

Dress Up Your Valentine's Dinner with Tuxedo Farfalle and Basil Pesto

By Chef Bob Skolnick Photography by Marty Snortum Studio



HOW MUCH PASTA TO COOK

There is some conjecture on this subject, but I recommend you use this simple rule of thumb on how much pasta to cook per person: when cooking dried pasta, use 3 ounces dry for a starter portion and 5 ounces dry for the entrée portion. When cooking fresh pasta, use 3.5 ounces for a starter and 6 ounces for an entrée portion.

HOW MUCH SAUCE TO PREPARE

How much sauce to use is a matter of personal taste, but the biggest mistake most non-Italians make is to use too much sauce. The pasta should be coated with the sauce, not drenched. When the pasta and the sauce are tossed together, there should not be extra sauce swimming around at the bottom.

PINE NUTS

These small, creamy white kernels taken from the nuts of pine trees are always sold shelled and blanched. Roasting can enhance the flavor of this nut, often used in desserts as well as in pesto and other savory dishes.

BASIL

There are many varieties of this spicy, aromatic herb, but sweet basil is most commonly used. Basil plays an important role in Italian, Asian and Indonesian cuisines, and have a high moisture content. Fresh basil should be shredded with a very sharp knife (taking care not to bruise the leaves) and should be added to the cooking process at the last minute.

Serves 4

- 20 ounces Tuxedo Farfalle, dry*
- 4 1/4 quarts light chicken stock
- 2 cups fresh basil leaves (stems removed)
- 3 tablespoon pine nuts
- 2 cloves fresh garlic - peeled
- 3 tablespoons freshly grated Reggiano Parmesan
- 2 tablespoons freshly grated Pecorino Romano Cheese
- 1/4 cup olive oil - extra virgin imported
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 1/4 teaspoon crushed fresh black pepper

* Farfalle Zebra is a hand made Italian pasta from durum wheat semolina flour. Produced by Antonio Marella in Italy and imported by Crystal Foods in Massachusetts, the pasta can be purchased over the phone - (800) 225 -3573. You can also find it locally at The End of The Vine in Ruidoso, (505) 630-9463.



PARMIGIANO REGGIANO CHEESE

Parmesan cheese gets its name from the Parma region in northern Italy. It is a hard cheese with a crumbly texture, aged 2 to 3 years in large wooden wheels. True Parmesan can only be stamped Parmigiano Reggiano if it is produced within the provinces of Parma and Reggio, where it is still made using the original method. It tastes best when you purchase it in a wedge and grate it yourself. To store, wrap it in greaseproof paper and foil and place on the bottom shelf of your refrigerator

TO PREPARE THE SAUCE

Place the pine nuts in a saucepan and stir over low heat for a few minutes until golden. Allow the pine nuts to cool. Place the pine nuts, fresh basil, garlic, salt and cheeses into a food processor and pulse for 20 seconds until finely chopped. With the processor running gradually, add the oil in a thin steady stream until a paste is formed. Add the fresh ground black pepper to taste. Gently toss the sauce with the warm pasta until fully coated.

Note: You can make the pesto up to a week in advance. If you do, place the pesto in an airtight container. Float a little additional olive oil on the top of the sauce to keep it from exposure to air, otherwise the basil will turn black.

TO COOK THE PASTA

This pasta should be prepared and served right away. Precooking and reheating is not recommended. In a large pot bring the light chicken stock to a boil. Add the pasta and stir gently. Typically, shaped dry pasta is fragile and aggressive stirring will break the pasta. Cook the pasta until al dente (firm to the bite but fully cooked). When draining the pasta from the pot into a colander, drain off most of the cooking liquid slowly until the pasta is uncovered and then gently transfer the pasta to the colander. Be careful not to break the pasta while doing so. Quickly rinse the pasta with hot water, shaking off the excess water. Set aside for immediate service.

PECORINO ROMANO CHEESE

Pecorino cheeses are a hard-cooked sheep milk curd cheese with a grainy texture similar to that of Parmesan. Pecorino Romano is aged longer than most cheeses, and is therefore harder and more suitable for grating (it will also keep in the refrigerator for months). Pecorino fresco is the name given to the fresh young cheese. When refrigerating, fully enclose the cheese in plastic wrap, as it has a strong aroma that can permeate other foods.

Flavorful



Authentic



Romantic



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