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Penne pasta with arrabbiata sauce



Ingredients

1 onion
2 red chillies
1 tablespoon of olive oil
2 large cloves of garlic
600g canned chopped tomatoes
A handful of fresh basil leaves
Salt and freshly milled black pepper
A handful of flat leaf parsley
400g penne pasta

Preparation

1. 1. Peel and chop the onion really finely. Heat the oil in a saucepan over a low heat and gently cook and soften the onion, stirring, for 5 minutes.
2. 2. Deseed and very finely chop the chillies, then crush two cloves of garlic. Add both to the onion and cook for another 2-3 minutes.
3. 3. Add the chopped tomatoes, crushing any larger pieces with a fork or potato masher
4. I like to taste small pieces of tomato in my sauce but not big lumps! Stir in the chopped basil leaves and a pinch of sugar, to counter the acidity of the tomatoes, then simmer gently for about 15 minutes, stirring occasionally, until the sauce is soft and thick. Season to taste with salt and black pepper.
5. 4. Meanwhile, cook the penne pasta according to the instructions on the packet and drain well.
6. 5. Add the cooked pasta to the sauce, stirring well to combine everything, and serve garnished with a sprinkling of chopped parsley.
7. Variations:
8. • Herbs: I like to use basil and parsley, but other recipes use thyme or oregano, or a combination of herbs. Fresh herbs are always best, but you could use dried if that's all you have. You may like to try adding Italian seasoning.
9. • Cheese: this sauce is often served with shavings of parmesan cheese, or try pecorino for a change.
10. • Heat: if you like it really fiery, use more chillies or add cayenne pepper to it. To tone down the spiciness, you could add cream or, for a lower fat version, add milk or low fat crème fraiche.
11. • Pasta: the traditional shape to use is penne but you can use whatever you have, such as fusilli or spaghetti.

• Texture: if you prefer a smooth sauce, blend the tomatoes before adding them, or simply use passata instead.

• Vegetables: you can pack this sauce with veg and use less pasta to make it even healthier

mushrooms and courgettes go really well with it, so do chopped peppers.

• Protein: there are many recipes which include meat or fish in this sauce. For example, finely chopped bacon or salami can be added when the onions are cooked, or chopped chicken or Italian sausage. Cooked prawns or shrimps can also be added to the sauce.

• Some people like to add a splash of balsamic vinegar or red wine to enhance the flavour.

Cooks Note

This fiery traditional Italian dish, Penne all'arrabbiata, means "angry" in Italian because of the kick delivered by the hot sauce. But you can, of course, choose the heat of the sauce to suit you, depending on the number and strength of the chillies you decide to use.

The basic dish is tasty, healthy and incredibly simple to prepare, and uses very few ingredients which most people have already in their fridges and store cupboards, the essential ingredients for the sauce being garlic, chillies, olive oil and tomatoes. However, this sauce is so versatile that it is used as a basis for a huge variety of different dishes!

Here is the recipe I use for a fairly basic arrabbiata sauce with penne pasta, which I've often used as a quickly improvised meal when arriving home late or for unexpected hungry visitors, followed by suggestions for many other variations that you could try.