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*by Liz Robb*

## Wholewheat pasta with spinach, feta and tomato



## Ingredients

2 tablespoons of olive oil  
250g wholewheat penne pasta  
1 large white onion  
1 red pepper  
3-4 large cloves of garlic  
150g button chestnut mushrooms  
200g cherry or baby plum tomatoes  
250g fresh spinach  
115g feta cheese  
Salt and freshly ground black pepper  
A handful of fresh basil leaves

## Preparation

- 1 1. First prepare the vegetables. Peel and chop the onion finely. Deseed the pepper and cut into small strips. Peel the garlic cloves. Chop the tomatoes in half. Wash the mushrooms and slice then in half. [If you can't find chestnut mushrooms, just use white ones instead. If you don't have button mushrooms, slice up larger ones.]
- 2 2. Wash the spinach really well to remove any grittiness, then pat dry. If you are using larger leaf spinach, trim off any thicker stalks
- 3 3. for baby leaf spinach, just leave it whole.
- 4 2. Heat the oil in a large saucepan and cook the onion gently for 4-5 minutes, until it is soft but not brown. Add the red pepper and cook for 2 more minutes. Crush the garlic and add it to the onion, cooking for another 1-2 minutes. Stir in the mushrooms, then add the tomatoes and cook over a low heat, stirring occasionally, for a further 5 minutes.
- 5 3. Meanwhile, cook the pasta in a large pan of boiling salted water for the required amount of time stated on the packet, until al dente, then drain. This will probably be about 11-12 minutes.
- 6 4. Reserve a chunk of the feta cheese to crumble on top of the finished dish, and crumble the rest into the cooked vegetables, stirring for just a few minutes until the cheese melts. Season well with black pepper, and salt if you wish, but add salt sparingly because of the saltiness of the feta cheese.
- 7 5. Wilt the spinach leaves down by placing them in a hot saucepan for a minute or two
- 8 there is no need to use any water. It may seem a large amount to begin with, but it is amazing how it shrinks in volume when it wilts.
- 9 6. Add the cooked pasta to the cooked vegetable mixture and mix together, then

quickly stir in the spinach. Turn it all into a large warmed pasta bowl, toss with the torn basil leaves and sprinkle the reserved feta cheese on top. Serve immediately!

**10** <strong>Notes:</strong>

- 11** – This is delicious served just as it is, but for really hungry people you could include crunchy slices of garlic bread or fresh crusty rolls.
- 12** – For those who love their meat, it tastes good accompanied by a grilled chicken breast, or with strips of grilled chicken laid across the top. Or maybe try scattering on a few juicy grilled shrimps.
- 13** – If you like your pasta spicy, add finely chopped fresh chilli or a sprinkling of crushed dried chilli flakes.

## **Cooks Note**

This simple satisfying supper dish shows that you can eat quickly and healthily without having to compromise on taste. Leafy spinach is full of nutrients, and tomatoes are fresh, sweet and juicy at this time of year; mine came straight from the garden. Just a small amount of tangy feta cheese adds calcium and lots of flavour without too much fat, and wholewheat pasta provides the fibre that you need. It's all good!

The ingredients for this dish are inexpensive and easily available; many of them you may already have in store at home. If you have any left over, you can eat it cold for lunch the next day, or it reheats well too.

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