

Pasta with Sicilian Pesto

My wife and I were exhausted after a long day of walking and sight-seeing in Venice. We stopped for dinner and ordered a plate of pasta with Sicilian Pesto. We were thrilled with the flavors! We asked the waiter about the herb combination and he explained that the addition of marjoram and substitution of almonds for pine nuts made it Sicilian-style. After a little experimentation at home, we landed on this version.

Here's a perfect pasta for a fall evening. It's loaded with newly harvested zucchini, summer squash, peppers and mushrooms. The Sicilian Pesto turns it into a special pasta experience.

Finish the week with a smile.

Preparation time: 40 minutes - Servings: 2 (plus leftovers)

Organize Your Ingredients!

Notes on Organizing

Prep and organize ingredients before you start cooking. Tonight you'll need 3 cloves of garlic: 2 whole, peeled cloves for the Sicilian Pesto and 1 chopped for the Pasta.

Sicilian Pesto

1/2 C. slivered almonds (toasted)
2-1/2 C. washed basil leaves
1/4 C. fresh marjoram leaves
2 cloves garlic (peeled)
1/3 C. olive oil
1/2 C. shredded Parmesan cheese

Plant-based Choice or Optional Chicken

Plant-based Choice:

1 tsp. olive oil
18-20 pieces of frozen Morningstar Chik'n
Strips or similar plant-based product
1/4 C. white wine

Optional Chicken:

1 tsp. olive oil
1 boneless, skinless chicken breast
1/2 C. white wine

Salad and Dressing

fixings for a green salad

Dressing:

2 T. olive oil
3 T. Balsamic vinegar
2 tsp. prepared mustard
2 tsp. honey
1/3 C. low-sodium vegetable broth

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Pasta:

2 C. dried, whole wheat penne pasta

Vegetables:

1 tsp. olive oil
1-1/2 C. Cremini mushrooms (sliced)
2 tsp. canola oil
one 6" zucchini (1/4" rounds/chopped)
one 6" yellow summer squash (1/4" rounds
chopped)
1 clove garlic (smashed and chopped)
2/3 C. sweet onion (thin-sliced)
2/3 C. red bell pepper (thin-sliced)

1/2 C. Sicilian pesto
1/3 C. starchy pasta cooking water
1/3 C. low-sodium vegetable broth
2 T. shredded Parmesan cheese

Let's Prepare, Cook, and Plate This!

Basic Assembly Instructions

Start by putting the pasta water on to boil. When water boils, drop in dried pasta and cook 8 minutes or until tender. Reserve 1/3 C. of the pasta cooking water, then drain and rinse the pasta. Set cooked pasta aside until needed in the recipe.

Sicilian Pesto

1. Place all Sicilian Pesto ingredients in food processor and grind until fine.
2. Measure 1/2 C. pesto for tonight's meal. Store unused pesto in fridge in container with a tight-fitting lid.
3. Pour about 1/4 C. olive oil over the top of the pesto before storing.

(When using pesto stored in the fridge, scrape back the oil on top and spoon off desired amount. Re-cover with oil. Pesto will keep a couple of weeks. It's also great on any variety of pasta or roasted vegetables.)

Plant-based Choice or Optional Chicken

Plant-based choice:

Brown Chick'n strips in oil and add white wine. Cover and let wine cook away. Remove from heat, let cool and thin-slice lengthwise.

Optional Chicken:

Brown chicken breast in oiled pan. Once browned, add white wine and cover pan. Cook over medium-low heat 5 minutes per side. Allow to cool and slice.

Salt and pepper to taste.

Salad and Dressing

Make green salads on individual plates.

Combine dressing ingredients in a small jar with a tight-fitting lid. Shake well and set aside.

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1. Brown mushrooms in oil. Remove from pan and set aside. Add canola oil to the pan and heat until oil shimmers. Sear the zucchini and summer squash rounds until browned. Throw chopped garlic into the pan with the zucchini and toss until garlic becomes fragrant. Remove zucchini and summer squash from pan and set side with mushrooms.
2. Drop onions and peppers into pan and toss until onions begin to brown. Return mushrooms and vegetables to pan. Add cooked noodles and Chick'n Strips (or optional chicken) and toss.
3. Mix 1/2 C. pesto, pasta cooking water and vegetable broth in a bowl. Pour over the pasta and toss well. Remove from heat.

Plate the Meal

Spoon 2 C. pasta and vegetables into pasta bowls. Top with 1 T. Parmesan per serving. Serve salads and dressing on the side.

Let us know what you think, and ask any questions you may have! chezdon@plate6.com