



Cilantro pesto with grilled Italian sausage over linguine, topped with feta cheese and pear tomatoes.

Cooking with Susanna's: Pestos

Susanne Stehr is the charming proprietor of Susanna's restaurant in Rosarito Beach

Pesto is a centuries-old sauce originating, most say, in the region of Liguria, Italy, at the time of the Roman Empire. The name 'pesto' derives from its method of preparation — "prestatura," or the grinding of leaves and other ingredients.

A traditional marble mortar and wooden pestle is recommended (although a marble pestle will work, too), gently crushing the ingredients for optimal flavor of the oils contained in the leaves.

For modern day speed, a blender can be used with an acceptable taste difference and, as long as it is in a sealed container and refrigerated, it can also be stored for 4 to 5 days.

A classic pesto consists of basil, garlic, parmesan cheese, pine nuts and olive oil, but there are so many delicious variations that can be had by substituting out the basil for other herbs or vegetables. I even like the difference walnuts make when substituted for the pine nuts in a tarragon pesto on a Thanksgiving turkey.

In keeping with the food style of Baja, cilantro pesto and jalapeno pesto make a fabulous and flavorful addition to grilled chicken or shrimp; prepared as tacos, burritos or served alone; as a topping on nachos, or even as a dip with a vegetable crudite.

Your serving options are endless, so whatever you do, don't pass up the pesto!

Cilantro Pesto

2 cups cilantro (stem & all)
4 garlic cloves
½ cup fresh parmesan, grated
3 tablespoons roasted pine nuts
1 cup vegetable or canola oil
salt & pepper to taste
Blend until all ingredients are liquid.

Jalapeno Pesto

½ cup cilantro
6 jalapenos (take the seeds out of 4 jalapenos for moderate temperature)
4 garlic cloves
½ cup fresh parmesan, grated
3 tablespoons roasted pine nuts
1 cup vegetable oil
salt and pepper to taste
Blend until all ingredients are liquid.