

Nesto (Nettle Pesto)

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BY ROSEMARY GLADSTAR

This is an old time favorite recipe and one I love to make each spring when the fresh young nettle tops are just springing forth. Friends will think you're a little bit quirky ~ "you're actually eating raw nettles?!!" Nesto, a name coined by my friend Janice Schofield Eaton, is simple and easy to make, so delicious, and absolutely so good for you.

If you don't have fresh nettles, you can reconstitute dry nettles by covering a cup of dried nettle with water and letting it sit over night. Strain well, pressing out all extra water. And use in the recipe as 'fresh'. It's not nearly as good as using the nettle fresh, but it does taste pretty good, especially, if you blend it with fresh basil & fresh parsley.

Pesto can be enjoyed on just about anything, crackers, grains, pasta, soups, by itself! Even with the addition of medicinal plants, the flavors seem to blend and harmonize into something sublime. Its medicine at it's finest; tastes good, is easy to make, and is a very efficient way of getting lots of nutrient dense medicinal plants into your diet. Freeze enough medicinal (and culinary pesto as well) blends so you'll have them available through the winter months. Unless you're lucky or smart enough to live in an area where fresh herbs grow year round, you won't be able to make these medicinal pestos once summer's over. So plan ahead.

Proportions for making pesto vary, as it's so dependent on personal flavor and intention; i.e. what you are making the 'medicinal' preparation for. If I were making this recipe to help cleanse heavy metals and toxins from the system, I would add some cilantro and opt not to use cheese, but instead flavor it with a seaweed (1 tablespoon) and miso (1 tablespoon), which are also highly regarded for helping eliminate radiation and other toxic substances from the body.

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You can use this basic recipe to make any number of medicinal herb pastes or pesto's. Try mixing a combination of 1 cup of wild herbs to 1 cup of common garden culinary herbs. Some of these flavors will need to be adjusted, as they will be surprisingly strong, but good!

ingredients

- ½ cup fresh sweet basil leaves
- 1 cup fresh RAW nettle, chopped coarsely (tender young tops of nettle plant are best).
- ½ -1 cup olive oil (start with ½ cup and slowly add more until a creamy paste like consistency)
- ½ - 1 cup pine nuts, cashews or walnuts
- 1- 3 cloves of garlic (to taste)
- 1/4 cup of fresh grated Parmesan and/or pecorino

directions

1. In a blender or food processor, add the nettle, basil, garlic and olive oil.
2. Pulsate until smooth. Add the nuts and cheese and pulsate a few minutes longer, until it reaches the desired consistency.
3. Some prefer a more coarsely ground, chunky pesto while others prefer smooth creamy finish.
4. It won't last long enough to go bad! but if you do happen to make a lot you can easily freeze it. Nesto will last for 6-8 months whe frozen. Its best to leave the cheese out if you are planning to freeze it. The texture and flavor is better if the cheese is added just before eating.

Rosemary Gladstar has been practicing, living, learning, teaching and writing about herbs for over 45 years. She is the author of twelve books including Medicinal Herbs; a Beginners Guide, Herbal Healing for Women, Gladstar Herbal Recipes for Vibrant Well Being and Herbal Healing for Men. She is also the author and director of the popular home study course, The Science and Art of Herbalism. She recently moved from her home at Sage Mountain ~ an Herbal Retreat Center and Botanical Sanctuary where she has lived, taught and worked for the past 30 years ~ to a smaller haven where she plans to plant a small garden, dream more, do less, and spend more time with the plants. www.scienceandartofherbalism.com

