

## A tasty twist on pasta and pesto

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(HealthDay)—Pesto is a delicious and fast pasta sauce. Because it can be made in advance and served cold, it's also a perfect do-ahead dish.

The nuts used in traditional pesto are healthful, but whether almonds, walnuts or [pine nuts](#), you may not always want the extra calories they pack in. There are some great variations that are just as flavorful.

One variation is to use green peas, a great high-fiber food, in place of the nuts. They're available fresh—shell them yourself—in warm weather months, but you can keep bags of frozen peas in your freezer and make this pesto year-round. If you want more of a protein boost, use shelled edamame—young green soy beans, typically available frozen. They're denser than peas, so when blending them, you'll need to add a few more tablespoons of water to get the right consistency.

If basil is out of season or too expensive, you can substitute other herbs, such as parsley or even cilantro.

No matter what pesto ingredients you decide on, boost nutrition by replacing white [pasta](#) with a whole grain variety. There are many choices beyond whole wheat. Pastas made from spelt or quinoa are tasty and toothy so you won't miss the mouthfeel of your usual boxed spaghetti.

## Pea Pesto

- 14-ounce box of any whole grain pasta
- 2 cups [green peas](#)
- 1 cup fresh herbs, such as basil, parsley and/or cilantro, most stems removed
- 2 cloves garlic
- 1/2 tablespoon extra-virgin olive oil
- Cold water as needed
- Salt to taste
- 1/4 cup grated Parmesan

Cook pasta according to the package instructions. Drain and set aside to

cool.

If not using fresh peas, defrost frozen peas in a colander under cold running [water](#). Transfer to a blender along with the herbs, garlic, olive oil and salt. Blend until smooth. Add a few tablespoons of [cold water](#) to make a smooth blend.

Toss pasta with the pesto to coat well. Just before serving, sprinkle with the Parmesan.

Yield: 4 servings

**More information:** *Consumer Reports* has more on [white pasta alternatives](#), including those made from healthful legumes.

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