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Whole-Grain Pasta with Golden Pesto and Greens

Serves 4

Eating for optimal brain health doesn't mean cutting out the dishes you have come to think of as comfort foods. Case in point: this elegant pasta recipe, which pairs a garlicky, nut-packed pesto with golden raisins and Swiss chard sautéed with briny preserved lemon. The pesto features three nuts—pistachios, walnuts, and pine nuts—because they all provide unique flavors and brain health virtues, too.

Pine nuts are buttery and delicious but can be difficult to find (not to mention expensive), so you could substitute almonds or pecans instead. Choose a whole-grain pasta with plenty of nooks and crannies (like trumpet or shell shapes) to capture the toasted nuts, golden nibs of garlic, and bits of salted lemon in each bite.

A double batch of the pesto keeps well in the fridge for up to ten days. Top it with a layer of olive oil to avoid discoloration, and scoop out spoonfuls to serve with crackers and white anchovies, toss into grain bowls, or dollop into a salad.

10 medium garlic cloves (2 ounces/60 g total) (see Tips)

⅓ cup (55 g) shelled unsalted pistachios

⅓ cup (55 g) pine nuts

⅓ cup (40 g) raw walnuts

1 teaspoon dried oregano

½ teaspoon kosher salt

⅓ teaspoon crushed red pepper flakes

3 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil

⅓ cup (60 g) golden raisins

1 bunch Swiss chard (7 ounces/200 g), stems finely chopped, leaves thinly sliced

½ preserved lemon, peel finely chopped (about

2 tablespoons) (see Tips)

12 ounces (340 g) whole-grain sturdy pasta (such as those shaped like trumpets, wagon wheels, bite-size shells, and shells)

Grated Pecorino Romano cheese (optional)

Freshly ground black pepper (optional)

To make the pesto, coarsely chop the garlic in the bowl of a food processor. Add the pistachios, pine nuts, walnuts, oregano, salt, and red pepper flakes and pulse about 15 times, until all the nuts are smaller than a pine nut.

Heat 2 tablespoons of the oil in a large nonstick skillet over medium-low heat. Add the pesto and raisins and cook, stirring often, until the smallest pieces of nut start to brown, 5 to 7 minutes. Scrape the pesto into a small bowl and set aside.

Using the same skillet, heat the remaining 1 tablespoon oil over medium heat. Cook the chard stems and preserved lemon until soft and starting to brown, 3 to 4 minutes. Add the chard leaves and cook, stirring often, until the leaves are wilted but still vibrant, 5 to 6 minutes.

Bring a large pot of salted water to a boil. Stir in the pasta and cook until just al dente, usually 1 to 2 minutes less than the package directions. Reserve $\frac{1}{2}$ cup (120 ml) of the pasta water, then drain the pasta in a colander. Return the pasta to the pot and add the pesto and chard. Toss well, drizzling with enough of the pasta water so the pesto and greens cling to the pasta.

To serve, scoop into shallow bowls. Top with grated cheese (if using), a drizzle of olive oil, and black pepper, if you like.

Tips: Preserved lemon peel adds a mellow, salty acidity to the dish. Look for jars in the condiments aisle of the grocery store. Or substitute 1 tablespoon lemon zest and $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon kosher salt.

While I prefer fresh, high-quality garlic, using already peeled cloves of garlic from the grocery store is a real time-saver here.