

Pesto with Ricotta Salata

“You have to make this more often!” My husband was effusive about how much he enjoyed this adjustment to my standard pesto sauce. I didn’t have much basil in the garden. I was too lazy to get out the food processor and then wash it. There was no Romano cheese in the fridge. I improvised, and you can, too. This recipe benefits from being hand pounded with a traditional mortar and pestle to achieve a rougher texture and more flavor than you would get with a food processor. Pour a dry, white Cortese di Gavi that won’t be overpowered by the fresh basil. *Salute!*



Ingredient list for 2 servings

8 garlic cloves - crushed
¼ cup pignoli nuts
⅔ cup fresh basil leaves - tightly packed
2 tablespoons ricotta salata - crumbled
1 - 2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
⅓ - ½ pound pasta - cooked al dente



- Crush garlic cloves with the flat side of a knife. This makes it easier to remove the skins. Pound garlic to a paste in the mortar.
- Add pignoli nuts and pound them to a paste in the mortar with the garlic.
- Gather a small bunch of basil leaves at a time and cut them into ribbons. Pound them in the mortar to combine with the garlic and nuts. Repeat with remaining basil.
- Add ricotta salata to the mortar a little at a time with a drizzle of olive oil after each addition to help combine all the ingredients.
- Serve immediately over cooked pasta.

Note: Ricotta salata is a firm, white, lightly-salted Italian cheese that can be sliced, grated or crumbled. It’s a great substitute for feta on a salad.