes; parsley brightens with its fresh flavor; and a small amount of ricotta ties everything together with its creaminess.

2 ounces Parmesan cheese (without rind), chopped into rough 1-inch pieces

1/3 cup roasted or raw walnuts

1/3 cup lightly packed fresh sage, roughly chopped

Kosher salt and ground black pepper

1/3 cup whole-milk ricotta cheese

1/3 cup extra virgin olive oil

Leaves from 1 bunch flat-leaf parsley, roughly chopped

1 pound rigatoni or paccheri pasta

In a food processor, pulse the Parmesan to the texture of coarse sand; transfer to a bowl. Process the walnuts, sage,  $\frac{3}{4}$  teaspoon salt, and  $\frac{1}{2}$  teaspoon pepper until finely chopped, scraping the bowl. Add the Parmesan, ricotta, and half the oil, then process until smooth. Add the parsley and remaining oil; pulse until creamy. Cook the pasta in a large pot of salted water until al dente. Reserve 1 cup water, then drain. Toss the pasta with the pesto, adding cooking water as needed to help the sauce cling. Season with salt and pepper.



Pasta with roasted pepper and manchego pesto. CONNIE MILLER/CONNIE MILLER OF CB CREATIVES

## **Pasta With Roasted Pepper and Manchego Pesto**

*Makes 4 servings*

The idea for this pesto came from Spanish romesco, a heady sauce that counts nuts, olive oil, smoked paprika, and dried ñora peppers among its ingredients. In keeping with the Spanish theme, we use manchego cheese, a semi-hard aged sheep's-milk cheese with grassy notes, a subtle piquancy, and a salty-savory finish. A generous dose of oregano adds bold herbal flavor and freshness.

2<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> ounces manchego cheese (without rind), chopped into rough 1-inch pieces

1/3 cup whole roasted or raw almonds

2 tablespoons fresh oregano

1½ teaspoons smoked paprika

Kosher salt and ground black pepper

1/3 cup extra virgin olive oil

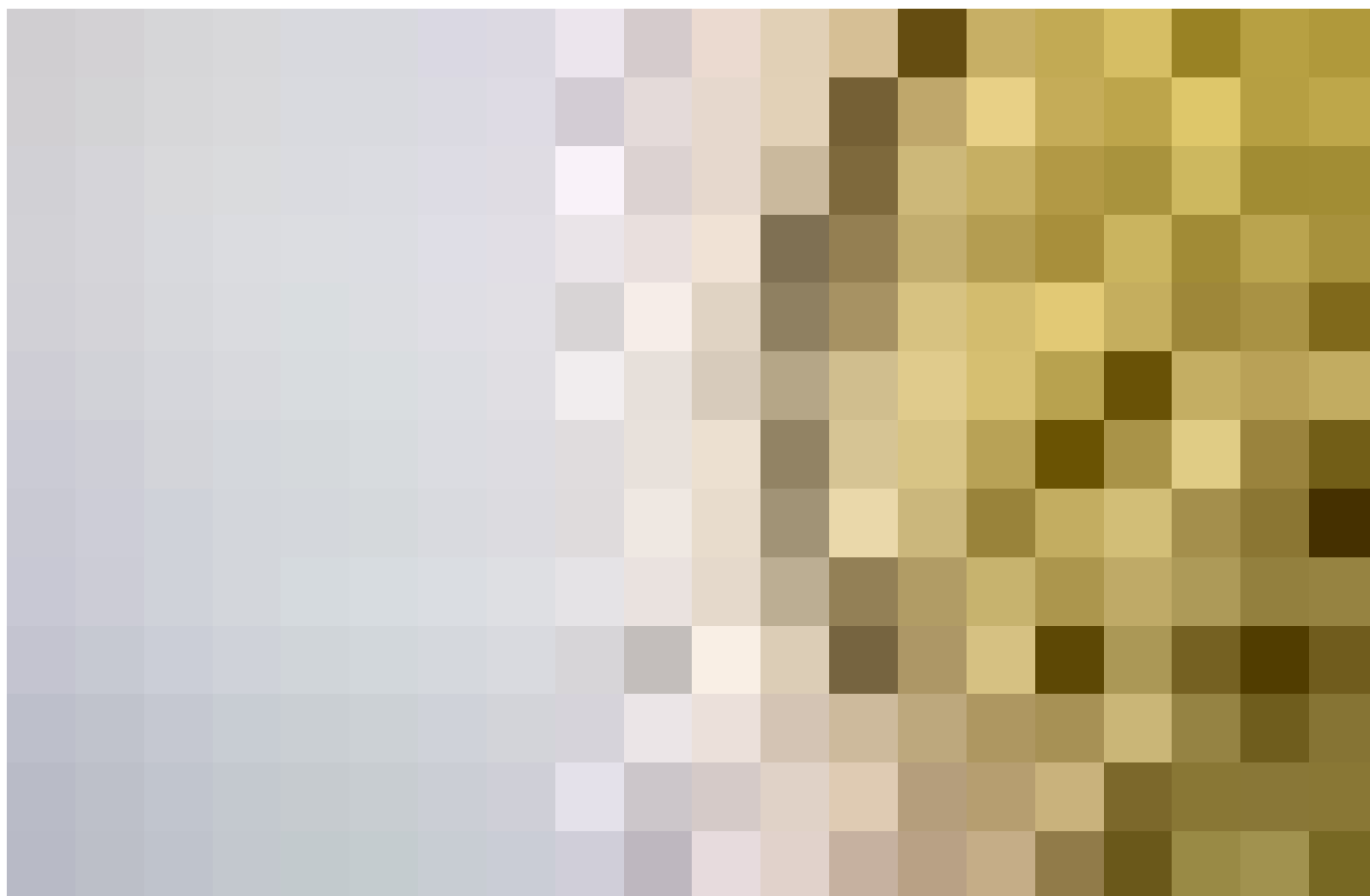
¾ cup drained roasted red peppers, patted dry

