Tuscan Kale Pesto

1 pound Tuscan or other tender kale
Kosher or sea salt
2 garlic cloves
Red pepper flakes or 1 chipotle chile, softened in water
¼-½ cup extra virgin olive oil

Strip away the tough central ribs of the kale and discard. Cook the kale in generously salted boiling water until tender, 10 to 15 minutes. Drain, refresh in cold water, and drain again. Squeeze the cooked kale by the handful to remove all excess moisture.

With the motor running, drop garlic into a food processor fitted with S-blade. Add kale, red pepper flakes, olive oil, and salt to taste. Puree to form a smooth stiff paste, adding oil as needed. Scrape mixture into a glass bowl or jar. If using a chipotle chile, bury it in the pesto for 1 to 2 hours to impart a smoky warm heat.

Serve as a spread with grilled toasts, with or without ricotta cheese, or use as condiment in vegetable soups. The pesto may also be thinned with pasta cooking water as a pasta sauce. The pesto will keep refrigerated up to 1 week.

Makes about 2 cups.

Adapted from "Red, White and Greens" by Faith Willinger (HarperCollins, 1996)

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