

K's Kitchen: Turning zucchini into pesto

By Kathryn Reed

I remember when I lived in Sonoma County and had a prolific garden. Zucchini plants seemed to take over the area, producing so much squash some ended up in the compost pile. I couldn't even give them away after a while.

I wish I had the recipe below back then. It's a perfect use for this summer, and early autumn vegetable. And with being able to find zucchini in the grocery store year-round, it's a recipe that is multi-seasonal.

Using yellow and green zucs will add a little color.

Be sure to taste the pesto before tossing it with the pasta to make sure it has enough flavor. More garlic, red pepper or salt may be needed because zucchinis are bland.

Other nuts could be used. When pine nuts weren't so expensive that is what I made regular pesto with. Now walnuts are my go-to choice. Roasted almonds would also be good in this dish. I was being lazy and didn't chop any walnuts as a garnish, but I would recommend doing so if serving to others. It will look better and provide more texture.



Pasta with Zucchini Pesto

1 C walnuts

Olive oil

5 garlic cloves, chopped

$\frac{1}{2}$ tsp crushed red pepper

3 medium zucchini ($1\frac{1}{2}$ pounds), half cut into matchsticks and the remainder chopped

Salt and pepper

1 lb. spaghetti

2 tsp lemon zest

$1\frac{1}{2}$ C Pecorino Romano, grated; plus more for serving

$\frac{1}{2}$ C chopped mint, plus more for garnish

In a large skillet coated with olive oil cook garlic and crushed red pepper over medium heat for about 1 minute. Add the chopped zucchini, season with salt and pepper, cook until lightly golden. Put this mixture into food processor or blender, add walnuts and blend. If needed, add olive oil. Season with salt and pepper.

Cook spaghetti until al dente. Reserve 1 cup of the pasta water, then drain. Return the pasta to the hot pot (but with burner off), add pasta water, pesto, zucchini matchsticks, lemon zest, cheese and mint. Stir until mixed well.

Garnish with mint and chopped walnuts. Extra cheese may be served on the side.