

Caprese Pasta Salad with Pesto

This Caprese Pasta Salad with Pesto is a light, flavorful dish that celebrates the fresh taste of Italian summer. With tender pasta, juicy tomatoes, creamy mozzarella, and fragrant basil pesto, it's the perfect combination of color, texture, and taste. The pesto dressing adds richness while the ripe tomatoes and basil keep every bite bright and refreshing. Whether you serve it as a side or a main dish, this salad delivers effortless Italian flair in every forkful.

Why You'll Love This Caprese Pasta Salad with Pesto

Fresh, Vibrant, and Satisfying

This salad is full of garden-fresh ingredients and simple Mediterranean flavors. The pesto adds an earthy, aromatic base that balances the creaminess of the mozzarella and the sweetness of the tomatoes.

Quick and Easy to Make

It takes just 20 minutes to prepare. You can toss it together for weeknight dinners, lunches, or outdoor gatherings. It's easy to transport, stays fresh for hours, and tastes even better after chilling.

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- Author: [Aaron recipes](#)
- Total Time: [20 minutes](#)
- Yield: [6 servings](#)
- Diet: [Vegetarian](#)

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Description

Fresh and flavorful Caprese Pasta Salad with Pesto, featuring rotini pasta, mozzarella pearls, juicy tomatoes, and basil tossed in a rich pesto dressing.

Ingredients

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- ☐ Rotini pasta – 1½ cups
 - ☐ Pesto – 3 tbsp (or to taste)
 - ☐ Extra-virgin olive oil – 1 tbsp
 - ☐ Salt – ¼ tsp
 - ☐ Granulated garlic – ¼ tsp
 - ☐ Black pepper – ? tsp
 - ☐ Grape tomatoes (halved) – ½ cup
 - ☐ Fresh mozzarella pearls – ½ cup
 - ☐ Fresh basil leaves (shredded) – 2 leaves
 - ☐ Cook Mode Prevent your screen from going dark
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Instructions

1. Bring a pot of salted water to a boil. Cook pasta for about 8 minutes or until al dente. Drain and cool slightly.
2. In a mixing bowl, whisk pesto, olive oil, salt, garlic, and pepper until smooth.
3. Add warm pasta to the pesto mixture and toss to coat evenly.
4. Fold in tomatoes, mozzarella pearls, and shredded basil. Mix gently.
5. Serve immediately or chill for at least 30 minutes before serving.

Notes

Use fresh mozzarella for the best texture.

Add a splash of lemon juice to brighten the pesto flavor.

Serve with grilled chicken or shrimp for a heartier meal.

Store leftovers in an airtight container for up to 3 days.

- Prep Time: 10 minutes
- Cook Time: 10 minutes
- Category: Salad
- Method: Mixing
- Cuisine: Italian

Nutrition

- **Serving Size:** 1 cup
- **Calories:** 320
- **Sugar:** 3g
- **Sodium:** 360mg
- **Fat:** 18g
- **Saturated Fat:** 6g
- **Unsaturated Fat:** 9g
- **Trans Fat:** 0g
- **Carbohydrates:** 28g
- **Fiber:** 2g
- **Protein:** 10g
- **Cholesterol:** 25mg

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Choosing the Right Ingredients

The Pasta Base

Rotini pasta works best because its spirals hold onto the pesto dressing beautifully. You can also use fusilli, penne, or farfalle. Cook it until al dente so it remains firm when tossed with the other ingredients.

The Caprese Trio

Fresh mozzarella pearls, grape tomatoes, and basil are the classic elements of Caprese salad. Use mozzarella stored in brine for the creamiest texture and choose ripe tomatoes for the sweetest flavor.

Making the Pesto Dressing

Creating the Perfect Blend

In a bowl, combine your favorite pesto with extra-virgin olive oil, a pinch of salt, granulated garlic, and black pepper. Whisk until smooth and glossy. This helps the pesto coat the pasta evenly

without clumping.

Adjusting to Taste

If you prefer a lighter dressing, thin it with a teaspoon of lemon juice or a splash of warm pasta water. For extra flavor, stir in a tablespoon of grated Parmesan cheese or crushed pine nuts.

Preparing the Pasta Salad

Cooking and Tossing

Bring salted water to a boil and cook your pasta for about 8 minutes until tender yet firm. Drain and cool slightly, then toss the pasta with the pesto mixture while it's still warm to absorb the flavors.

Adding the Fresh Ingredients

Fold in halved grape tomatoes, mozzarella pearls, and shredded basil leaves. Mix gently to coat everything evenly without breaking the cheese. The vibrant colors and aromatic basil create a true taste of Italy.

Serving and Presentation

Perfect Ways to Serve

Serve this salad slightly chilled or at room temperature. It pairs wonderfully with grilled chicken, shrimp, or steak. You can also serve it as a standalone light meal or picnic dish.

Presentation Tips

Garnish with extra basil and a sprinkle of Parmesan before serving. For a restaurant-style touch, drizzle a bit of balsamic glaze over the top — it adds sweetness and visual appeal.

Expert Tips for Success

Choose High-Quality Pesto

Use a fresh, refrigerated pesto rather than jarred versions if possible. The flavor is brighter and more aromatic, making the salad taste homemade and authentic.

Keep Ingredients Fresh

Add the basil and mozzarella pearls just before serving to keep their texture and color vibrant. If storing, toss lightly again before serving to refresh the flavors.

Storing and Make-Ahead Tips

Refrigeration Tips

Store leftovers in an airtight container in the refrigerator for up to three days. Stir before serving to redistribute the dressing, as pesto tends to settle.

Make It Ahead

You can prepare the pasta and pesto mixture a day in advance. Add tomatoes, mozzarella, and basil right before serving for the freshest texture and flavor.

FAQs About Caprese Pasta Salad with Pesto

Can I make this salad vegan?

Yes, simply use dairy-free pesto and vegan mozzarella. The salad will still be creamy and full of flavor.

Can I use store-bought pesto?

Absolutely. Choose a high-quality brand made with real basil and olive oil for the best results.

Can I serve it warm?

Yes, it's delicious warm or cold. Warm pasta enhances the pesto aroma, while cold pasta brings out its freshness.

What can I add for more protein?

Grilled chicken, shrimp, or chickpeas make excellent additions that complement the pesto's flavor.

Conclusion

Caprese Pasta Salad with Pesto is the perfect combination of simplicity and elegance. With its fresh ingredients, bold pesto flavor, and creamy mozzarella, it's a dish that brings Italy straight to your kitchen. It's quick to prepare, travels well, and delights everyone at the table. Whether you serve it as a light meal or a vibrant side, this recipe is a guaranteed favorite. For another refreshing and flavorful option, try our Pesto Caprese Pasta Salad — another easy, basil-packed dish that pairs beautifully with Mediterranean meals.

Meta Title: Caprese Pasta Salad with Pesto – Fresh & Easy Italian Recipe

Meta Description: Make this Caprese Pasta Salad with Pesto for a quick, fresh Italian-style dish with basil, mozzarella, and tomatoes. Perfect for picnics or summer dinners.
