



"The Essence of Paso Robles"™

Crisp Polenta Rounds with Pesto and Pine Nuts

Wine Pairing: Robert Hall NV Brut Rosé

Makes: 24

Polenta

2 2/3 cups whole milk
1 fresh thyme sprig
1 cup yellow cornmeal

1 fresh rosemary sprig
1 garlic clove, peeled

Pesto

½ cup (packed) fresh basil leaves
2 TBLS. Freshly grated parmesan cheese
½ cup extra-virgin olive oil plus more for frying

½ cup pine nuts, toasted, divided

For Polenta:

Lightly oil a 13x9-inch baking pan. Bring first 4 ingredients to simmer in heavy large saucepan over medium heat; simmer 5 minutes. Using slotted spoon, remove herbs and garlic. Whisk in cornmeal in slow steady stream; return to boil. Reduce heat to low. Simmer until polenta is very thick, whisking often, about 10 minutes. Turn polenta out into prepared pan; spread to ½-inch-thick layer (polenta will not fill pan). Cool completely. *Do Ahead. Can be made 2 days ahead. Cover and chill.*

For Pesto:

Blanch basil in small saucepan of boiling salted water 5 seconds. Drain, rinse, and squeeze dry. Place basil in mini processor. Add ¼ cup pine nuts and cheese. Blend to coarse puree. With machine running, add ½ cup oil. Blend until pesto is almost smooth. Season with salt and pepper. *Do Ahead. Can be made 1 day ahead. Cover and chill.*

Using 1 1/2- inch round or scalloped cutter cut out 24 polenta rounds. Pour enough oil into heavy large nonstick skillet to coat bottom; heat over medium high heat. Sauté polenta rounds until beginning to brown, about 1 minute per side; transfer to small baking sheet. *Do Ahead. Can be made 4 hours ahead. Let stand at room temperature. Rewarm in 375 degree oven 5 minutes before serving.*

Arrange polenta rounds on platter. Top with pesto; sprinkle with pine nuts.