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## Red Pepper + Eggplant Pasta with Red Pesto

### Ingredients:

1½ cups whole wheat fusilli  
coconut/olive oil  
1 large eggplant  
2 portions of Red Pepper Pesto (*see below*)  
3 jarred roasted red peppers  
lemon juice (optional)  
¼ cup toasted pine nuts  
grated Parmesan/crumbled feta, to garnish  
2 cups arugula

Boil a large pot of salted water. Once boiling, add the pasta and cook according to package directions until al dente. Drain and toss with a little oil to prevent sticking.

While the pasta is cooking, remove the stalk from the eggplant then cut into ½-inch chunks. Place in a pan, cover with water and add a pinch of salt. Bring to a boil and cook for 2 minutes until the eggplant is just starting to soften. Drain and rinse under cold water.

Tip the eggplant into a frying pan and add a little oil. Fry over high heat for 4 minutes until cooked through and slightly crisp. Keep stirring. Remove from the heat and mix through the pasta with the pesto.

Finely slice the red peppers and add to the pan. Season and add a little extra oil or some lemon juice if needed.

To pack: Spoon the pasta salad into the lunchboxes. Scatter the pine nuts and cheese on the salad and top with the arugula.

### Try This:

- Fry 6 oz. lean ground beef until well browned. Stir through the pasta salad before packing in the lunchboxes.
- Bake 2 cod fillets, each topped with a teaspoon of Red Pepper Pesto, in a 400°F oven for 12–15 minutes. Place the cooled fish on the pasta salad and finish with the nuts, cheese and arugula.
- Turn this into a hot gratin to eat at home: sprinkle equal amounts of grated Parmesan and breadcrumbs on top of the pasta salad in a baking dish and bake in a 400°F oven for 10–15 minutes.



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### **Red pepper pesto**

Make the Green Pesto *below* but add 1 jarred roasted red pepper and 5 sun-dried tomatoes and omit the water and oil when blitzing.

Makes 4 Lunchbox portions

Pestos are perfect for using up leftover herbs, greens and nuts. Pine nuts are traditional but unsalted cashews will create a similar, creamy pesto.

#### **Ingredients:**

1 garlic clove (optional)  
1–2 oz. Parmesan  
40 fresh basil leaves  
½ cup pine nuts (or other nuts)  
3 tablespoons olive oil  
juice of 1–2 lemons

#### **Try this:**

- You can omit the Parmesan and use a splash of natural yogurt/almond milk for creaminess instead.
- Toasting the nuts will give a deeper color and flavor.
- Swap the basil for other soft herbs such as parsley/cilantro or use a mixture.
- Add a handful of arugula for pepperiness or spinach for a rich green flavor.
- Throw in a handful of seeds.
- Experiment with different cheeses—pecorino and Manchego both work well.
- Serve leftover pesto on toast topped with an egg at breakfast, or with crackers or raw slices of zucchini as a snack/starter.

Peel the garlic (if using). Turn on a food processor and drop the garlic on to the turning blades. Grate the Parmesan and add to the processor bowl along with the basil, pine nuts, oil and 3 tablespoons water. Blitz everything together for 2 minutes until broken down.

Add lemon juice to taste plus extra water, if needed, to reach your desired texture and flavor. The pesto should not be completely smooth but should run off the spoon like a thick sauce rather than a dip. Season well.

This can be kept in the fridge in an airtight container, covered with a thin layer of olive oil, for up to a week. It also freezes well for 3 months—place in ice-cube trays for individual portions and thaw before using.



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