

Sicilian Pesto from Trapani

This is an incredibly simple tomato pesto, characteristic of the province of Trapani in Sicilia.

Yields 4-6 Servings

INGREDIENTS:

- 3/4 to 1 lb (400 grams) of Busiate, Gemelli, or Fusilli pasta
- 2 lbs. of fresh tomatoes or one 28 oz. can of whole San Marzano tomatoes
- 1 small handful of basil leaves, about 20 leaves
- ½ cup blanched or raw almonds, lightly toasted in a dry pan or in the oven
- 3 garlic cloves, peeled
- ½ cup grated Pecorino Romano cheese
- ½ cup extra virgin olive oil
- ½ tsp. salt and 1/2 tsp. black pepper, or 1 tsp. PGS (Pastagirl Seasoning)
- ½ cup toasted bread crumbs as topping (optional)



I am obsessed with this sauce! This is a super simple tomato pesto, typical of the province of Trapani in Sicilia. Centuries ago, it is believed that Genovese ships sailed from the north and brought their pesto to the south, where locals in the region substituted fresh tomatoes and almonds to create their own version. You will find it on every menu in trattorias and ristoranti throughout the region.

INSTRUCTIONS:

For fresh tomatoes, cut an X on the bottom of each tomato and blanch in a bowl of boiling water for 2 minutes. Drain the water and let tomatoes cool, then peel off the skin. Cut in half and remove the seeds.

If using canned tomatoes, drain the juice and use just the tomatoes.

1. Place basil leaves, almonds, garlic cloves and a few splashes of olive oil in a blender or food processor and pulse until mixture resemble large breadcrumbs.
2. Add tomatoes and pecorino cheese and pulse a few more times.
3. Add seasoning and more olive oil if necessary (q.b., quanto basta, as much needed).
4. In a small saucepan, toast the bread crumbs with a splash of olive oil until golden brown. Set aside.
5. Boil water for pasta and add salt. Cook pasta to al dente according to the package, reserving a cup of pasta water. Drain the pasta.
6. Return pasta to pan and add a large spoon full of pesto.
7. Toss everything together over low heat for one minute. Add more pesto and or pasta water to thin sauce if needed. Serve the pasta in individual bowls and top with a dollop of pesto and a sprinkle of Pecorino Romano cheese and toasted bread crumbs.