1 pound fusilli or gemelli pasta

In a food processor, pulse the manchego to the texture of coarse sand; transfer to a bowl. Process the almonds, oregano, paprika, ¾ teaspoon salt, and ½ teaspoon pepper until finely chopped, scraping the bowl. Add the manchego and half the oil, then process until smooth. Add the peppers and remaining oil; pulse until creamy.

Cook the pasta in a large pot of salted water until al dente. Reserve 1 cup water, then drain. Toss the pasta with the pesto, adding cooking water as needed to help the sauce cling. Season with salt and pepper.

Optional garnish: Chopped fresh flat-leaf parsley.



Pasta with pistachio and aged gouda pesto. CONNIE MILLER/CONNIE MILLER OF CB CREATIVES

## **Pasta With Pistachio and Aged Gouda Pesto**

*Makes 4 servings*

Aged Gouda is a different cheese than the mild, semi-firm variety. With a firm, dry texture similar to Parmesan and a nutty flavor that hints at caramel and chocolate, aged Gouda is an excellent choice for making pesto. In this recipe, we pair the cheese with pistachios, as well as with rosemary and tarragon for a rich, complexly flavored pasta dish.

2<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> ounces aged Gouda cheese (without rind), chopped into rough 1-inch pieces

1/3 cup roasted or raw pistachios

1 tablespoon chopped fresh rosemary



Kosher salt and ground black pepper

1/3 cup extra virgin olive oil

1 cup lightly packed fresh tarragon, roughly chopped

1 teaspoon honey

1 pound campanelle or strozzapreti pasta

In a food processor, pulse the Gouda to the texture of coarse sand; transfer to a bowl. Process the pistachios, rosemary, and  $\frac{3}{4}$  teaspoon salt until finely chopped, scraping the bowl. Add the Gouda and half the oil, then process until smooth. Add the tarragon, honey, and remaining oil; pulse until creamy.

Cook the pasta in a large pot of salted water until al dente. Reserve 1 cup water, then drain. Toss the pasta with the pesto, adding cooking water as needed to help the sauce cling. Season with salt and pepper.

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Christopher Kimball is the founder of Milk Street, home to a magazine, school, and radio and television shows. Globe readers get 12 weeks of complete digital access, plus two issues of Milk Street print magazine, for just \$1. Go to [177milkstreet.com/globe](https://177milkstreet.com/globe). Send comments to [magazine@globe.com](mailto:magazine@globe.com).

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