

Broad bean and pesto salad

Early broad beans that are ready to harvest at the end of May and beginning of June are so tender that you can actually cook the skins too if you prepare them the day they are picked. All you have to do is cut through the skin between each bean and cook the pieces as you would the beans by boiling them until tender in salted water. Or if you wish cook the very small pods whole, having removed the top and tail, if they are no bigger than 7cm long. It's worth noting that broad beans steam well too.

For 4 people you will need:

- 12oz (350g) pasta of your choice
- 8oz (250g) podded broad beans
- Handful fresh basil leaves
- 2 cloves garlic
- Half oz (15g) Parmesan cheese grated and a little extra to scatter over salad before serving
- 100ml olive oil
- Salt and freshly ground black peppercorns to season.

Method:

- Cook the pasta according to the instructions on the packet in boiling salted water. When cooked, drain and rinse under cold water and leave to continue draining in a colander while you make the pesto.
- Cook the broad beans in boiling salted water for about five minutes or until soft and drain and rinse under cold water to cool them down.
- Place the beans, along with the garlic, basil and Parmesan cheese into a food processor and zap for a few seconds until combined but not completely smooth. Then, with the motor running, gradually add the oil in a steady stream until you have a thick sauce.
- Season with salt and freshly ground black peppercorns and toss together with the pasta until it's coated evenly. Scatter a little more Parmesan cheese over finished dish before serving.
- Serve as a side salad.

NOTE: Broad beans tend to discolour if left out too long once they are cooked, so this salad is best prepared just before you want to eat.