Artichoke Pesto Pasta

A note before you start:

As I state on my recipe page, I firmly believe that if you can find a pre-made product that meets your taste standards, by all means buy it rather than make it! In this case, I discovered Giovanni Rana's Basil Pesto which meets both my taste and fresh ingredient requirements. I found it in the deli area in a refrigerated case at my local supermarket.

Ingredients:

- 1 16 oz box of pasta of your choice. I happen to think a shaped pasta works best here as opposed to a spaghetti. Suggesting fusilli, cavatapi, or bow tie
- 1 head of broccoli cut into bite size florets
- 1 12.5 oz container of room temperature basil pesto* (pls read cook's notes before you begin)
- 1 can of artichoke hearts, drained and excess water gently squeezed out
- ¼ c of heavy cream (you can substitute light cream, or milk)
- ¼ c of chicken stock
- Fresh Parmesan to taste
- Salt & Pepper

Step 1:
Fill a large pot, with water and bring to a boil. While waiting for this, cut the broccoli into bite size pieces. When the water is boiling, gently and slowly add 1 TBSP of salt. Add the broccoli and cook for 1-2 minutes (depending upon how large your pieces are. Promptly remove the broccoli with a spider utensil (see the picture) or slotted spoon and place in a serving bowl. Broccoli will be 'al dente' but residual cooking will occur.

Step 2:
Add the pasta to the boiling water and cook according to the package directions.

Step 3:
Meanwhile, cut up the artichokes into bite size pieces (quarter them and slice) and add to the broccoli in the bowl. Next, add the container of pesto. Mix in the cream, and chicken stock (these are essentially to thin out the pesto a bit as the brand I used is quite thick). Gently toss all together

Step 4:
Drain the pasta (do not rinse under cold water). Add to the artichoke, broccoli, pesto mixture and toss to coat. Add freshly shaved parmesan and enjoy!

Cook's Notes:

*Pesto should never be heated! It will discolor and separate, so it's best to use it at room temperature. It can be left on the counter for up to 2 hours (and I'm guessing even longer than that, but I don't recommend it). The warm broccoli and pasta will warm it up enough.
**Feel free to add rotisserie chicken, sun dried tomatoes, even julienned ham to make this a complete meal.

Buon Appetito!

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