

The DISH



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When National Pasta Day comes around, we don't miss it. My family absolutely loves pasta. Me? I'll eat a little, but it's not my favorite thing. Many times I substitute zucchini or summer squash for the noodles. I feel much better doing it that way. My freezer is actually quite full of squash that I've ran through my spiralizing machine. So, to honor this family favorite holiday, here are some pasta dishes that we'll definitely be trying.

Cheesy Spinach Dip Chicken Pasta

2½ cups uncooked penne rigate
2 chicken breasts
Salt and pepper
2 Tbsp. all-purpose flour
½ cup sour cream or Greek yogurt
4 oz. cream cheese, softened
¼ cup half-and-half or whole milk
1 pkg. dry Ranch mix
5 oz. frozen spinach or half a batch of fresh spinach
1¼ cup shredded mozzarella cheese

Butter a 2-quart baking dish. Set aside. Cook pasta according to the instructions on the package. Drain and keep warm.

Dice chicken, season with salt and pepper. Sprinkle flour over chicken and toss to coat. Heat olive oil in a large skillet. Add chicken and cook until no longer pink.

Meanwhile, in a large mixing bowl, mix together sour cream, cream cheese, Ranch mix, half-and-half and spinach. Add cooked pasta and chicken to the spinach mixture and stir all together. Transfer the mixture into the prepared dish. At this point, you can cover the dish with plastic wrap and refrigerate until ready to serve.

If serving right away, top the dish with cheese and bake for 10 minutes in a 375-degree oven. The cheese should be melted. You can then turn the oven to broiler (on low setting) and broil for 2 to 3 minutes or until the cheese bubbles up and gets golden brown spots. Let stand in room temperature for 10 minutes before serving.

Greek Chicken Pasta

16 oz. pkg. linguine pasta
½ cup chopped red onion
1 Tbsp. olive oil
2 cloves garlic, crushed
1 lb. skinless, boneless chicken breast meat, cut into bite-size pieces

14 oz. can marinated artichoke hearts, drained and chopped
1 large tomato, chopped
½ cup crumbled feta cheese
3 Tbsp. chopped fresh parsley
2 Tbsp. lemon juice
2 tsp. dried oregano
Salt and pepper to taste
2 lemons, wedged, for garnish

Bring a large pot of lightly salted water to a boil. Cook pasta in boiling water until tender yet firm to the bite, 8 to 10 minutes; drain.

Heat olive oil in a large skillet over medium-high heat. Add onion and garlic; saute until fragrant, about 2 minutes. Stir in the chicken and cook, stirring occasionally, until chicken is no longer pink in the center and the juices run clear, about 5 to 6 minutes.

Reduce heat to medium-low; add artichoke hearts, tomato, feta cheese, parsley, lemon juice, oregano and cooked pasta. Cook and stir until heated through, about 2 to 3 minutes. Remove from heat, season with salt and pepper and garnish with lemon wedges.

Jalapeño Popper Mac and Cheese

2-3 jalapeños, seeded and diced
1 medium onion, diced
1 tsp. garlic powder
½ tsp. salt
8 oz. cream cheese
2 cups milk
1 cup water
8 oz. dried pasta
8 oz. shredded monterey jack cheese
½ cup bread crumbs or cracker crumbs
1 Tbsp. olive oil or coconut oil

In a large skillet, saute peppers and onions with garlic powder and salt. Cook until softened, about 5 minutes. Stir in cream cheese and mix until it is melted. Add in milk, water and dry pasta. Bring to a boil and simmer on medium 10-15 minutes, stirring regularly, until

pasta is cooked through.

Meanwhile, combine cracker crumbs and oil in a small bowl and mix until all the crumbs are evenly coated. Preheat oven to 400 degrees. Once pasta is cooked, add cheese and stir in to melt. If using an oven-safe pan, top with crumbs and place in oven for 5-10 minutes to brown. Or, pour pasta into a 9-by-9 pan and top with crumbs and bake for 5-10 minutes.

Baked Penne Rigate

½ lb. penne rigate pasta
2 cups ricotta cheese
1 cup mozzarella cheese
¾ cup Parmesan cheese
Salt and pepper to taste
2 eggs
1 jar of marinara sauce
Topping: ¼ cup Parmesan cheese

Bring a pot of salted water to a boil. Preheat your oven to 350 degrees. Add your penne rigate to the boiling water. Cook as directed on package for al dente.

In a bowl, combine the cheeses, eggs and salt and pepper. When pasta is cooked, place drained pasta in base of a pan (heat safe). Pour half of the marinara sauce on top of pasta. Stir to combine. Scoop your cheese mixture on top of your pasta. Spread evenly. Bake for 18-20 minutes.

Pull out from the oven and drizzle the remaining marinara sauce on top and then sprinkle with the ¼ cup of Parmesan cheese. Place back in the oven and bake another 5-10 minutes.

Sesame Noodles

16 oz. pkg. linguine pasta
6 cloves garlic, minced
6 Tbsp. sugar
6 Tbsp. safflower oil
6 Tbsp. rice vinegar
6 Tbsp. soy sauce
2 Tbsp. sesame oil
2 tsp. chili sauce
6 green onions, sliced
1 tsp. sesame seeds, toasted

Bring a pot of lightly salted water to boil. Add pasta and cook until al dente, about 8 to 10 minutes. Drain and transfer to a serving bowl.

Meanwhile, place a saucepan over medium-high heat. Stir in garlic, sugar, oil, vinegar, soy sauce, sesame oil and chili sauce. Bring to a boil, stirring constantly, until sugar dissolves. Pour sauce over linguine and toss to coat. Garnish with green onions and sesame seeds.