

Nut-Free Anti-Aging Pesto

Makes 1 cup

Written for Dr. Kara Fitzgerald. Article [here](#).

As a teenager, I worked for an Italian family that raised their own meat and grew their own vegetables and herbs. Among the many different foods I ate during family lunch (I learned not to ask what I was eating until after I ate it), was the Italian Pesto Genovese in the heat of summer that I adored. Using a marble mortar and pestle with homegrown basil, Italian olive oil, pine nuts, garlic, Parmigiano Reggiano, Pecorino cheese, and a bit of arm strength and finesse, 15 minutes later we had this beautiful pesto – the smell, color, and taste – out of this world! It was my introduction to simple herb condiments which I've continued to enjoy and experiment with for my family meals. And I must say, lately, cilantro has become one of my favorites!



Cilantro, you either love it for its bright, citrusy flavor or hate it because it tastes like soap or dirt, which may be due to a genetic variant near olfactory receptor genes. Cilantro is available year-round, stores well, and makes a wonderful pesto that livens up everything from vegetables to legumes, fish, seafood, and meats. This non-traditional pesto substitutes pepitas for pine nuts and omits the cheese.

Cilantro is a methyl donor, the leaves are rich in folate, and the stems contain high concentrations of phenols and flavonoids that reduce inflammation and prevent cell damage. It is an excellent source of vitamin K important for skeletal health and wound healing. And instead of traditional pine nuts I've used **Pepitas** (pumpkin seeds) – a methyl donor and a great source of fiber, polyunsaturated fatty acids, manganese, magnesium, phosphorus, iron, copper, zinc, riboflavin (B2), folate, and vitamin E.

Ingredients:

- 1 bunch cilantro 1 large or 2 small bunches
- 1/4 cup raw pumpkin seeds or pepitas
- 1 clove garlic peeled
- 1 tbsp fresh lemon juice plus more to taste
- 1/8 tsp fine sea salt
- 1/2 cup extra virgin olive oil (EVOO) plus more as needed

Instructions

- Trim ½” off cilantro ends and remove any woody stalks, wash thoroughly in a salad spinner and spin dry.
- Pulse pepitas and garlic in a food processor until minced.
- Add cilantro, lemon juice, salt, and pulse until chopped fine (or as desired).
- Pour olive oil in slowly and process until desired consistency.
- Taste and adjust salt and lemon/lime juice.
- Serve on eggs, baked/poached fish, shrimp, chicken, pork, black beans, chili, and/or steamed vegetables.

Recipe Notes:

- Can substitute lemon juice with that of lime
- To make a thicker pesto, add ½-1 whole avocado and reduce the olive oil to desired consistency. This makes a delicious dip for vegetables and cassava or other grain-free tortilla chips.
- Store in airtight container in refrigerator for about three days.

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