

# RECIPE VARIATIONS: PESTO

Kitchen

Grade 3 • 45 mins

NEW!

GRADE 3

SCHOOL PARTNER  
LESSON PLAN

## ? ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

- What is pesto?
- What is it traditionally made of?
- What other things can it be made of?



## MATERIALS

- Food processor
- Rubber spatulas
- Ingredients as found in this [Basil Pesto](#) recipe
  - If there are students who are allergic to nuts toasted sunflower seeds can be used in place of pine nuts.
  - If basil is out of season, or unavailable, try making the pesto with spinach, kale, or nasturtium leaves.
- Paper boats for serving
- Woven wheat crackers to dip in pesto. Alternatively, cooked pasta can be made to mix pesto into.

## Abc VOCABULARY

- Traditional—produced, done or used, in accordance with tradition.
- Tradition—a long established custom or belief that had been passed from one generation to another. (For culinary purposes this custom can be the inclusion of certain ingredients, the method of preparation, or both.)
- Variant—a form or version of something that differs in some respect from other forms of the same thing or from a standard.
- Substitute—to use or add in place of.

## PREPARATION (45 MINS)

Instructional Warm-up/Opening: Entry. Hand washing. Greetings.

Teacher asks if any students have prior knowledge or have tried pesto before. Teacher describes the ingredients of traditional pesto, followed by explanation of the many ways that pesto has been adapted (you can even make nasturtium pesto.)

## GUIDED PRACTICE

Teacher provides overview of lesson, explaining that students will use the food processor to process spinach, sunflowers seeds and other ingredients to make pesto. (Sunflower seeds are used since DJOD is a nut free campus.)

## TEACHER BACKGROUND

Pesto is typically a sauce made of fresh basil, garlic, oil, pine nuts, and grated cheese. We will be modifying the recipe to avoid pine nut allergens. Pesto originated in Genoa, the capital city of Liguria, Italy.

## LESSON DESCRIPTION

Pesto is easy to make at home! In this lesson, students will learn how to make homemade pesto using fresh ingredients and practice your skills using a flexible recipe.

## LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Define traditional pesto as a sauce of crushed basil leaves, pine nuts, garlic, Parmesan cheese, and olive oil, typically served with pasta.
- Understand that many chefs have experimented with the concept of pesto over the years with many different ingredients such as cilantro, parsley, spinach, and substitutions for the pine nuts and parmesan.
- Identify pesto as a base concept of crushed leaves, and oily nut or seed, parmesan or nutritional yeast, garlic and olive oil.

**Content Learning Objectives***Culinary Flavors and Textures*

**CFT.3.4** Identify flavors, foods, and dishes from other cultures

**CFT.4.3** Assess main ingredients, seasonings and dishes of other cultures

**CFT.5.2** Explain food traditions of other cultures using sensory language to describe flavor and ingredients

## ACADEMIC STANDARD CONNECTIONS

**CCSS.ELALITERACY.L.3.1.G** Form and use comparative and superlative adjectives and adverbs, and choose between them depending on what is to be modified.

## HEALTH STANDARD CONNECTIONS

**National Health Education Standard 4:** Students will demonstrate the ability to use interpersonal communication skills to enhance health and avoid or reduce health risks.

**NOTE:**

Although pesto is high in fat, most of that fat is unsaturated. Fats from plants and nuts are believed to have heart health benefits. Besides adding fresh flavor, pesto has health benefits. Its ingredients are part of the heart-healthy Mediterranean diet. Plus, certain compounds in the ingredients may reduce your risk of heart disease, diabetes, and cancer.

---

*Lesson Sequence*

---

**Prepare to Cook (5 min)**

Students will tie hair back if necessary and wash their hands.

**Recipe Introduction:**

Teacher asks if any students have prior knowledge or have tried pesto before. Teacher describes the ingredients of traditional pesto, followed by explanation of the many ways that pesto has been adapted (you can even make nasturtium pesto.)

**Review Familiar Skills:**

Remind students to always wash their hands properly before handling food. Kitchen equipment such as a food processor should be used with adult supervision. Safety always remains a top priority.

**Demonstrate New Tools and Skills:**

Traditional pesto is commonly made with basil, garlic, pine nuts, olive oil, salt, and parmesan cheese. Today, we will be flexible with our recipe by using alternative ingredients. Instead of pine nuts we will use sunflower seeds. Instead of cheese, some tables will use nutritional yeast. We look forward to trying different varieties.

**Divvy Up Tasks:**

Students will work in an assembly line to add ingredients to the food processor.

**Cook!**

Students add to food processor bowl: spinach, and pre-measured amounts of other ingredients. Students blend pesto in processor. If pesto is too dry they add more olive oil. If pesto is too wet more nutritional yeast or parmesan can be added. Students scrape out prepared pesto with rubber spatulas serve on paper boats with several crackers.

**Enjoy!**

Students enjoy a snack of pesto and crackers. Students describe the taste, and texture of the pesto. Students are asked how they think that the flavor would be changed by having different ingredients in the pesto, specifically greens that are more naturally spicy like mustard or nasturtium, or have a distinct flavor such as basil.

**Clean Up:**

Students throw away all trash and line up for dismissal.

**Reflect:**

Students share out whether they cared for the pesto using polite words.

---

## CONNECTIONS TO THE GARDEN

Use basil from the garden. Use pesto as a dip for something ready to harvest from the garden, such as carrot sticks. Bring compost out to the garden.

Ask students to identify other green leaves that are growing in the garden that pesto could be made from, such as spinach, nasturtium leaves, mustard leaves, beet or broccoli greens or kale. Have students looking over a chart of planting and harvesting times for different greens and determine what types of pesto could be made from in season greens throughout different parts of the year.

## DIGGING DEEPER EXTENSIONS

Students can interview family members about their experiences with pesto, and what their favorite pesto dish is. Students can inquire with cafeteria staff as to the possibilities of adding a dish including pesto, such as pesto pasta, pesto pizza, or pesto bread to a lunch offered at the school.

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Simple Spinach and Basil Sunflower Seed Pesto (Tree Nut Free)

(Variant adapted by Jason Madden from the following two recipes:

- [Spinach and Sunflower Seed Pesto \(Vegan and Nut Free\)](#)
- [Emeril's Basil Pesto](#)

## INGREDIENTS

- 3 packed cups of spinach and fresh basil leaves (kale can also be substituted for spinach)
- 1 clove of garlic
- ½ cups sunflower seeds
- ¼ cup parmesan cheese
- ¼ tsp salt
- ⅛ tsp pepper
- ½ cup Olive Oil
- 1 ½ tablespoons Lemon Juice

## DIRECTIONS

In the bowl of a food processor or blender add the spinach, garlic, sunflower seeds, parmesan cheese, salt and pepper and pulse until well combined, but not totally smooth. Slowly drizzle in the olive oil while pulsing. Add lemon juice, salt and pepper to taste.