

Pasta with grilled Shrimp

& Lemon-Artichoke-Pistachio Pesto

I made my first Lemon-Artichoke Pesto several years ago and was not happy with the results. I shelved it, thinking I would come back and work on the recipe another day. Then one day I was grilling some shrimp for an appetizer and it just sounded like the perfect thing to baste the shrimp with. It was! And this time it came out spectacular on the first try. I guess I've learned a few things over the years.

This time around I am doing this with pasta and shrimp. But it also makes a fabulous appetizer by simply brushing grilled shrimp skewers with the sauce after grilling.

You will have leftover pesto when you are done. It freezes well. You might even consider making a double batch and freeze what you don't use in small containers for quick and easy dinners.

5-6 servings

Lemon-Artichoke-Pistachio Pesto:

6 ounces frozen artichoke hearts -
thawed

Juice of one medium lemon
(about 2 ounces)

1/4 cup shelled pistachio nuts

1-2 cloves fresh garlic (optional)

1/2 teaspoon salt (preferably sea salt)

3/4 cup finely grated Parmigiano-
Reggiano or Grana Padana cheese

1-2 tablespoons fresh French Tarragon-
stems removed (adjusted to taste)

1 tablespoon fresh thyme
(or lemon thyme) - stems removed

5-6 ounces extra virgin olive oil

Other Ingredients:

12 ounces shrimp - fresh or frozen,
peeled and deveined

1 pound pasta of your choice

Italian Parsley (or French Tarragon) -
chopped (for garnish)

Prepare Lemon-Artichoke-Pistachio Pesto:

1. Place all ingredients except for the olive oil in a food processor. Start the processor and gradually begin to add the oil. Process until semi-smooth, stopping the processor once or twice to scrape down the bowl. Taste and adjust salt and tarragon to your liking.
2. Transfer the pesto to a bowl. If freezing, transfer to small containers and top with a thin layer of oil. It can also be refrigerated for 3-4 days. Place in a food storage container and cover with a thin layer of oil.

To prepare the shrimp and pasta:

1. Heat 4 quarts of water and add a tablespoon of salt when it begins to boil.
2. Heat gas or charcoal barbecue to medium heat. Brush or toss the shrimp with a small amount of olive oil. If you have a grilling pan for your barbecue you can grill the shrimp on that. If not, you can grill on top of foil.
3. Place pasta in water and stir. While pasta is cooking, grill the shrimp (it should only take 2-3 minutes per side).
4. Cook pasta until al dente. Reserve 1/4 cup of pasta water before draining.
5. Return drained pasta to pasta pot. Add back the reserved 1/4 cup of pasta water and enough of the pesto to coat well (about a cup to a cup and a quarter).
6. Platter pasta. Top with shrimp and garnish with chopped herbs. Buon appetito!



Frankie's Tips:

- ◆ You might wonder why I am using frozen artichoke hearts instead of canned. The first time I made it I used canned. I was much happier with the texture and flavor of the pesto when I made it with frozen. I don't know if all stores carry frozen. They do have them at Trader Joe's.
- ◆ I timed this recipe so that you grill the shrimp while the pasta is cooking, in order that everything will come together hot. Shrimp cooks quickly so if you time it right you should not have a problem. But if you feel more comfortable, you can grill them in advance (while your water is heating would work well also), and then cover with foil, or re-warm before serving.
- ◆ The pesto can easily be made a day or two ahead. It also freezes well so you can make it anytime and freeze in small containers. You will have a little left from this recipe which would be just perfect for a quick pasta for two some other evening.
- ◆ I loved the pistachios in this recipe, but other nuts such as walnuts or pine nuts would work fine.