

Salt and Serenity

Pasta alla Trapanese

Serves 4

This recipe originated in the town of Trapani in Sicily. It's a tomato-almond based alternative to the typical basil and pine nut pesto version from Liguria. While red pepper flakes are not traditional, I like the punch they add. Feel free to omit them.

While researching this dish I discovered that some versions included cheese in the pesto, others were without. I tried it both ways and preferred it without. It is nice to add a bit of Parmesan on top when serving.

1 large clove garlic, peeled and smashed large knife
½ cup roasted, unsalted almonds
2 heaping cups cherry or grape tomatoes
½ teaspoon kosher salt
¼ -½ teaspoon red pepper flakes (optional)
½ cup, packed, basil leaves
2-3 Tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
1-pound pasta (you could use spaghetti but it's more delicious with a short twisty pasta, like fusilli or gemelli)
Parmesan cheese for serving (optional)
Fresh basil leaves, for garnish

1. Bring a large pot of water to a boil. While waiting for water to boil, make sauce.
2. Place garlic and almonds in food processor and pulse 8-10 times. Add tomatoes, basil, red pepper flakes (if using) and salt and pulse a few more times until tomatoes begin to break up. Add 2 Tablespoons olive oil and pulse again until sauce is chunky. If sauce seems too dry, add additional Tablespoon of olive oil. Transfer sauce to a large serving bowl.
3. To the boiling water add 2 tablespoons kosher salt and pasta. Stir and cook, according to package directions. One minute before pasta is ready, remove about 1 cup of the starchy cooking liquid. Drain pasta once it is al dente. Mix ½ cup starchy water into sauce in serving bowl. Add drained pasta and mix well. Add additional cooking water if you prefer a looser sauce.
4. Spoon into bowls, garnish with fresh basil leaves and finish with Parmesan cheese if desired.

