



Orecchiette with Pistachio Pesto

SERVES 6

In the “heel” of southern Italy is the region of Puglia, with the capital city of Bari on the Adriatic coast. The harbor, built 2,000 years ago by the Romans, was a part of my morning walks when I visited. Each day, I watched the fishermen bring in their nets of baby octopus and clams that eventually made their way onto the tables of the restaurants of Bari. Another scene I witnessed in the old city center were the women sitting outside their houses, shaping orecchiette pasta as fast as their nimble fingers could make them. As each little “ear” of pasta was formed, they were tossed into a basket to dry.

I've come to love orecchiette pasta and the way it grasps its sauce while lying on the plate so elegantly, as if it didn't have a care in the world. This pistachio pesto is quite simple to make, yet it makes a big statement on the plate and palette, especially when made with the De Viti's olive oil, which I sell on my website. I don't make my own orecchiette like those women in Bari, but I think of them every time I bite into those tender pasta ears that keep whispering that I need to go back to Bari.

INGREDIENTS

1 cup shelled unsalted pistachios	2 scallions, chopped
2 cloves garlic, minced	1 cup grated Parmesan cheese
2 tablespoons fresh mint, chopped	1 teaspoon plus 3 tablespoons kosher salt
2 tablespoons fresh basil, chopped	3/4 cup olive oil
zest of one lemon	12 ounces Orecchiette pasta



PROCESS:

Spread the pistachios on a baking sheet and toast in the oven for 10 minutes, until fragrant. Let cool, then coarsely chop. In a large bowl, toss the pistachios with the garlic, mint, basil, zest, scallions, Parmesan, and 1 teaspoon of the salt. Drizzle in the olive oil and stir.

In a large pot, bring 8 cups water and 3 tablespoons salt to a boil over high heat. Cook the pasta in the boiling water until al dente, following the package instructions. Drain, reserving 1/2 cup of the pasta water. Immediately transfer the pasta to the pistachio pesto and stir gently until the pasta is coated with the pesto, adding some of the reserved pasta water if needed to loosen the sauce. Serve immediately.

Put a large pot of water on to boil and salt it well. Meanwhile, preheat oven to 350 degrees. Place pistachios on a baking sheet and toast in oven for 10 minutes. Let cool, then chop finely or pulse in a food processor. In a bowl, toss the pistachios with the garlic, mint, basil, zest, scallions, Parmesan cheese, and a pinch of salt. Drizzle in the olive oil and stir.

Cook the pasta in the boiling water until al dente, following the package instructions. Drain, reserving 1/2 cup of the pasta water. Immediately add the pistachio pesto with the reserved pasta water. Toss gently until the pasta is coated with the pesto. Serve immediately.