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by Liz Robb

Recipe: Traditional Neopolitan Pasta and Potato With Fresh Vegetables And Herbs

Ingredients

2 or 3 large vine tomatoes
1 small white onion
1 carrot
1 stick of celery
2 fairly large potatoes
About 300ml cold water
2 tablespoons of extra virgin olive oil
A large knob of butter
150ml beef stock
175g wholewheat spaghetti
100-120g finely grated parmesan cheese
Black pepper
A handful of parsley

Servings
4
Person

Preparation

1. With a sharp knife, score the tomatoes all around in a cross shape, cover in boiling water for a minute or two, then peel off the skin. Chop into small pieces, retaining any juice, and set to one side.
2. Peel the onion and the carrot then very finely chop them both. Finely chop the celery too.
3. Peel the potatoes and chop into very small dice.
4. Heat the oil and butter together in a large heavy bottomed pan. Sauté the onion gently for 2 minutes then add the carrot and celery and continue to cook for another 10 minutes. Stir in a little cold water occasionally as you do so to make it creamy.
5. Stir in the chopped tomato and potato and then add the hot beef stock; it should just cover the potato, add a little more water if not. Cook gently, stirring occasionally, for 10-15 minutes, or until the potato has softened and is just about cooked.
6. Break up the spaghetti and add it to the pan, stirring in the rest of the cold water, about 200ml. Simmer for 10-12 minutes, making sure that the pasta is cooked.
7. Stir in at least 50g of finely grated parmesan and season to taste with plenty of black pepper. Taste and add more cheese if needed, and add a little more liquid if it is too dry. Serve garnished with finely chopped parsley and extra parmesan.

Cooks Note

Eating pasta and potato together seems like an unusual idea, being rather heavy in carbohydrate. It emerged as a traditional dish in Naples as a way of using up odds and ends of different types of pasta, along with other easily available common ingredients. A rind of Parmesan cheese was also cooked in it until soft in many recipes, or chopped pancetta included. However, it really is easy to make and surprisingly tasty, great for a quick and substantial midweek meal for a hungry family. NB. some prefer this dish to have a soupy consistency, whereas others like it to be drier; I made it somewhere between the two! Adjust the amount of water you add until it reaches your preferred consistency.