

Linguine with Chicken and Spicy Pesto

Traci Horany Bayer

3 Tbsp. olive oil, divided	12 oz. linguine
1 lb. skinless, boneless chicken breasts, cut in 1/3-inch strips	Freshly grated Parmesan cheese
Salt and pepper	
3 green onions, thinly sliced	Pesto:
1/3 cup chopped pecans, toasted	2 cups loosely packed basil leaves
1 Tbsp. minced garlic	1/2 cup grated Parmesan cheese
2 to 3 tsp. minced, seeded jalapeño chiles	1/4 cup toasted almonds
1/4 to 1/2 tsp. dried crushed red pepper flakes	3 garlic cloves, peeled
1/2 to 3/4 cup pesto (store-bought or recipe to follow)	1/3 cup olive oil
	Salt and pepper, to taste

Heat 2 tablespoons oil in a large heavy skillet over medium-high heat. Season chicken strips with salt and pepper. Add chicken to skillet and sauté until cooked through and browned on both sides (about 4 to 5 minutes). With a slotted spoon transfer chicken to bowl. Add remaining 1 tablespoon oil to skillet; sauté green onions, pecans, garlic, jalapeño, and pepper flakes until the onions begin to wilt, about 3 minutes. Add pesto and chicken with accumulated juices to pan. Stir to blend well; remove from heat.

Meanwhile, cook linguine in boiling salted water until tender. Drain, reserving about 3/4 cup cooking liquid. Return the skillet to medium heat. Add 1/2 cup pasta cooking liquid to sauce and stir to blend. Transfer pasta to a large serving bowl and top with sauce. Sprinkle with Parmesan cheese and toss to coat pasta and evenly distribute sauce, adding remaining cooking liquid if pasta seems dry. Serve immediately.

Pesto: Combine basil, cheese, almonds, and peeled garlic in a food processor; pulse until finely chopped. With motor running, pour olive oil through feed tube and process until finely ground. Season with salt and pepper.