

## Pesto alla Genovese

BASIL, GARLIC AND CHEESE SAUCE To make about 1 1/2 to 2 cups

2 cups fresh basil leaves, stripped from their stems, coarsely chopped and tightly packed; or substitute 2 cups fresh flat-leaf Italian parsley, coarsely chopped, and 2 tablespoons dried basil leaves

1 teaspoon salt

1/2 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper

1 to 2 teaspoons finely chopped garlic

2 tablespoons finely chopped pine nuts or walnuts

1 to 1 1/2 cups olive oil

1/2 cup freshly grated imported sardo, romano or Parmesan cheese

TO MAKE THE PESTO IN A BLENDER, combine the coarsely chopped fresh basil (or fresh parsley and dried basil), salt, pepper, garlic, pine nuts or walnuts and 1 cup of olive oil in the blender jar. Blend them at high speed until the ingredients are smooth, stopping the blender every 5 or 6 seconds to push the herbs down with a rubber spatula.

The sauce should be thin enough to run off the spatula easily. If it seems too thick, blend in as much as 2 cup more olive oil. Transfer the sauce to a bowl and stir in the grated cheese.

TO MAKE THE PESTO BY HAND, crush the coarsely chopped fresh basil (or fresh parsley and dried basil) with a mortar and pestle or place in a heavy mixing bowl and crush with the back of a large wooden spoon until the herbs are smooth and almost pastelike. Work in the salt and pepper, garlic, and pine nuts or walnuts, and then add the olive oil 1/2 cup at a time, continuing to crush the herbs. When the sauce is thin enough to run off the pestle or spoon easily, mix in the grated cheese. Serve the pesto thoroughly mixed into hot drained pasta that has been tossed first with a few tablespoons of soft butter.

NOTE: Often in Italy the pesto is thinned further by adding to it 1 or 2 tablespoons of the hot spaghetti water before mixing it with the pasta.