

Pesto Caprese Penne Pasta

A bright and flavorful vegetarian pasta packed with protein. Add chicken or sausage for the meat lovers.



Servings

4 SERVINGS

Prep Time

10 MINUTES

Cook Time

11 MINUTES

Ingredients

Caprese Pasta

- 1 box Barilla ProteinPLUS Penne (14.5 oz)
- 1 cup cherry tomatoes (or grape tomatoes) (halved)
- 8 oz mozzarella perline
- 1 1/4 cup basil pesto (recipe below, or your favorite pesto)
- 1/4 cup fresh basil leaves thinly sliced, for tossing with the pasta

Pesto

- 2 cups fresh basil leaves
- 1 cup fresh parsley (or spinach, or kale)
- 1/3 cup extra virgin olive oil
- 1/3 cup freshly grated Parmesan cheese
- 1/2 cup pine nuts
- 1 lemon
- 3 cloves garlic
- 1/2 tsp crushed red pepper flakes
- 1 tsp salt

Instructions

1. Bring a large pot of water to a boil. When boiling, add the Barilla ProteinPLUS Penne and cook as per package directions to al dente, approximately 11 minutes. When the pasta is done, reserve 1 cup of the pasta water. Drain and set aside.

2. While the pasta is cooking, prepare the pesto. Toast the pine nuts over medium low heat until just starting to turn a golden brown.

3. In a food processor, combine all of the pesto ingredients together. Process until you reach your desired consistency. Season to taste with additional salt, lemon, garlic, or red pepper flakes.

4. Slice the tomatoes in half into bite sized pieces. Slice the 1/4 cup fresh basil leaves from the pasta ingredient list into thin slices.

5. Return the cooked pasta, pesto sauce, tomatoes, mozzarella, and fresh basil to the large cooking pot (or in a large bowl). Toss to combine. Add a little of the reserved pasta water as needed to loosen the sauce for even coating. Serve immediately.

Recipe Notes

I love the mozzarella perline (pearl sized) cheese because it is the perfect bite sized shape for this pasta. You can also use larger chunks of mozzarella, cut to preference. Shredded mozzarella will also work but will likely melt and make a stringy pasta.

You can use any favorite, jarred pesto as an alternative. You will need approximately 1 1/4 cups of pesto for moderate coverage as in the pictures. Find my pesto recipe here! One batch is the perfect amount.

This pesto recipe is best with freshly grated cheese. Using canned cheese will greatly affect the flavor, texture, and final result of the pesto sauce.

<http://www.threeolivesbranch.com/recipe/pesto-caprese-penne-pasta/>