

Foodnity Recipes

Easy Creamy Pesto Pasta

Quick, rich, and deeply satisfying. This dinner brings together bright lemon and savory Parmesan for a perfect weeknight meal. It is a little slice of comfort in a bowl.

15 min Prep time	**12 min** Cook time	**27 min** Total time
4 Servings	**Easy** Difficulty	**Italian** Cuisine

Ingredients

Pasta

- [ ] 12 oz (340 g) penne or fettuccine pasta (or your choice)

Pesto Sauce

- [ ] 1 cup fresh basil leaves, packed
- [ ] 1/2 cup extra-virgin olive oil
- [ ] 1/4 cup toasted pine nuts (or walnuts)
- [ ] 2 garlic cloves, minced
- [ ] 1/2 cup freshly grated Parmesan cheese
- [ ] 1/2 cup heavy cream (or 1/4 cup cream + 1/4 cup milk)
- [ ] Zest and juice of 1/2 a lemon
- [ ] Salt, to taste
- [ ] Freshly ground black pepper, to taste

Instructions

1. Start by filling your large pot with water. I usually add 1 tbsp of kosher salt here—it really makes a difference—and bring it to a proper rolling boil.
2. Gently add the 12 oz (340 g) penne or fettuccine pasta (or your choice) and cook for about 9-11 minutes. Stir it every now and then so it doesn't stick. Now, here is the important part: reserve 1 cup of that starchy pasta water before you drain it in a colander.
3. While the pasta is doing its thing, let's make the pesto. Pulse the 1 cup fresh basil leaves, packed, 1/4 cup toasted pine nuts (or walnuts), 2 garlic cloves, minced, lemon zest, and a pinch of salt in your food processor. Drizzle in the 1/2 cup extra-virgin olive oil in a steady stream until it turns into a lovely smooth paste.
4. Add the 1/2 cup freshly grated Parmesan cheese to the mix and pulse until it's all combined. Then, spoon in the 1/2 cup heavy cream (or 1/4 cup cream + 1/4 cup milk) and pulse again until the sauce looks silky. Honestly, if it feels a bit too thick, just add a tiny splash of that reserved pasta water.
5. Put your drained pasta back into the pot or a large bowl and pour that beautiful creamy pesto over it. Use tongs to toss everything together until every single strand is coated. If it needs a bit more loosening, just add a bit more reserved water.
6. Turn the heat to low and stir the pasta for just 1-2 minutes. This helps the sauce warm through and really meld the flavors together. Give it a taste and adjust the seasoning with salt and freshly ground black pepper.

7. Transfer the pasta to warm plates or a big serving bowl. For a little something extra, sprinkle on some more grated Parmesan, toasted pine nuts, or a few torn basil leaves for a pop of color.

8. If you're feeling extra hungry, you can pour in about 8 oz of sliced grilled chicken and toss it gently to combine.

9. Serve it right away. I love it with some garlic-bread, roasted veggies, or a light green salad on the side.

10. If you have leftovers, don't worry. Just splash a little milk or cream into a low-heat skillet, cover it, and warm the pasta through until it's smooth again.

Nutrition per serving

640 kcal	19 g	48 g	42 g
Calories	Protein	Carbs	Fat

Tips & notes

- Pasta water is like liquid gold; it helps the sauce cling to the noodles.
- Using fresh basil is key for that bright, aromatic flavor.
- Warming the pasta over low heat at the end ensures the sauce is perfectly integrated.