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by Liz Robb

Whole Wheat Penne Pasta with Feta and Wilted Chard



Ingredients

Serves 4
450g wholewheat pasta
Salt and freshly milled black pepper
35g butter
2 tablespoons of extra virgin olive oil
1 small onion
2 cloves of garlic
1 red chilli
600g fresh chard
1 lemon
200ml vegetable stock
300g feta cheese
75g toasted pine nuts
Fresh parmesan cheese

Preparation

1. 1. Cook the wholewheat pasta in a large pan of boiling salted water for 7-8 minutes, or for a few minutes less than the packet recommends, so that the pasta is not quite cooked. Lift it out of the pan with a slotted spoon and retain the boiling water.
2. 2. Meanwhile, prepare the vegetables. Peel and finely chop the onion, peel and crush the cloves of garlic then deseed and chop the red chilli finely. Wash the chard thoroughly and separate the leaves from the stems. Chop the stems into small pieces and cut the leaves roughly into ribbons. Steam the pieces of stem over the boiling pasta water for 4-5 minutes.
3. 3. Heat the oil in a large saucepan over a low heat and add the butter, cut into small pieces, to melt. Sauté the onion for 2-3 minutes until softened but not browned, then add the garlic and chilli and cook for a further 2 minutes.
4. 4. Stir in the stems and leaves of the chard then add the zest and juice of half a lemon and season with salt and black pepper. Pour in the stock, put on the lid and cook for 2-3 minutes to allow the chard leaves to wilt.

5. Chop the feta into small chunks and add them, then sprinkle in the pine nuts. Gently stir in the pasta and cook for about 3 minutes

the pasta should be al dente.

Serve garnished with a good grating of parmesan cheese.

Notes:

- If you don't have feta cheese, replace it with an alternative such as gruyere, or perhaps a soft cheese like ricotta.

- For an even heartier meal, try adding chunks of cooked chicken breast, or stir in shrimps or prawns.

Cooks Note

Chard is a leafy green vegetable with large crinkly leaves and thick stems which is exceptionally nutritious, being high in vitamins A, K and C and rich in fibre and minerals. When it appears in my vegetable delivery I often shred the leaves and use them raw in salads, giving the salad that slightly bitter flavour which I enjoy.

This recipe uses wilted chard in a healthy and filling hot pasta dish along with creamy feta cheese, crunchy pine nuts, garlic, a little red chilli and a hint of lemon. I find it's better to cook the stems for a little longer than the leaves to make sure that they're not tough.