

Kaffir Lime Leaf Pesto - Perfumed essence

The method below uses just leaves, olive oil and a dash of salt. Store it in the fridge. Use as is or, if appropriate when you go to use the sauce, add other ingredients like pepper, chopped chilli or garlic. About 1/3 cup seems to last in the fridge for a few weeks. If you make more, freeze the rest. It takes a reasonable amount of time for the preparation of the leaves, and the blending. However, the result is worth it. Use an older style blender if you can for the quantities given below, however, for a small quantity, finely chop the leaves then crush with a mortar and pestle.

For 1/2 to 2/3 cup:

- 30 to 40 kaffir lime leaves
- up to 1/3 cup of quality olive oil
- 1/8 tsp salt or just a dash

(After scraping out the sauce, the blender will be lined with a significant amount of lovely kaffir lime flavoured oil. Thus immediately make a kaffir flavoured pesto from parsley or similar or make a chimichurri style sauce. Thus, have extra fresh herbs on hand.)



Method:

Thoroughly wash, drain and dry the leaves: use a salad spinner or pat them dry. When ready to make the sauce, use a sharp knife to slice the outside leaf sections off the middle spine - discard these spines as they are too woody. Use a knife or sharpened cleaver to shred or chop the leaves as finely as possible, like chopping parsley, so they will break up more easily when blending (or pounding in the pestle if using one).

Place the chopped leaves and salt in a traditional blender or vitamiser if you have one. Otherwise use a food processor or wand. Either way, you will need to blend the mixture several times - push the leaves down further and turn the mixture over to get as fine a result as possible. The aim is to break down the leaves so the mixture is reasonably texture free.

Add enough oil to get the mixture to combine, adding more oil as necessary for a paste-like mixture, though the oil will still separate as the leaves will not break down completely. When the appropriate texture is obtained, scrape the mixture into a jar and refrigerate.

Serve:

Use small amounts as a flavouring for soups, salads, sandwiches, breakfast eggs, curries etc.

Equipment:

Sharp knife or cleaver. Traditional blender/vitamiser/wand/food processor or mortar and pestle.

Difficulty and Time:

Moderately difficult (3/5). 20 to 30 minutes to prepare.

Notes and variations:

- Don't go overboard with the salt. More of it, and other flavours, can be added later.