

VINEGARS, OIL AND PESTO

HERE ARE SOME HELPFUL TIPS FROM *K*ETTLEBY HERB FARMS

PESTO

Originating in Genoa Italy, the word “pesto” is derived from the word “pestle”, various fresh herbs were mashed together with garlic, nuts, fresh cheese and olive oil using a mortar and pestle. Fortunately today we can use a food processor or blender to achieve the same results.

Pesto is often thought of as being exclusively made from basil, but pestos can be made from a variety of different herbs such as- coriander, rosemary, mint, oregano, tarragon, thyme or savory. Some of the cheeses that could be used include-sardo, romano, pecorino or parmesan and suggested nuts are pine nuts, walnuts, pistachio nuts or try sunflower seeds. These are a number of different unrefined culinary oils that can be used, unsaturated oils such as olive, sunflower, safflower and almond are recommended.

Pesto is quite easy to make, basically you add all the ingredients except the cheese to a blender/food processor and pulverize, then add the fresh cheese and blend again briefly. To use cook the pasta of your choice to “al dente”, drain well saving about 1/4 cup of the hot water, then stir the pasta into the pesto adding 4-5 tablespoons of the hot water if desired and serve immediately. Pesto can also be stored in the refrigerator for up to 3 weeks or in the freezer for up to 6 months. Freezing pesto in ice cube trays then storing in freezer bags/containers in the freezer is a handy way to store pesto and each cube equals about one tablespoon which is great for flavouring soups, stews, meats and vegetables all year long.

HERBAL OILS

Herb flavoured oils are an excellent method of preserving the flavour, aroma and benefits of fresh herbs to enjoy all year long. They are made by combining a culinary oil with one or more finely chopped herbs, usually in a ratio of 1/2 cup chopped herbs to 2 cups oil, the mixture is then allowed to steep at room temperature and shaken daily until the desired flavour is reached. You can also gently heat the mixture at a low temperature then allow to cool, this will speed up the extraction process but must be done with caution since oils have a very low boiling point. When the desired flavour is reached the herbs are filtered out using cheesecloth or other suitable filtering material, then bottled, capped/corked and labeled.

Due to the potential danger of storing herbs in oil we do not recommend placing herbs in the finished bottle. Recent incidences of severe food poisoning resulting from ingesting garlic that had been stored in olive oil has led to the following recommendations: -an acidifying agent such as vinegar be used in the production of veg./herb flavoured oils and that any oil containing vegetables/herbs be refrigerated to slow bacterial growth and should be discarded after 3 weeks, however if the vegetables/herbs are removed immediately after flavouring, oils can be stored at room temp.

(Oregon State University Extension Service)

Olive oil is a good base oil to use with very strong flavoured herbs such as garlic or pepper, but since it has quite a strong flavour we recommended that with most other herbs use sunflower or safflower oils or other good quality oil with little or no flavour of their own. Other oils that can be used include-canola, peanut (particularly for a stir fry oil due to its high smoking point), and other oils made from walnuts, almonds or hazelnuts. Avoid corn oils and other vegetable oils. The list of herbs to use is up to one's imagination and taste but some to try include-garlic, basil, tarragon, rosemary, salad burnet, thyme, lemon thyme, dill, parsley, etc. Etc.....

Some of the uses for flavoured oils include-salad dressings, marinades, pasta toppings, sauces, soups, stirfry and brushing on bread. For best flavour allow oils to come to room temperature before using.

HERBAL VINEGARS

Herb vinegars are probably the best known herbal products. Using fresh herbs and good quality vinegars the possibilities are limitless, they can be used for food, skin care, and cleaning. For most culinary purposes use good quality red wine, white wine or rice wine vinegars whose acidity is not less than 5 percent. The most common mistake people make when making herbal vinegars is not using enough herbs...for every 2 cups of vinegar use 1 cup of finely chopped herb (leaves/flowers), if using seeds use 2 tablespoons crushed, for roots use 1/4 cup grated. To make pour the vinegar at room temperature (for seeds heat the vinegar to boiling point) over the herbs in a non-reactive container such as glass or enamel, cap tightly (do not use metal caps), and allow to steep in dark place for 2 to 3 weeks or until desired flavour is reached, shake daily. Then strain through cheesecloth, coffee or other suitable filter, bottle, cap/cork and label. If desired fresh herbs may be added to the bottles, due to the acidity of vinegar it acts as a natural preservative.

Vinegars can be stored for up to 2 years, once opened should be used within 3 months.

Some of the culinary uses include-salad dressings, marinades, sauces, soups, stews, casseroles.

CULINARY HERB OILS, VINEGARS AND PESTOS

BASIL PESTO

2 large cloves garlic
 2 cups fresh basil
 1/2 cup pine nuts
 3/4 cup olive oil
 3/4 cup freshly grated parmesan cheese

Chop garlic in food processor/blender, add basil, nuts, and olive oil process for 30-45 seconds, with motor running add cheese and blend until well mixed. Spoon mixture into sterilized jars and refrigerate or freeze. Makes 1 cup(250ml)

BASIL OIL (BASIC RECIPE CAN SUBSTITUTE ANY HERB OR A COMBINATION OF HERBS)

1/2 cup fresh basil, chopped
 2 cups sunflower/safflower oil
 2 T. White wine vinegar

Pour oil over chopped herbs in a non-reactive container add vinegar, cap securely and stand in a warm place for two to three weeks, shake daily. When desired flavour is reached, strain and bottle in sterilized bottles, cap, label and date. Store in a cool dark place. Makes 2 cups. (500ml)

MEDITERRANEAN PESTO

"Recipes from RIVERSONG" by Pat Crocker

2 large cloves garlic
 2 T. Fresh rosemary leaves
 1 T. Fresh thyme leaves
 1 T. Fresh savory leaves
 1 T. Fresh tarragon leaves
 1 cup fresh oregano leaves
 1/2 cup fresh parsley leaves
 1/2 cup fresh grated parmesan cheese
 1/2 cup pistachio nuts or walnuts
 1.2 t. Salt
 2/3 cup olive, safflower or sunflower oil

Chop garlic in food processor/blender, add herbs and process for 30 seconds, add cheese, nuts and salt to bowl and with motor running slowly pour in oil. Process until well mixed. Spoon mixture into sterilized jars and store in fridge or freeze. Makes 1 cup(250ml)

HERB VINEGAR

<i>HERB TO USE</i>	<i>PART OF HERB</i>	<i>VINEGAR TO USE</i>
BASIL	LEAVES	WHITE WINE
SALAD BURNET	LEAVES	WHITE WINE
DILL	SEED	RED WINE
FENNEL	SEED	RED WINE
GARLIC	CLOVE	RED WINE
LOVAGE	ROOT	RED WINE
MARJORAM (SWEET)	LEAVES	WHITE WINE
MINT-SPEARMINT/ENGLISH	LEAVES	CIDER
NASTURIUM	FLOWERS/LEAVES	CIDER
ROSEMARY	LEAVES	WHITE WINE
SAGE	LEAVES	RED WINE
TARRAGON(FRENCH)	LEAVES	WHITE WINE
THYME-ENGLISH	LEAVES	WHITE WINE
THYME-LEMON	LEAVES	WHITE WINE

COMBINATIONS:

THYME, ROSEMARY, HYSSOP, FENNEL, OREGANO, GARLIC IN RED WINE VINEGAR
 MARJORAM, BURNET, THYME, TARRAGON, PARSLEY AND CHIVES IN WHITE WINE VINEGAR
 NASTURIUM, GARLIC CHIVE, AND DILL FLOWERS IN APPLE CIDER VINEGAR