

toasted ricotta gnocchi with pistachio pesto

serves 2 to 4

gnocchi

2 cups (from one 1-pound or 454-gram container) whole-milk ricotta

1 large egg

½ cup (50 grams) finely grated Parmesan, plus more for serving

1½ teaspoons (4 grams) kosher salt

1 cup (130 grams) all-purpose flour

Olive oil

pesto

½ cup (70 grams) shelled pistachios, salted or unsalted

1 large or 2 small garlic cloves

1 teaspoon (3 grams) kosher salt

Freshly ground pepper and/or red-pepper flakes, to taste

1½ cups (45 grams, or 1½ ounces) arugula leaves

½ cup (105 grams) olive oil

If you've ever sworn off gnocchi-making forever after bombing at it, I'm here to tell you what a reader once told me: Psst, you should try ricotta gnocchi. I'm so glad she did, because ricotta gnocchi is much, much harder to fail at, and believe me, I try all of the time. It requires none of the baking or ricing potatoes or persnickety kneading—oh no, that was too much kneading, and now they're a gluey mess heading for the trash can!—of potato gnocchi. You can go from a tub of store-bought ricotta to golden, crisp-edged, cheesy nuggets in under 45 minutes.

Why nuggets? I personally find ricotta gnocchi that's been boiled a bit too fluffy and soft. But I've always loved the potato gnocchi at Barbuto, a restaurant in the West Village, where fresh gnocchi are browned in butter and oil instead of boiling, for gorgeous color and texture. I started doing this with ricotta gnocchi and have never looked back.

This recipe makes what looks like two servings, but I'm telling you, it's closer to four. Ricotta gnocchi are rich, and I've yet to meet anyone who could eat a heap of them. I add a quick, sharp, crunchy pesto here for even more contrast. In the summer, we love this with a simple tomato salad (oil, vinegar, flaky salt) on the side.

Prepare the ricotta: Lightly dust a large baking sheet with flour. On your counter, stack two squares of paper towels, and scoop the ricotta on top, flattening out the cheese to mostly cover the towels. Cover with another two squares of paper towel, pat it on top, and set it aside for 15 minutes.

Form the gnocchi: In a large bowl, beat together the egg, Parmesan, and salt to combine. Add the drained ricotta, and mix it thoroughly. Add the flour, and mix only until it disappears.

Flour your counter well, and scoop the ricotta mixture onto it. Divide the ricotta in half. Using floured hands and a gentle touch, roll the first half into a ¾-inch-thick rope about 25 to 28 inches long. (If this is a challenge on your counter space, you can roll it into four 12-to-14-inch ropes.) Cut the rope into ¾-inch segments, and scatter them on the prepared baking sheet. Repeat with the second half of the ricotta dough. →

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Freeze the gnocchi on the tray for 10 to 15 minutes, until cool and lightly firmed to the touch but not frozen through. (Firming them up makes them easier to brown in the pan, but if you have utter confidence in your frying skills, you can skip this step.)

Meanwhile, make the pesto: Blend the nuts, garlic, salt, and a couple pinches of pepper in a food processor until roughly chopped. Add the arugula, and let the machine roughly chop it, too. In a thin stream, add the olive oil, running the machine the whole time. Taste the pesto, and add more salt or pepper to taste.

Cook the gnocchi: In a large nonstick pan, heat 3 tablespoons olive oil over medium heat. Add half of the gnocchi—try to space them apart a tiny bit, but don't go crazy with it—and let them cook, undisturbed, until they are a deep golden brown underneath, about 2 to 3 minutes. Now that the gnocchi have set a little, you can flip and toss them a few times until they're browned on more sides, about 5 to 7 minutes total cooking time. I find them much easier to move around with a fork than a spatula, but of course be careful of your pan's finish. Use a slotted spoon to transfer gnocchi to a serving bowl. Repeat with the second half of the gnocchi, adding more olive oil if needed; leave them in the pan when they're done. (The second batch always goes faster, because the pan is hotter.)

Assemble the gnocchi to serve: Return the first half of toasted gnocchi to the pan, and add 2 tablespoons water. Cook, stirring the gnocchi, for 1 minute; this will help the pesto to coat them smoothly. Remove from the heat, and add half of the arugula pesto, gently stirring, and then add more to taste. Pour the gnocchi into the serving bowl, and garnish with Parmesan.