

Rigatoni with Spicy Sausage and Roasted Tomatoes

This can be made with meat or plant-based sausages.

Serves 4

2 pints cherry or grape tomatoes, red or multi-coloured, halved
1 Tablespoon olive oil
2 cloves garlic, finely minced or grated
1 Tablespoon honey
1 teaspoon kosher salt
¼ teaspoon black pepper
2 sprigs fresh thyme
4 meat or plant based spicy Italian sausages, casings removed (I love plant based "Beyond Meat" brand)
1 Tablespoon tomato paste
2 cups tomato sauce (jarred sauce is fine. I like Rao's brand)
1 pound penne or rigatoni pasta
188 grams (¾ cup) ricotta cheese mixed with 2 Tablespoons milk or cream
20 grams (¼ cup) freshly grated Parmesan cheese
8-10 fresh basil leaves, cut into thin julienne strips

1. Preheat oven to 375°F. Place halved tomatoes on a rimmed baking sheet. In a little bowl, whisk together olive oil, garlic and honey. Drizzle over tomatoes. Mix well until they are all coated. Sprinkle with salt and pepper. Lay thyme sprigs over top of tomatoes. Roast until blistered, about 20-25 minutes.
2. Heat 2 teaspoons olive oil in large nonstick skillet. Add sausage and using a potato masher or a wooden spoon, break up sausage into little pieces. Continue cooking on medium heat until sausage is well browned. Add tomato paste and tomato sauce to sausage in skillet. Cook on medium heat and then turn down to a simmer while the pasta cooks.
3. While sauce is cooking, bring a large pot of water to a boil. When it comes to a boil, add 3 tablespoons of kosher salt. Add pasta and cook it to 1 minute before package directions.
4. Just before draining pasta, scoop out ½ cup pasta water and reserve. Add pasta back into pot. Dump sausage-tomato sauce over pasta and put back on low heat. Stir in roasted tomatoes. Cook for about 1 minute. If sauce seems to thick, add reserved water.
5. Transfer pasta to a platter. Sprinkle with Parmesan cheese and dollop ricotta over the top. Scatter basil over pasta and serve.

