

DAVID LEBOVITZ

Pasta with Broccoli Pesto

Adapted from [Milk Street Tuesday Nights](#) by Christopher Kimball

Four servings

This is a one-pot (plus a blender or food processor) dinner, and I find it easiest to make if I prepare all the ingredients in advance and have them ready to go, known in France as a *mise en place* (aka: having everything in place). And I recommend reading the recipe all the way through before starting out.

You're using the same large pot of water at a moderate boil to cook everything, so don't drain and toss the water out until you reserve some of the cooking water in two parts of the recipe, which I've highlighted in **bold** as they're easy steps to omit.

I added a few anchovies to the original recipe, which you can't really taste but give a nice bit of *umami* (deliciousness) in the background. Skip the anchovies if you wish or if you want to keep it vegetarian.

3 medium garlic cloves, peeled and sliced

4 tablespoons (2 ounces, 55g) salted or unsalted butter, cut into cubes

1 tablespoon drained capers

1/2 teaspoon red pepper flakes or 1/2 teaspoon Italian jarred [crushed chilis](#)

3-4 anchovy fillets, optional

4 teaspoons freshly grated lemon zest, divided, plus a little lemon juice for finishing the pasta

2 tablespoons, plus 3/4 teaspoon kosher or sea salt (if using finely granulated salt, cut the amount in half)

1 pound (450g) fresh broccoli

2 cups (1 1/2 ounces, 40g) gently packed baby spinach

Freshly ground black pepper

12 ounces pasta with ridges, such as rigatoni or penne rigate

1/2 cup (1 ounce, 30g) grated Parmesan or pecorino cheese, plus more for serving

1. **To make the pasta sauce/pesto**, put the garlic, butter, capers, red pepper flakes or crushed chilis, anchovies (if using), 2 teaspoons of lemon zest and 3/4 teaspoon of salt into the blender.
2. Slice the stems off the broccoli, cutting as close to the base of the florets as possible. Use a paring knife or vegetable peeler to peel the stems and cut the stems crosswise into 1/2-inch-thick (2cm) rounds.
3. Cut the broccoli florets into 1-inch (3cm) pieces and set those aside to cook later.
4. Heat 4 quarts (4l) of water in a large pot with 2 tablespoons salt. When the water boils, add the sliced **broccoli stems** and cook until *very* tender, about 10 to 12 minutes. Add the spinach and cook for 15 seconds. Remove the broccoli and spinach with a slotted spoon and place them in the blender with the other ingredients. Add **1/2 cup (125ml)** of the broccoli cooking water.
5. Blend all the ingredients until smooth. Taste and season with salt and pepper, if desired. Set aside.
6. **To finish the pasta**, cook the broccoli florets in the boiling water until they are just cooked through, but with just a little bit of texture left in them. Mine were good at 9 minutes. Remove the cooked florets with a slotted spoon, put them in a colander, and run under cold water to stop the cooking, if you want. Transfer the florets to a small bowl but keep the colander handy.
7. Add the pasta to the boiling water and cook until it's slightly *al dente*. (Check the package for recommended cooking time.) Reserve **1/4 cup (60ml)** of the cooking liquid, then drain the pasta.
8. Add the pasta back to the pot along with the broccoli pesto, cooked broccoli florets, the 1/4 cup of cooking water, the remaining 2 teaspoons of lemon zest, and the grated cheese.
9. Cook over medium heat, stirring, until everything is well combined and the sauce thickens a bit, 1 to 2 minutes, seasoning with a few drops of fresh lemon juice to brighten up the flavor. Taste, and add more salt and pepper, if desired.

Serve the pasta with grated cheese over the top.