

MACHEESMO

- MEALS -

SPRING PESTO

Pesto is such a fantastic flavor boost to dishes. You can take a normal, blah pasta dish, stir in a few spoonfuls of pesto, and it becomes something magical.

This time of year, you should be able to find nice, large bundles of basil for fairly cheap. The basil will be fresh and smell amazing.

Be sure to check out the instructions on my basic pesto recipe for storage for later!

Helpful Equipment:

- Food Processor
- Baking Sheet



You can click on these to zap you to Amazon and see my recommendation for each.

MEAL 1

- Pesto Shrimp Pasta Toss

MEAL 2

- Watercress Pesto with Salmon

MEAL 3

- Pesto Brie Grilled Cheese
- Salad

QUINOA!

- Pesto Quinoa Lunch Salad

#macheesmomeals: If you make anything in the meal plan, I would love it if you snapped a quick photo and shared it on Instagram or Twitter with the hashtag #macheesmomeals ! Thanks!



PESTO | My Basic Recipe and Storage

Pesto is one of those things that you can typically find in jars at the store, but nothing really beats the fresh stuff. It can be expensive to find enough basil to make a good batch of pesto during certain times of the year, but this time of the year you should be able to find big bushels of the stuff.

Basic Pesto Recipe

Yield: 1 cup | Time: 10 min

Ingredients:

3 Cups basil, washed and dried.
1/4 Cup olive oil (might need a bit more or less)
1 garlic clove, crushed
1/8 Cup pine nuts, toasted
1/3 cup Parmesan cheese
Salt and pepper

Directions:

- 1) Place all ingredients in food processor and let it spin for a few seconds until all mixed up (when using the mini processor, you may need to do a few batches).
- 2) Place pesto into ice cube trays (about 2 Tablespoons per cube).
- 3) Let these freeze solid overnight.
- 4) Pop the pesto cubes out and store them in a freezer bag. If you have ice cube trays to spare you can keep your pesto in the tray I guess.
- 5) You can toss them into any warm dish and once they have melted down, you'll have a very tasty pesto dinner!

You can use this pesto for most the recipes in this meal plan. You can also use store-bought pesto in a pinch though.





MEAL 1 | Pesto and Shrimp Pasta Toss

Sturdy seafoods like shrimp (and salmon in meal two) are fantastic pairings for pesto. They hold up to the herbs nicely and make for a tasty quick dinner.

Shrimp Pasta Toss

Yield: Serves 4 | Time: 30 min

Ingredients:

1 pound shrimp (20-22/lb)
2 tablespoons olive oil
1/2 cup pesto
1/2 cup pasta water
8-10 ounces thin spaghetti
1/4 cup pine nuts, garnish
Parmesan cheese, garnish
Salt and pepper

Directions:

- 1) If you didn't buy them cleaned, clean the shrimp by peeling off the top part of the shells (leaving the tails). Run a paring knife down the back of each shrimp and rinse out the shrimp vein with cold water.
- 2) Cook pasta according to directions in salted water. Reserve a cup of cooking water although you might only need 1/2 cup.
- 3) In a large skillet over medium-high heat, add a drizzle of olive oil. Add shrimp in a single layer and sear well on both sides until shrimp are pink, about 3-4 minutes. Season shrimp with a pinch of salt.
- 4) Add pesto to the skillet along with pasta water and stir to combine. If sauce is really thick, add more water to thin it out.
- 5) Toss in cooked pasta and toss to combine.
- 6) Serve pasta and try to divide shrimp evenly between each plate. Garnish each plate with pine nuts and parmesan cheese.

Optional: For a richer pasta, stir in 1/2 cup of cream at the end of cooking.



Shrimp Alternatives

If you aren't a shrimp fan, this dish is pretty easy to substitute. You can cube 1-1 1/2 pounds chicken and brown that in the olive oil. Then add pesto and continue with the recipe. If you use chicken, I would use normal thickness spaghetti... not the thin stuff.

For a vegetarian alternative, I think mushrooms and pesto go really well together. Slice and saute about a pound of cremini mushrooms. Then stir in pesto and pasta water. For that version, I recommend adding about 1/2 cup of cream near the end to bring the flavors together.



MEAL 2 | Pesto with Roasted Salmon

You can use the standard basil pesto for this dish, but I really like this watercress twist on the classic. It's a bit lighter overall, but has a nice spice to it from the watercress. If you have leftover pesto, you can do the same thing by freezing it in ice cube trays!

Watercress Pesto

Yield: Serves 4 | Time: 45 min

Ingredients:

1/2 cup walnuts, toasted
1/2 cup sunflower seeds, toasted
1 bunch watercress (about 2 cups)
1 cup grated Parmesan cheese
3/4 cup olive oil
1 lemon, juice only
2 cloves garlic
Salt and pepper
Red quinoa or brown rice, for serving

Directions:

- 1) To start pesto, add nuts to a dry skillet over medium-low heat and toast until fragrant, about 4-5 minutes, stirring occasionally.
- 2) Add nuts to a food processor and pulse a few times until roughly ground.
- 3) Add other pesto ingredients to the food processor and process until an even consistency. Season with salt and pepper.

Serve pesto over quinoa or rice with pan-seared salmon.

