

This fresh and bright pesto packs a roasted pepper punch



Poblano Pistachio Pesto

Photos Susie Iventosch

By Susie Iventosch

When you smell roasting peppers over a fire, you know there will be something delicious to eat soon. That aroma is so enticing! This time, it's a creamy and spicy, fresh and bright pesto made with both roasted and fresh poblanos, jalapeños, pistachios, basil, cilantro, garlic, lime juice, and Pecorino Romano. It makes the perfect condiment for grilled meats, and it's fantastic with just about any Mexican dish you can imagine. We love to serve it with enchiladas or even drop a spoonful into chicken tortilla soup.

You could make this pesto with either raw or roasted peppers, but I really love the com-

bination because it gives the pesto the fresh vibrant characteristics as well as the smooth and smoky taste of the roasted peppers.

Don't worry if you think that roasting peppers will be a tedious task – roasting and then cooling them in a paper bag before peeling them. I have learned to take a great shortcut when it comes to roasting peppers. I remove the stems and seeds, grill them over medium heat on the barbecue for 2-3 minutes per side and then place them right in the food processor. No need to peel them at all, which saves a lot of time. You already know this if you've ever peeled roasted peppers!

For the fresh peppers, sim-



ply remove the stem and seeds and coarsely chop them before adding them to the food

processor

This pesto stores for several days or up to a week in the



refrigerator in an airtight container.

INGREDIENTS

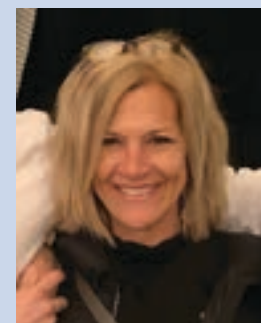
3 large poblano peppers, stem and seeds removed and cut in half lengthwise
1 jalapeño pepper, stems and seeds removed and cut in half lengthwise
1 cup cilantro leaves
8 large basil leaves (1/2 cup thinly sliced)
1/4 cup roasted, salted pistachios
1 clove garlic, minced
1/3 cup grated Pecorino Romano (or Parmesan cheese)
1/2 tsp. salt
1 tbsp. fresh lime juice
1/4 cup extra-virgin olive oil

DIRECTIONS

Drizzle three poblano halves and one jalapeño half with a little bit of olive oil. Roast these pepper halves on the grill over medium heat for 3-4 minutes per side, just until beginning to brown and blister. You can do this directly on the grill, or in an aluminum pan. Remove from grill and cool for about 10 minutes. (This step can be done several hours or a day ahead of time.)

Meanwhile, coarsely dice the remaining half of the peppers, both jalapeño and poblano. Add pistachios to the food processor and puree until very fine. Add cilantro, basil and cheese and continue to process. Add both roasted and raw poblano and jalapeño peppers, garlic, salt and lime juice, and puree until smooth.

Finally, drizzle in olive oil and process one final time until smooth. There will still be some lumps, but mostly smooth.



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'Between Two Worlds' – a moving French film in Orinda



Photo provided

By Sophie Braccini

Beyond the shock effect of a close-to-documentary film about those at the bottom of the social order, the French film "Between Two Worlds" talks about the impossibility of differing social classes to really connect. It also questions the possibility of lying without cheating, or the moral justification of dissimulation to serve a higher purpose. The movie is served magnificently by French star Juliette Binoche ("The Eng-

lish Patient" - Oscar for Best Supporting Actress - 1996) surrounded by a cast of amateur actors playing themselves.

The movie begins with a middle-aged woman who appears at her wit's end and financially desperate, seeking a job with the French State employment agency. She has moved away from an abusive marriage, she says, has not worked for 20 years and now needs to make a living on her own. The only job that seems possible is that of a janitor. She will do anything, she says. That is

how Marianne Winckler's journey starts. In the city of Ouistreham, located in northwestern France, Winckler works and interactions with women in similar difficult situations, broken families, immigrants, vulnerable people who are easily discounted and abused by the companies that employ them. Ouistreham also has a port with a ferry and when all else fails, becoming a part of the ferry cleaning crew is the job from hell that becomes the last resort for those who can't get anything better.

