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FOOD ~ WINE ~ TRAVEL



Tagliatelle with Pesto

How often do you buy a bunch of basil, use a dozen leaves or so in a sauce or salad then wonder what to do with the rest? The answer's easy, pesto, the famous bright green sauce of Liguria; though if you're buying basil specifically to make pesto, get a pot of living basil if you can as the smaller leaves are even better. Pesto means 'to pound' as this sauce is traditionally made using a mortar and pestle, but I find a blender works well if you blend it as briefly as possible - too long and the heat generated changes the flavour. Pesto should never be heated, just tossed through freshly cooked pasta off the heat. Whip up a batch of pesto to preserve the flavour of summer for the cooler months. It keeps for ages in an airtight container in the fridge covered with a layer of oil or with a piece of plastic pressed onto the surface to stop it oxidising, and it's great stirred into soups or drizzled over tomatoes for a simple salad. I like the herbal notes of sauvignon blanc with pesto, especially ones from the Adelaide Hills like d'Arenberg's The Broken Fishplate.

Serves 4 as a starter

INGREDIENTS

- ¼ cup pine nuts
- ⅓ cup freshly grated Parmigiano Reggiano, plus extra for serving
- ⅓ cup freshly grated young pecorino
- 1 clove garlic, crushed
- 1 teaspoon salt flakes
- 2 cups basil leaves*
- ¾ cup extra virgin olive oil
- 250g dried egg tagliatelle



METHOD

1. Process pine nuts, Parmigiano, pecorino, garlic and salt in a blender or food processor.
2. Add basil and oil and pulse briefly, just until the oil is emulsified; it shouldn't be completely smooth.
3. Cover with a piece of plastic film pressed onto the surface and set aside, or refrigerate if making it ahead of time.
4. Cook pasta according to packet directions then drain, reserving ½ cup of the cooking water.
5. Return pasta to the hot saucepan, add half the pesto and a tablespoon or 2 of the cooking water, tossing well to make it creamy.
6. Serve into flat bowls and top with extra parmesan.