



Q: What's a quick way to pull off an informal yet festive lunch?

A: Make it easy on yourself! Start with flowers from your local grocery store and use a rental company to limit your choices and save yourself from running around. Then, rely on food that's prepared ahead of time to be sure you enjoy your own festivities. Pistou is a French version of pesto and our recipe is a cinch. Shown here with herb-grilled jumbo shrimp and toasted Italian couscous, it makes for an impressive plate that keeps you out of the kitchen and sets the color palette for your spring green table. It will look like you've fussed, but this is the ultimate in simplicity!



ELEMENTS OF STYLE

Build a collection of interesting vessels in a variety of shapes and sizes. They'll allow you to get creative with your arrangements and elevate store-bought bouquets. Here are some favorites that can handle a few buds or an armful of blooms.



littala
Alvar Aalto
Collection
vase in apple
green; \$125.
[vincishome
products.com](http://vincishomeproducts.com)



Oscar de la Renta
Large Faux
Bois Vase;
\$295.
[wellappointed
house.com](http://wellappointedhouse.com)



Global Views
Gemstone
T-Lite Bud
Vase;
\$98-\$173.
zincdoor.com



WATERCRESS & MICRO CELERY PISTOU

INGREDIENTS

- 3 garlic cloves
- 1 cup (packed) fresh basil leaves
- 2 cups watercress leaves
- 1/2 cup pack micro celery
(can substitute celery leaves)
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1/4 cup extra virgin olive oil
- 1/4 cup grated Parmesan cheese
- 1/4 cup cold water

PREPARATION

Finely chop garlic in processor. Add basil, watercress, micro celery and salt.

Process until finely chopped, scraping down sides of bowl occasionally.

With machine running, gradually blend in oil.

Add cheese; process to blend well.

Add water as necessary for a thinner consistency.

Season with pepper. Taste for salt.

Can be made 2 days ahead.