

Walnut-Parsley Pistou

MAKES ABOUT 1 CUP

Pistou is the French equivalent of pesto—meet my version. I've loved a lot of pestos in my time, and I never tire of playing around with different herb-nut-cheese combinations. This is one of my favorites because the pairing of fresh, bright parsley and nutty, savory walnuts works so well. It's important to buy your nuts from a farmers' market or reputable source that has a high product turnover. The difference in taste between stale walnuts (many of which are rancid) and fresh cannot be overstated. You'll know that the second you bite into a sweet, fresh one.

This *pistou* is delicious on grilled chicken or a fillet of white fish like halibut, or as a garnish atop the asparagus velouté on page 85. It will hold for up to 3 days in the refrigerator and also freezes well (bring it to room temperature before using). Before you begin, read my final note about chopping herbs in Parsley Sauce Verte (page 5).

Preheat the oven to 325°F. Spread the walnuts on a small baking sheet and toast for 3 to 5 minutes, until lightly fragrant but not overly toasted. Set aside until cool to the touch, about 10 minutes.

Place the oil in a small bowl about 4 inches in diameter and add the parsley immediately upon chopping to prevent browning. Fresh herbs start to discolor as soon as they're chopped; submerging them in oil helps keep their color and protects their flavor. Splash in more oil if needed to keep the parsley covered.

In a food processor, pulse the walnuts 3 or 4 times to break them into small pieces. Add the cheese and garlic and pulse another 5 to 10 times to incorporate and evenly disperse the garlic.

Combine the nut mixture and the parsley with its oil in a bowl and stir to mix. Adjust the consistency with more oil if necessary and then taste and adjust the seasoning.

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup walnut halves
 $\frac{1}{2}$ cup extra-virgin olive oil
 $\frac{1}{2}$ cup finely chopped flat-leaf parsley
 $\frac{1}{4}$ cup ground Parmigiano-Reggiano cheese (see page 376)
 1 teaspoon garlic paste (page 344)
 $\frac{1}{8}$ teaspoon salt

Variation

Basil Pistou: Blanch and shock (see page 375) 2 cups of tightly packed basil, cooking for 15 to 20 seconds, until tender. When cool, completely squeeze out the water and roughly chop the basil; you should have about $\frac{1}{2}$ cup. Follow the recipe to toast $\frac{1}{4}$ cup pine nuts until lightly toasted and fragrant, 3 to 5 minutes; set aside to cool. Place the basil in a food processor and turn on the machine, slowly add $\frac{1}{2}$ cup extra-virgin olive oil until evenly combined, 5 to 10 seconds. Transfer the basil-oil mixture to a bowl. In the same food processor (no need to wash), pulse the pine nuts 3 or 4 times to break them into small pieces. Add $\frac{1}{4}$ cup ground Parmigiano-Reggiano cheese and $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon garlic paste and pulse another 5 to 10 times to incorporate and evenly disperse the garlic. Follow the recipe to combine the nut and basil-oil mixture, adjusting the consistency with more oil and adjusting the seasoning with $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon salt as necessary.

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