

LAURA'S SCAPES AND GRAPES PESTO

One of my favorite aspects of participating in the Brookwood Farm CSA is the excitement of picking up the share each week. What's better than filling my bag with the freshest organic local produce grown right in my hometown? When I return home, the real fun begins. I lay out the bounty on the table, look at it, and think, "What can I make with you?" Typically, the decision is obvious (like the sugar snap peas that get devoured raw instantly) but sometimes, you are confronted with an eventful vegetable that inspires invention —one you don't normally see, which isn't even available at the supermarket. I revel in this challenge, because I find that there my creativity can truly shine, as I experiment with this new ingredient to make a delicious meal for those I love. However, for others, this can be an overwhelming experience ... when presented with a bag of curly green things called scapes you've never seen before, or comprehending what to do with a dauntingly huge white daikon radish the size of a child's calf! I have found the best way to relieve this anxiety is to talk to your other local CSA members and Brookwood farmers. Pick-up day is a perfect time to exchange recipes, share experiences, and get inspired for the coming week.

This recipe was a pure invention of mine that has received rave reviews from my friends and family. While first experimenting with this pesto, my ingenious mom came up with the idea of adding the green grapes. These slightly tart grapes are so whimsical and unexpected, playing off of the pungent flavor of the scapes. The fig balsamic vinegar complements all of the flavors and raises the dish to a whole new level, creating a sweet and savory marriage. I hope you too enjoy trying my creation, and that this provides an impetus to explore your own culinary concoctions. Just make sure you share them with me! Buon Appetito! ·

- Laura Sabini

Ingredients

10 garlic scapes from Brookwood Farm! ·

½ pound of raw slivered almonds

1 organic lemon

½ tablespoon of Himalayan sea salt

1 tsp of red pepper flakes (or less, to taste)

½ to 1 tsp of black pepper

½ cup of fresh parsley leaves

½ to ¾ cup of extra virgin olive oil (I recommend Monini Fruttato)

1 cup of organic green grapes

¼ cup of fig balsamic vinegar (from Saratoga Olive Oil Company...well worth the online order at saratogaoliveoil.com, or another brand may be available at Milton Marketplace)

2 500-gram bags of Gnocchetti Sardi (or 2lbs of any other small pasta variety, like a shell or ditalini)

(The absolute best is the Rustichella d'Abruzzo brand in the brown paper bag)

(A great gluten-free option is Takayama brown rice pasta shells)

Directions

- Cut the garlic scapes with a scissor into two-inch pieces, excluding the nodule, directly into the food processor

- Add the almonds, zest of the lemon, juice of the lemon, salt, hot pepper, black pepper, parsley, and process until well blended

- Add the olive oil and process again until blended
- Halve the green grapes and put aside
- Salt a pot of water and bring to a boil
- Cook your pasta until “al dente”
- Once your pasta is cooked, drain well
- Add two scoops of your pesto to the bottom of the pasta pot, and return half of the pasta to the pot and mix until well coated.
- Add more pesto to the pot and add the remaining pasta and mix again
- Plate the pasta in a bowl and sprinkle the green grapes on top
- Drizzle lightly with fig balsamic vinegar and serve with a curled garlic scape on top for garnish

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This dish pairs wonderfully with a rose' wine. I like the Villa Wolf 2011 Pinot Noir Rose' from Germany—light, and salmon-colored, with bright fruit and a flinty finish. Another perfect pairing is the fuller-bodied Domaine du Tariquet Rose' de Pressee from France, which has a spicy note with notes of raspberry and flower petals. Both are available at my favorite wine shop, Esprit du Vin in Milton.