Sauces / Italy

Sun-Dried Tomato Pesto

A Sicilian pesto born from summer abundance and the patience of the sun — oil-packed dried tomatoes ground with almonds, garlic, and basil into a deep, ruby-red paste that clings to rigatoni like velvet and tastes of August preserved in a jar.

Time 15 min **Servings** 4

What you'll need.

- ☐ 100 parts Sun-dried tomatoes (oil-packed, drained)
- ☐ 8 parts Garlic cloves (peeled)
- ☐ 50 parts Extra-virgin olive oil (Sicilian preferred)
- ☐ 2 parts Salt and black pepper
- ☐ 30 parts Blanched almonds
- ☐ 20 parts Fresh basil leaves
- ☐ 25 parts Pecorino Romano (grated)
- ☐ 2 parts Dried peperoncino (red chili flakes)

Let's make it.

01 In a food processor, combine the blanched almonds and garlic cloves. Pulse 10–12 times until you have a coarse, irregular paste — the almonds should be broken down to small crumbs but not completely smooth. Over-processing now leads to an oily, textureless pesto. In Sicily, this would be done in a marble mortar, pressing in circular strokes, and that method produces a slightly rougher, more characterful texture — use it if you have the patience and the mortar.

02 Add the sun-dried tomatoes, basil, and peperoncino to the food processor. Pulse 8–10 times to combine — the tomatoes will break down slowly, releasing their concentrated oils into the almond crumble. The mixture will start to look almost black-red at this stage, with the basil providing green flecks. It should be very coarse and dry-looking — the olive oil comes next and will transform the texture entirely.

03 With the food processor running, drizzle the olive oil in slowly. Add the grated Pecorino Romano. Pulse to combine. The pesto will transform from dry and crumbled to a cohesive, glossy, spreadable paste. Season with salt and black pepper. Taste: it should be intensely savory, slightly salty, with a deep tomato richness and bright herb note. If too thick, add more olive oil. Store covered in oil to prevent oxidation — a thin layer of oil poured over the top before refrigerating extends shelf life by several days.

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Servings are an estimate; check quantities in the source recipe.
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