

PESTO LAMB

(*Agnello alla Genovese*)

By Dennis W. Viau; an original recipe.

I believe a lot of cooks shy away from lamb because the meat tastes a little gamey and they don't know how to deal with the flavor. The trick is to work *with* the lamb's flavor by adding complementary flavors such as garlic or rosemary. Lamb is a delicious red meat and I much prefer its flavor to beef. I rarely buy beef, but I almost always have lamb in the freezer. The flavor stands up well with other bold flavors.



This is one of my signature recipes, which is requested often among my friends. This recipe was entered into a nationwide contest and won a place in the *Cook's Country Best Lost Suppers* cookbook by America's Text Kitchen. Look for me on page 132. They changed the recipe considerably. Following is the original:

Ingredients:

4 cups fresh basil leaves, packed (about 4 ounces/113g)
5 to 8 cloves of garlic, depending on size; peeled
1 cup (140g) pine nuts; lightly toasted
1 cup (115g) grated Parmesan or Romano cheese
½ cup (120ml) extra virgin olive oil
1 leg of lamb, boneless; about 5 lbs (2.25kg)
Fresh ground pepper to taste

Directions:

Put the pine nuts in a skillet over medium heat and toast them until they start to turn light brown, about 5 minutes. Remove them from the skillet to cool. Remove the basil leaves from their stems (discard the stems) and place in a sturdy plastic ziplock bag with the cooled pine nuts and the garlic cloves. Moderately hammer the contents with a rubber mallet or the smooth side of a meat tenderizing mallet until well crushed. (This takes a while.)

Place the crushed basil, garlic, pine nuts, cheese and oil in a food processor and blend well. The pesto should be more dry than oily, more like a soft paste. (This makes about 1½ cups of pesto.)

Remove the string or elastic wrapping from the lamb, if present, and trim off the fatty rind and any large pieces of fat. Open the leg and spread one third to one half the pesto on the inside meat. Roll the leg and tie with kitchen twine. Sprinkle pepper all over the leg and then spread the remaining pesto on the outside. Wrap in plastic wrap and let sit in the refrigerator for 24 hours.

Heat the oven to 350°F (175°C). Remove the leg from the plastic and place in a roasting pan. Don't remove the pesto. Roast until the internal temperature reaches 125°F (52°C) for medium-rare (about 1½ hours) or 155°F (70°C) for medium (about 2 hours). Check with a meat thermometer. Remove the roast from the oven and let rest for 15 minutes to redistribute the juices before carving.

The step-by-step photos were removed. See the video for the preparation.

