



Creamy Mushroom Pasta (Without Cream)

The secret ingredient in this creamy mushroom pasta is the pasta cooking water. A good splash of the starch-rich water gives any sauce a lovely creamy texture without the need to add cream.

Serves 6 as a starter



INGREDIENTS

- ¼ cup extra virgin olive oil (60ml)
- 1 red onion, finely diced
- Salt flakes, to taste
- 2 cloves garlic, crushed
- 1 teaspoon fennel seeds, coarsely crushed
- Pinch dried chilli flakes, to taste
- 350g Swiss brown mushrooms, finely sliced (12½oz)
- 500g orecchiette (1lb)
- 200g grape or cherry tomatoes, halved or quartered
- 50g cold butter, diced (2oz)
- 2 sprigs basil, leaves torn
- Freshly grated parmesan cheese, for serving

METHOD

1. Place oil and onion in a heavy-based frying pan over low heat.
2. Add a good pinch of salt, cover and cook, stirring occasionally, for 15–20 minutes, until just starting to colour.
3. Stir in garlic, fennel and chilli and cook for 2–3 minutes, stirring frequently, until aromatic.
4. Stir in mushroom and a little more salt.
5. Increase heat to medium, cover and cook for about 5 minutes, until mushrooms are wilted and the liquid they release has evaporated.
6. Bring a large saucepan of well-salted water to the boil using 10g salt/litre water (½oz salt/2 pints water).
7. Meanwhile, add tomato to the pan and stir for a minute then cover and set aside.
8. Add the pasta to the boiling water and cook until just al dente.
9. Drain pasta, reserving some of the cooking water.
10. Add pasta to the frying pan with butter, basil and about ½ cup of the cooking water and toss over medium heat for a minute or 2 until well combined and creamy, adding a little more pasta cooking water if necessary to give a creamy consistency.
11. Top creamy mushroom pasta with parmesan and serve immediately.