

# Mediterranean Flavors Pasta Salad

Servings: approx. 10 - 12

## Ingredients

- 1 ea 16-ounce package rotini pasta, tri-colored used here

## Dressing:

- 1/3 cup olive, avocado, grapeseed oil – or any other oil that you like
- 2 tablespoons red wine, balsamic, apple cider vinegar – as you like
- 2 tablespoons fresh squeezed lemon juice
- 1 – 2 tablespoons mustard – any kind you like
- 1 very small shallot – minced very fine
- 1 clove garlic – minced very fine
- 2 teaspoons dried Mexican oregano
- ½ teaspoon salt
- pinch of pepper

## Salad:

- 1 large English cucumber – seeded & sliced. Peeled or partially peeled if you like
- 1 yellow bell pepper – cubed
- 2 cups cherry tomatoes – halved
- ½ red onion – sliced thin (or pickled onions are awesome!)
- 1 ea 6.5-ounce can black olives, sliced – drained
- ¼ cup sun dried tomatoes in oil – chopped
- 8 ounces Mozzarella or feta cheese – cubed small
- 7 ounces pepperoni, salami - optional

## Directions

Fill a large pot with hot water and add enough salt for the water to ‘taste like the ocean’. Bring water to a boil. Add the pasta and cook to the al dente stage as per package directions. Much like the potato salad, the pasta will absorb the sauce better when warm/hot. If putting warm/hot pasta, do not put the meat/cheese (if using), until cooled.

While the pasta is cooking, make the dressing. In a jar, place the oil, vinegar, lemon juice and mustard. Whisk until emulsified, so the dressing won’t separate. Add the shallot, garlic, oregano, salt and pepper. Place a lid on the jar and shake. Taste and adjust seasonings, if needed. Set aside.

In a large bowl, prepare the salad ingredients. Add the pasta. Add meat, if using. Pour about ½ the dressing over the salad and stir. Continue to add the dressing in small amounts, until desired amount of dressing has been added. Cover and place in the refrigerator at least a few hours, but I like to prepare the day before I need it.

Note: you don’t have to use tomatoes in oil, but if you use dry, I recommend you put them in with the dressing, so they reconstitute some.