

Secret Ingredient Pasta Salad with Jammy Tomatoes

Serves 6-8

This pasta salad is very good, kind of has a “cold Amatriciana” feel to it, which, if you’ve ever eaten cold, leftover Amatriciana, you know is a very good thing. (Amatriciana is a classic Roman-as-in-Rome pasta, made with cured pork, tomato, sometimes onion and pecorino.) You can eat it immediately, but it’s truly better after a few hours, either cold or at room temp, a textbook example of a great “eat directly out of a container” food. As always, she is flexible –skip the capers if you like, make it spicy or not, go cheese-less if you dare, use shallots instead of red onion– but resist the urge to throw everything under the sun into this pasta salad. This salad should be composed, elegant and focused, tasting of jammy tomatoes, summertime and secrets (sun-dried tomatoes).

Ingredients

1 pound of pasta, I like a short tube shape, like campanelle, radiatori, or rigatoni for this

Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper

¼ cup olive oil, plus more

4 garlic cloves, thinly sliced

Crushed chili flake, a dab of harissa paste, your favorite hot sauce, anything spicy

1-2 pounds any type of tomatoes (I like the smaller ones on the vine), quartered

½ to 1 cup sun-dried tomatoes (!), chopped, sliced, whatever*

2 tablespoons red wine vinegar

½ red onion, sliced (not too thin)

2 tablespoons capers, optional

2-4 ounces roughly chopped pecorino or parmesan cheese, optional

*I like using sun-dried tomatoes packed in oil (the oil is delicious and can be used to cook with), but the dry sun-dried tomatoes also work– no need to re-plump or rehydrate them before using, they’ll do their thing in the skillet.

**Drink with: beer on ice or a very cold, light red wine

Instructions

- 1 Cook pasta in a large pot of salted boiling water; drain and set aside (if you’re worried, drizzle with a little olive oil to prevent noodles from sticking- but pasta should still be warm when you dress it so don’t do this too far in advance).
- 2 Meanwhile, combine onion and vinegar in a small bowl and season with salt and pepper and set aside (they are marinating rather than pickling, fwiw).
- 3 Heat ¼ cup olive oil in a large skillet over medium heat. Add garlic and season with salt and pepper. Cook, swirling the skillet occasionally, until the garlic is tender and just starting to brown, 3 to 4 minutes. Add your spicy something of choice, add the fresh and sun-dried (!) tomatoes, capers, and season with salt and pepper.
- 4 Cook, tossing occasionally until the fresh tomatoes are just burst and juicy (you can use a spatula or wooden spoon to encourage them to break down if they started out especially firm), 5 to 8 minutes.
- 5 Combine pasta and tomato mixture in a large bowl. Add your marinated onions, drizzle with a bit more olive oil and season again with salt, pepper and more of your spicy something if you like. Toss, toss, toss until every piece of pasta is evenly coated. Let it sit for 10 minutes or so and toss it again. Think of it as marinated pasta, knowing that the flavor will change a bit as it sits.
- 6 You can eat it immediately, but it’s truly better after a few hours, cold or at room temp. This is perfect “eat out of a container” food at the beach, on the grass, wherever. Top with lots of cheese before eating and drink with something cold and effervescent.

DO AHEAD: The pasta salad can be made and refrigerated for up to 5 days.