

DECEMBER RECIPE

RECOMMENDED PAIRING: 2018 BRANDINI R56 BAROLO DOCG

INGREDIENTS

- 14 oz (400 g) pici, fettuccini, spaghetti or pasta of choice
- 1 tablespoon (15 ml) salt
- 1 tablespoon (15 ml) olive oil
- 3 tablespoons (45 ml) pine nuts
- 1 1/4 cups (312 ml) slow-roasted cherry tomatoes (see reverse)
- 1 1/4 cups (312 ml) whole canned tomatoes, broken into small pieces, with 1/2 cup (125 ml) juice - San Marzano if possible
- 1/3 cup (80 ml) creamy goat cheese, torn into small pieces
- 1/3 cup (80 ml) fresh basil, thinly sliced and divided
- 1/2 cup (125 ml) Parmesan cheese, fresh grated and divided, more if you wish for table

TIME

- Prep Time: 15-20 minutes
- Cooking Time: 20 minutes

SERVING SIZE: 4



PASTA AL POMODORO

Like many pasta dishes, this is more of a process and assemblage than an actual measure-and-follow-directions recipe. With the ingredients in place, the dish comes together in the time it takes to cook the pasta to the al dente stage, approximately 12 - 15 minutes. I love using Pici for the pasta, a broad, chewy noodle native of Tuscany. Feel free to use fettuccini, which is equally good, or any pasta of choice.

1. Heat olive oil in a small skillet, add pine nuts, and toast until golden. Drain on a paper towel and set aside. Be careful toasting pine nuts as they burn easily.
2. Bring a large pot of water to a boil, add 1 tablespoon (15ml) salt and the pasta, and cook according to package directions until al dente. Make sure to reserve some of the pasta water for step #4.
3. While the pasta water is coming to a boil, place both tomatoes and the 1/2 cup (125ml) tomato juice in a skillet large enough to hold the cooked pasta, and heat to a solid simmer, stirring with a wooden spoon and reducing the tomato juice by half. Turn off heat if the sauce has reduced before pasta is cooked.
4. Once the pasta is al dente, use tongs to lift from the water and place in the tomato sauce on low heat. Add goat cheese and toss with the pasta. If the sauce seems too thick, add some of the pasta water, a little at a time. When the goat cheese has melted, remove pan from heat and add half the basil and cheese. Toss, plate, and sprinkle evenly with pine nuts, remaining basil, and Parmesan. Serve extra Parmesan on the table if you wish.

INGREDIENTS

- 2 tablespoons (30 ml) olive oil
- 3 cups (750 ml) cherry tomatoes, cut larger ones in half
- 2 teaspoons (10 ml) coarse salt
- 1 teaspoon (5 ml) red pepper flakes

TIME

- Prep Time: 5 minutes
- Cooking Time: 2.5-3 hours

SLOW ROASTED CHERRY TOMATOES

Can be prepared up to 1 week in advance and stored in the fridge..

1. Preheat oven to 200° F (93° C).
2. Toss all ingredients together in a ceramic roasting dish large enough to hold tomatoes with them being no more than 2 tomatoes deep.
3. Roast, uncovered, for 2 ½-3 hours until they are slightly colored and have given up their juices. Toss them a couple of times while cooking with a wooden spoon.
4. Remove from oven and store in a closed container in the refrigerator for up to a week. Great served on bruschetta or pasta or added to a stew, soup, or sauce.

"A Simple Pasta" by Sally Uhlmann

My friend's eyes fluttered with surprise as she slowly savored her first bite of the Pasta al Pomodoro. She swallowed, smiled in satisfaction, and then offered me a toast, lifting her glass of local Cortona Syrah and proclaiming, "This is just the best ever. I mean it. So delicious...I could eat it every day. And I love, love, love how simple it is."

I nodded and sipped my wine, thinking I had succeeded as a hostess in putting my guest at ease and letting her believe this pasta was thrown together effortlessly. Indeed, it can be when you use store-bought tomatoes and olive oil. However, for me, this simple dish has its beginnings well over three hundred years ago when the farmers who owned my land in Cortona, Italy, planted the original olive grove. Like most savory cuisine in Italy, olive oil commands a starring role, and it's a fact that the oil from your olives—handpicked and cold-pressed—always tastes better than any other. Peppery, floral, and herbal, its color registers between emerald and olive green. It first hits your tongue, smooth and unctuous, before lodging in your soul.

The tomatoes, however, elevate this dish to the realm of the Gods, and obtaining them was anything but fast. This past spring, I planted a variety of tomatoes, including San Marzano and three different types of cherry tomatoes. The plants were staked and trellised with bamboo poles and twine, regularly pruned, watered, and kept bug-free with companion plantings of marigolds and nasturtiums. In the late summer, with heat pouring from the sun, whole San Marzano were harvested, peeled, and canned, with only lemon juice, salt, and a sprig of fresh basil added to ensure their prime, ripe flavor.

The day before serving the pasta, I gathered cherry tomatoes from the vines and slow-roasted them. This is the equivalent of transforming a grape into a raisin. The flavor intensifies, and the texture is altered into something with more teeth. What an amazing condiment to be able to pull from your refrigerator. I often prepare slow-roasted tomatoes in the winter, when I long for tomatoes on the vine but need to settle for store-bought. They are sublime.