

Salt and Serenity

Spicy Orecchiette with Tuna, Lemons, Peas and Crunchy Breadcrumb Topping

Adapted from Serious Eats contributor Lauren Rothman's recipe for Spicy Orecchiette With Tuna, Peas, and Lemon.

Serves 4

2 lemons
½ baguette, ciabatta or sourdough bread, crusts removed, bread torn into 2 inch chunks
2 Tablespoons olive oil
½ teaspoon kosher salt
2 Tablespoons Kosher salt, for pasta water
1 pound dried orechiette or similar pasta, such as mini shells or penne
1 cup frozen peas
2 Tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
1 clove garlic, peeled and finely grated
½ -1 teaspoon red chili flakes
1 5-ounce can or jar of tuna packed in olive oil, preferably Italian, drained and oil discarded
¼ cup chopped fresh parsley leaves
8 basil leaves, chopped
Freshly ground black pepper
¼ cup coarsely grated Parmesan cheese (optional)

1. Zest lemons with a fine grater. You should get about 1 tablespoon of zest from each lemon. Squeeze juice from one zested lemon. Put second zested lemon in fridge for another day. Set aside zest and juice.
2. Place bread chunks in food processor fitted with steel knife blade. Add 2 tablespoons olive oil, ½ teaspoon kosher salt and 1 Tablespoon lemon zest. The remaining zest and juice are to add to the pasta, later. Pulse food processor until you have mostly fine breadcrumbs. A few larger pieces are ok.

3. Heat a large skillet over medium-low heat. Add breadcrumbs and cook, stirring often, until they are toasted and golden brown in colour. It will take about 5-6 minutes and you must be vigilant about stirring or they will burn. Remove breadcrumbs from pan and set aside.
4. Bring a large pot of water to a boil, add 2 Tablespoons kosher salt and cook pasta according to package directions. 30 seconds before pasta is done, add frozen peas to the boiling water. Drain pasta and peas, reserving 1/2 cup of pasta water.
5. While pasta cooks, heat olive oil in a small skillet over medium heat until shimmering. Add garlic and chili flakes and cook, stirring, until fragrant, about 1 minutes. Transfer mixture to a bowl and set aside.
6. When pasta is cooked, return pasta to now-empty pot. Add tuna, breaking it into chunky flakes as you add it. Add garlic and chili oil mixture to pasta and set over high heat. Add reserved pasta cooking liquid, remaining tablespoon lemon zest, 1 Tablespoon lemon juice and simmer, stirring constantly, until the sauce coats the pasta and thickens. Stir in parsley, basil and Parmesan cheese, if using, and season to taste with salt and pepper. Serve with toasted breadcrumbs on the side, letting each person add as many as they like.