



This is Boursin...all dressed up with garlic, fresh herbs, and ready to be served with a good crisp cracker or breadstick.

Boursin

This the recipe that made me fall in love with Boursin, from Marge Clarke author of *It's About Thyme*. It is the real thing. My variations are in parenthesis. As a purist, she would tell you, one can't make Boursin with dried herbs, only fresh will do. After trying this, I think you'll agree!

8 ounces Cream Cheese (I use the low fat or fat free)
1 Tbsp fresh lemon (I usually just add the juice of a whole lemon)
1 minced clove garlic (I use at least 2)
½ tsp Worcestershire and ½ tsp dry mustard
1 Tbsp each of finely chopped fresh parsley and fresh chives

4 Tbsp minced fresh herbs* (I double this)

*Marge says to at least use 4 of the following herbs ---the more, the better. Rosemary, thyme, dill, Greek oregano, marjoram, summer savory, basil and/or sage.

Combine all ingredients but do not beat it. Just mix gently and thoroughly. (Beating them will make the herbs smeary as they are fresh. The flavor will be fine, just the presentation ruined. Cover tightly and refrigerate. When ready to serve, bring to room temperature. Makes about 1 cup. (I like to shape into a roundish-ball and garnish with springs of fresh herbs.)

Basil Pesto

Once again, as a purist, this is another dish that simply cannot be made with dried basil...that is a big NO. Only fresh will do.

4 cups coarsely chopped fresh basil leaves

1 cup pine nuts (I usually omit these as I am not a fan and the pesto turns out fine. Or you can use ½ cup of toasted walnuts which are a nice substitute.)

½ cup extra virgin olive oil (or best available)

1 cup grated Parmesan (fresh is best) *

3 cloves garlic, crushed OR ½ cup fresh garlic scapes!

Use your food processor. Add all ingredients, except the olive oil. Process about 10 seconds. With the motor running, slowly pour in the olive oil and process another 10 seconds, or until the oil is absorbed. Stop motor, scrape sides, then process another 5-10 seconds longer. Put pesto in a glass jar with a lid and cover with another drizzle of olive oil---to keep pesto fresh. Cover tightly and store in the refrigerator for up to one week. Makes about 1 cup.

*IF you don't have freshly grated Parmesan cheese, don't let that keep you from making this pesto. Use the regular Parmesan you buy in a can or jar.



IF you have never made or tried pesto before, fear not...this is really what it looks like “thick, green paste”. Remember, green is good and good for you. It really is the true taste of mid-summer. I serve pesto so many ways. In addition to pasta dishes, I also love it as a topping for a baked or broiled chicken breasts. Or my favorite... slathered on fresh baguette bread sliced thin, topped with either bruschetta or sundried tomatoes, then sprinkle with freshly grated Parmesan. Broil until cheese is melt-y and slightly crisped. Each bite, an explosion of marvelous flavor.

Balsamic Marinade

(London Broil)

INGREDIENTS

4 large garlic cloves, minced
1/3 cup Balsamic vinegar
Big squeeze of fresh lemon juice
3 T Dijon mustard
2 tablespoons Worcestershire sauce
1 tablespoon soy sauce
1 teaspoon dried oregano, crumbled
1 teaspoon dried basil, crumbled
1 teaspoon dried thyme, crumbled
1/2 teaspoon dried hot red pepper flakes
2/3 cup olive oil
1 (2 to 2 1/2 pound) London broil

DIRECTIONS

To make marinade: In a bowl, whisk together marinade ingredients until combined well. Put London broil in a large resealable plastic bag and pour marinade over it. Seal bag, pressing out excess air, and set in a shallow dish. Marinate meat, chilled, turning bag once or twice, for 8 hours. Remove meat from the marinade, pat to dry. Reserve marinade

Add reserved marinade to a small sauce pan and simmer about 10 minutes until thickens. Set aside.

Preheat a grill, cook meat on an oiled rack, turning once, ~5-6 minutes on each side, for rare meat.

Let meat rest ~5 minutes. Cut meat diagonally across the grain into thin slices. Drizzle with marinade reduction.



Tarragon Vinegar

I first became enamored with herbal vinegars after starting my own herb garden. They take a simple meal and turn it into something exquisite. Tarragon vinegar was of course, first, so I could master a béarnaise sauce and salad dressings

Basically, you take about 2 cups white wine vinegar, a pint size mason jar or decorative glass bottle, and about 1 cup of fresh French tarragon leaves (four to five 5-inch sprigs).

Fill the jar or bottle about half full with freshly picked French tarragon leaves that you rinsed well and patted dry. Bruise the leaves a bit to release the essential oils. Fill the jar/bottle with white wine vinegar. Make sure to mix the leaves and add more vinegar to fill so that the leaves are covered.

Close the lid or cork the bottle and allow to sit in cool dark place for 2-4 weeks. I then use this for béarnaise, vinaigrette, or just to sprinkle on steamed spinach.

Other Combo's

Red Wine Vinegar with Basil, Oregano, garlic. Great base for Italian Vinaigrette

Apple Cider Vinegar with Cilantro, garlic, and cayenne. A MUST in your marinade for Fajita's



HERB BUTTER (Compound Butter)

I have made herb butter for years. It is a great way to use little sprigs and snippets of the end of season herbs. They are now all the rage and more properly called "compound butters" since they contain more than herbs. I add minced peppers, sun dried tomatoes, garlic and more. Once you have the basics down pat you have my permission to play and create your own. The flavor combinations are endless.

I start with unsalted butter and add my own salts. I like to play here and add a Himalayan Pink salt, kosher or even a seasoned salt.

Directions are simple.

Soften unsalted butter and add the minced, savory tidbits of herbs. Stir with a fork to blend. I form mine into a log, wrap in a plastic wrap, place in freezer to harden. If sealed well, herb butter will last several months in the freezer. Let thaw in the refrigerator.

Garlic, Basil, Sundried Tomato Compound Butter

1 stick unsalted butter
1 Tablespoon minced, sun dried tomatoes
1 Tablespoon minced, fresh basil
1 clove minced fresh garlic
1/2 teaspoon salt (Optional)

~Cut the butter into 1/4" medallions and fancy-up a plate for a dinner party.
~Serve on good crusty bread or baguette
~Makes a lovely twist to garlic toast I like to spread this version on thick slices of fresh, crusty bread and toast it under a broiler.
~Slather on grilled ears of corn. Unexpected, yum.
~After you saute shrimp, add a bit to the skillet and stir to coat the shrimp.
~Dollop on top of grilled meat, chicken, fish or shrimp
~Brush on grilled vegetables or kebabs Serve as topping for garlic toast