Pan-Seared Salmon

Yield: Serves 4 | Time: 30 min

Ingredients:

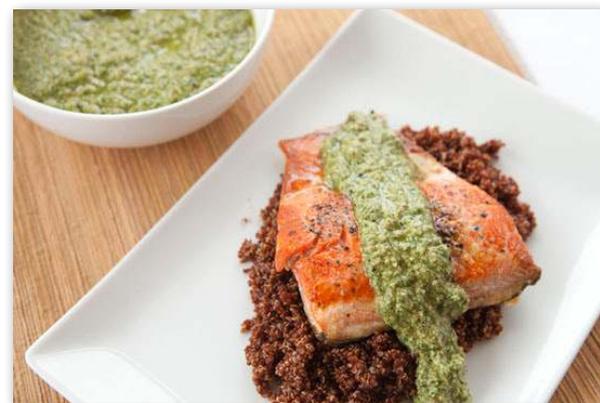
4 5-6 ounce filets salmon
Olive oil
Salt and pepper

Directions:

- 1) Preheat oven to 350 degrees F. Drizzle salmon with olive oil and season with salt and pepper. Heat an oven-safe skillet over medium-high heat.
- 2) Once hot, add salmon, skin-side up and sear the salmon for 3 minutes.
- 3) Flip salmon and transfer to a 350 degree F. oven. Cook for 8 minutes until the salmon is just cooked through. You might need an extra minute or two if you're cooking the salmon as one whole filet.
- 4) Serve salmon over red quinoa or brown rice with a good amount of the watercress pesto.

Vegetarian Version

If you want to skip the salmon here, sear some tofu in a pan with a drizzle of oil. Serve the tofu over the red quinoa with the pesto on top.





MEAL 3 | Sandwich and Salad

This isn't just any old sandwich... it's one of my top three grilled cheeses of all time. I make a lot of grilled cheeses so that definitely means something! It's simple, but totally delicious.

Brie Pesto Grilled Cheese

Yield: 4 sandwiches | **Time:** 20 min.

Ingredients:

1/2 cup pesto
8 sturdy slices bread
12 ounces brie, rind removed
2 tablespoons unsalted butter

Directions:

- 1) Lightly butter your pieces of bread and cut the rind off of the brie cheese. Cut it into slices.
- 3) Slather each bread piece with pesto on the non-buttered side.
- 4) Add two slices of bread, butter side down to a pan over medium heat. Top each piece with brie and add the second piece of bread, butter side up.
- 5) Cook sandwich for about 3-4 minutes per side until browned lightly and the cheese is melted.

Serve it up while hot!

Spinach Salad

Yield: Serves 4 | **Time:** 15 min

Ingredients:

5 ounces baby spinach
1/2 small red onion, slivered
2 cups red seedless grapes, halved
4 ounces blue cheese, crumbled
2 cups croutons
Olive oil and balsamic vinegar
Salt and pepper

Directions:

- 1) Meanwhile, divide spinach between plates and top with slivered onions, grapes, blue cheese, and croutons.
- 2) Drizzle salads with olive oil and balsamic vinegar and season them with a pinch of coarse salt and ground pepper.





Quinoa Lunch | Pesto Quinoa Salad

Lunch can be tricky to keep interesting. This salad has lots of fresh flavors though and is probably a change-up for you. Make a batch of it on Sunday and try it out for lunch for a few days during the week!

Pesto Quinoa Salad

Yield: Serves 6 | **Time:** 1 hour

Ingredients:

8 ounces quinoa, cooked
1 small red onion, diced
1 red pepper, diced
1 orange or green pepper, diced
1 cucumber, seeded,
peeled and diced
1 Cup feta cheese, crumbled
1 can chickpeas, drained
and rinsed
1 large beet, roasted and
diced (opt.)
1/2 cup pesto
2 tablespoons olive oil
Salt and pepper

Directions:

- 1) Cook quinoa according to package and set aside.
- 2) While quinoa cooks, chop all your veggies and roast your beet (350 for about an hour) if you're using beets.
- 3) Combine veggies with quinoa. Crumble in feta. Toss with pesto and olive oil and season with salt and pepper.
- 4) The salad is best if you let it chill before serving.





SHOPPING LIST

This is a full list of all the ingredients used in every meal in this week's plan. I recommend reviewing it for stuff you probably already have on hand before rushing out to the store and buying everything! If items on the list don't have amounts, it is most likely because the recipe uses a very small amount of that ingredient or it is used as a garnish.

Note: Included in the list is ingredients for one batch of normal pesto and one batch of watercress pesto.

Fresh Produce

- Baby spinach (5 oz.)
- Basil (3 cups)
- Beet, large (1)
- Cucumber (1)
- Garlic (3 cloves)
- Grapes, red seedless (2 cups)
- Lemon (1)
- Orange pepper (1)
- SUB: green pepper
- Red onion (1 1/2)
- Red pepper (1)
- Watercress (2 cups)

Meat, Poultry, Seafood

- Salmon (4 5-6 oz. filets)
- Shrimp, large raw (1 lb.)

Dairy

- Blue cheese (4 oz.)
- Brie cheese (12 oz.)
- Butter, unsalted (2 Tbsp.)
- Feta cheese (4 oz.)
- Parmesan cheese (4-5 oz.)

Spices and Pantry Items

- Balsamic vinegar (drizzle)
- Black pepper
- Chickpeas (1 15-oz. can)
- Croutons (2 cups)
- Kosher salt
- Olive oil (1 1/4 cups)
- Pine nuts (1/2 cup)
- Quinoa (8 oz.)
- Red quinoa (2 cups)
- SUB: Brown rice
- Sandwich bread (8 pieces)
- Sunflower seeds (1/2 cup)
- Thin spaghetti (10 oz.)
- Walnuts (1/2 cup)