



Picnic recipes

LEMON-HERB CHICKEN AND FRESH TOMATO PESTO

From Monica Downen

Ingredients:

2 lbs boneless, skinless chicken breasts, cut into strips (or you can bake or grill them whole for slicing)
 3/4 cup freshly squeezed lemon juice (about 4 lemons)
 Zest of one lemon, minced
 1 cup premium olive oil
 2 tsp kosher salt
 1 tsp freshly ground pepper
 1 tbsp minced fresh herbs (use any herbs you love: thyme, lemon thyme, rosemary, basil, oregano, marjoram, etc.)
 1 tbsp minced flat-leaf parsley
 2 tsp minced garlic
 Bamboo skewers

Instructions:

- Pour the chicken into a glass dish. Whisk all other ingredients together and pour over the chicken. Toss to coat it well, cover and let marinate for 60-90 minutes. It will marinate better on the counter and can safely remain out of the refrigerator for up to 2 hours, as long as you cook it right away to the proper temperature. Don't overmarinate, or the acid in the lemon juice will turn the chicken meat mealy.
- While chicken is marinating, soak the skewers in warm water and prepare your ingredients to make the pesto sauce. Also preheat your oven to 350 degrees (325 for a convection oven), or preheat your grill if desired. Line a

baking sheet with parchment paper (or silpat). Or you can spray the pan with cooking spray to keep chicken from sticking.

- After 60-90 minutes, thread the chicken onto skewers (or skip this step if cooking whole breasts for later slicing). Discard the leftover marinade containing raw chicken juices.
- Cook the skewers until the internal temperature reaches 160 degrees. If you do not already have an instant-read thermometer, you need one — it is the only reliable way to cook meat.
- Remove the chicken from the oven or grill, cool for 15 minutes on the counter, then refrigerate.

FRESH TOMATO PESTO

Ingredients:

1/3 cup whole almonds, unsalted and lightly toasted
 1 plump garlic clove, crushed and peeled
 1/2 cup Pecorino Romano or Parmigiano Reggiano
 1/4 tsp red chili flakes or to taste
 3/4 lb (about 2 1/2 cups) very ripe heirloom tomatoes, cut into chunks
 12 large fresh basil leaves
 1/2 tsp coarse sea salt or kosher salt, or to taste
 1/2 cup extra-virgin olive oil

Instructions:

- In the food processor or blender, puree the almonds, garlic, cheese, red chili flakes and some of the tomatoes for liquid. Add the remaining tomatoes, basil and salt and blend to a fine puree, scraping down the sides as needed.
- With the machine running, add olive oil in a steady stream, emulsifying the mixture into a thick pesto. Taste and adjust seasoning. If you're going to use the sauce within a couple of hours, leave the pesto at room temperature.

Refrigerate and store it for longer, up to two days, but let it return to room temperature before eating for the best flavor. This delicious sauce makes a great dip, spread or pasta dish (simply toss with cooked pasta), or you could even make a chilled soup out of it.

- For a picnic, consider making a sandwich from the chicken on high-quality bread slathered with the tomato pesto. Add some favorite greens; arugula works well.