

RECIPE GUIDE: Pasta

Whether feeding just one or a family, pasta can be filling, nutritious and economical with the right pantry ingredients. Make it hot or serve it as a cold pasta salad! Choose a pasta, a protein, a vegetable, and a sauce to create a complete meal.

Yield: 4 servings



Pasta/Grain - 1/2 pound whole grain pasta, gnocchi, couscous, polenta



Protein - 8 ounces cooked or 12 ounces fresh cubed chicken, fish, shellfish, lean ground beef, chicken or turkey sausage; 12 ounces cubed tofu; 2 cups cooked beans; 8 eggs, hardboiled and sliced; 4 ounces nuts and seeds; or a combination of the above



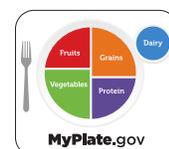
Vegetables - 2 cups or more shredded or chopped zucchini, carrots, bell peppers, spinach, broccoli, cauliflower



Sauce - 1 to 2 cups tomato-based sauce such as marinara or 1/2 cup oil-based sauce such as pesto or lemon-olive oil mix



Herbs, spices and aromatic vegetables - 1/2 chopped onion; 3 minced garlic; 1/2 teaspoon - oregano, basil, thyme, garlic powder, onion powder, crushed red pepper flakes, and/or paprika



PROCEDURE and TIPS

Step 1:

Cook pasta according to package directions. Drain off water and reserve 1/4 cup. Set pasta aside.

Step 2:

Skip this step if not using meat or tofu. In a large pan, heat olive oil or vegetable oil and add ground beef, chicken, fish or shellfish, or sausage. Sauté until cooked (ground beef and sausage, 165°F; chicken, 165°F; fish or shellfish, 145°F or until opaque and fish flakes when poked with a fork). Remove from pan and set aside.

Step 3:

Drain off excess fat and leave only 1 tablespoon in the pan. Add 1 tablespoon oil, or less, if not enough oil remains. Add onion, if using, and sauté for a few minutes. Add garlic, if using, and sauté for 30 seconds.

Step 4:

Add vegetables and sauté for 4-8 minutes, depending on vegetable, until tender. Add sauce and the meat. Add herbs and spices, if using. Cook until the sauce and meat are heated through. Turn off heat.

Step 5:

Add the pasta to the pan and toss to coat. If the pasta got cold while preparing the sauce, reheat it in the microwave oven for a minute or so before tossing in the sauce. Add some of reserved pasta cooking water if the sauce looks dry. Add nuts or seeds, if using.

Step 6:

Serve immediately.

Tips for success:

- Tomato-based pasta sauces work well with any protein. Oil-based sauces work well with chicken, fish and shellfish.
- Fish can be cut into chunks and small shellfish like shrimp and clams can be kept whole.
- For a quicker meal, use rotisserie chicken or canned fish.
- Beans and tofu work well with tomato-based sauces. Add them in Step 4 with the sauce.
- You can top the pasta with the sliced hardboiled eggs as another source of protein.
- You can also prepare the dish with an oil-based sauce, such as a lemon-olive oil dressing, ahead of time and serve as a cold pasta salad.

