



One of my favorite summer things is fresh pesto—spiced up, of course. And one of the main ingredients is basil, although cooks substitute spinach, Italian parsley, and cilantro for the basil on occasion. There are more than 60 species and varieties of basil, and one of my favorites is 'Greek Miniature Basil' at left. I shot this photo in a greenhouse full of Italian chile pepper varieties in Torre del Lago Puccini on the northwest coast of Italy last year.

Dana Bowen, writing in *Saveur*, noted: “From its humble beginnings in Liguria, pesto has gone far: not only can you find it in jarred form all around the world, but it's used to flavor everything from pizzas to fast-food sandwiches to chips. It's now a household name, up there with marinara and mayonnaise. But unlike those sauces, pesto has always conferred a certain gourmet status in the States; its rise in popularity in the 1980s coincided with the period when Americans started exploring regional Italian cooking and embracing all things Mediterranean.”

Saveur's online pesto articles are [here](#) and their pesto recipes are [here](#) .

Here are two spicy pestos for you to try!

Green Chile Pesto

Of course we have our own New Mexican version of pesto! It's a topping for pasta but also can be added to soups, stews, and rice. Although we have specified cilantro in this recipes, you can use the traditional basil or even Italian parsley. Pecans, another New Mexican crop, can be

substituted for the piñon nuts.

1 cup chopped green New Mexican chile
1 cup chopped fresh cilantro
1/3 cup piñon nuts
1/2 cup grated Parmesan or Pecorino Romano cheese
1/2 cup virgin olive oil

Place the chile, cilantro, nuts, and cheese in a food processor and, while processing, slowly drizzle in the oil to form a pesto.

Yield: 1 1/2 cups

Heat Scale: Medium

Chipotle Pesto



From our friend J.P. Hayes of Sgt. Pepper's Hot Sauce Micro Brewery in Austin comes this excellent pesto designed to be served over homemade bread, pasta or use as a pizza topping. Mix it with mayonnaise or ranch dressing and it's a tasty dip. J.P. gave a dramatic demonstration of preparing this pesto without electricity at the 1996 Texas Hill Country Wine and Food Festival.

1 can chipotle chiles in adobo (or 1/2 cup chipotles rehydrated in wine vinegar)
1/4 cup tomato paste
8 cloves garlic
2 tablespoons cider vinegar or lime juice
1 cup grated Parmesan or romano cheese
1 cup pumpkin seeds (*pepitas*) or piñon nuts, toasted
1 cup canola oil

Combine the chipotles, garlic, and vinegar in a food processor and puree. Add the cheese and pumpkin seeds. With the processor running, drizzle in the oil until the desired consistency is reached (you may not need all the oil).

Yield: 1 1/2 cups

Heat Scale: Medium hot