But Winckler is not exactly what she pretends to be. She makes little mistakes that betray her difference, until the full story is revealed and the friends she has made among the hard-working women feel betrayed and used, in spite of what might be Winckler's real motivation.

Forget any glamorous idea you might have about France. This is not a film about the charm of a little port in Normandy, its cheerful inhabitants and their wonderful cuisine. It is about what it is really like to be "have-nots" living in the shadows of those who "have." The group of workers are made mostly of women, rough women who often have to feed a family, and among whom a real solidarity exists. Binoche as Winckler does not wear any visible makeup in this movie, her eyes are red with tiredness and her wrinkles show.

Winckler is surrounded by a cast of women from Ouistreham playing their

own roles. One of them especially, H el ene Lambert who plays the betrayed friend, is totally on par with Binoche, the Oscar-winning actress. The result is poignant. It is almost a documentary of the lives of these women forced to work at a furious pace that breaks their bodies for a pittance. The movie shows the humanity of these mostly uneducated women as they live their hard lives. They are shown as multidimensional heroines who laugh, love, and fight for respect, even when they don't get any. Their courage is tremendous. Especially in this post-COVID time, the movie asks about the place in society of all the service people who take the jobs nobody wants and remain mostly invisible to the rest of the population.

The film also shows with finesse the difficulty to communicate between different social groups. It does not try to pretend that there is solidarity when people are from very different worlds, even if friendship and respect can happen. "Between Two Worlds" is not an optimistic movie with a happy ending and redemption, but it can create a catharsis and renewed respect for our fellow human beings living invisibly and servicing us.

"Between Two Worlds" is brought to Orinda by the local nonprofit, the International Film Showcase. It will play for at least a week starting on Aug. 25. Tickets at www.orindamovies.com/

Brook Street resident revitalizes neighborhood gathering after a pandemic hiatus



Photo Sharon K. Sobotta

By Sharon K. Sobotta

Those who live on Brook Street, play at the Brook Street Park or travel up and down Brook Street on the way to school or while partaking in a downtown stroll, have likely crossed paths with 80-year-

old Margaret Szabo. And those who've chatted with her, showed kindness to her grandchild at the park or just answered their door when she showed up to introduce herself, have likely been on the receiving end of an invitation to Margaret and Jon Szabo's annual neighborhood party.

After a three-year pandemic hiatus, three dozen Lafayette residents from all ages and stages of life gathered in the Szabo's backyard on a sunny afternoon. A handful of kids swam in the glistening swimming pool while adults sat around picnic tables connecting with each other over conversation, bubbly and a potluck buffet that was served inside Margaret Szabo's childhood home.

"It's fun to know people and have people to say hi to as you walk through the community," Margaret Szabo says as she sits beside neighbor Scott Tenenbaum, whose lived on Brook Street for 40 years and Cheng Chi and his family who moved to the area from Shanghai, China just before the pandemic.

Szabo and her husband launched the annual neighborhood gathering tradition in 2005. And it's become a staple celebration that those who've crossed Szabo's path, lived near her or once did, look forward to every year. The annual tradition was put on pause between 2020-23 as the world dealt with COVID, but in spite of the three year gap, folks came back together as if they hadn't missed a beat.

"It's nice to once again be able to meet with friends and neighbors and acquaintances and people I've never met before," Scott Tenenbaum said. "It's important to be able to keep in touch

with neighbors and be able to put yourself out in front of the community and connect with each other."

Tenenbaum doesn't take the gathering of people who share the common thread of living or spending time in the surrounding area but have a vast array of life experiences for granted.

"Margaret really puts herself out there. She goes out and meets neighbors and knocks on their doors or gets their numbers and calls them to personally invite them," Tenenbaum said. "That helps people feel included, like they belong."

Cheng Chi and his wife and daughter moved to Lafayette from Shanghai just ahead of the pandemic and attended Szabo's first party (which was the last one she hosted until this year) in 2019.

"When we came here from Shanghai, we were very happy to know the people here and be a part of this quiet and peaceful community," Chi said. "It feels nice to be included and to be warmly welcomed in this community."

Chi's daughter is a rising fifth grader at Lafayette Elementary School and strikes up a conversation with a rising sixth grader named Shreyansh, who she recognizes from school last year, as Chi shares his experience.

"That's what it's all about," an elder at the table chimes in. "Connections."