

Pizza Pasta Salad

By Becky Krystal

 Servings: 6-8 (makes about 10 cups)

 Total: 45 mins

- ☐ 1/2 teaspoon fine salt, plus more as needed
- ☐ 12 ounces dried cheese tortellini (see Notes)
- ☐ 5 to 7 ounces pepperoni, diced (see Notes)
- ☐ One (7-ounce) jar oil-packed sun-dried tomatoes, preferably in olive oil (see Where to buy and Substitutions)
- ☐ 2 cups (10 ounces) cherry tomatoes, halved
- ☐ 8 ounces mozzarella cheese pearls, preferably vacuum-packed (see Notes)
- ☐ 3 tablespoons olive oil, plus more as needed
- ☐ 1/4 cup red wine vinegar
- ☐ 1 teaspoon dried oregano
- ☐ 1 teaspoon dried basil
- ☐ 1 teaspoon honey (optional)
- ☐ 1/2 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
- ☐ Pinch crushed red pepper flakes (optional)
- ☐ Fresh torn basil leaves, for serving
- ☐ Shaved or finely grated Parmigiano-Reggiano cheese, for serving

Step 1

Bring a medium (4-quart) pot of salted water to a boil. Add the tortellini and cook, stirring occasionally, until tender throughout, about 1 minute more than the package instructions for al dente.

Step 2

Line a plate with paper towels and set it near the stovetop. In a large (12-inch) dry skillet over medium heat, cook the pepperoni, stirring occasionally, until crisp and the fat renders, 6 to 8 minutes. Use a slotted spoon to transfer the pepperoni to the prepared plate to drain, reserving the fat in the skillet.

Step 3

Remove the sun-dried tomatoes from the jar. Reserve the oil, coarsely chop the tomatoes and transfer them to a large bowl. Add the cherry tomatoes, mozzarella and pepperoni, and stir to combine.

Step 4

Pour the reserved pepperoni fat (about 1 tablespoon) into a medium bowl or lidded jar. Add the reserved oil from the sun-dried tomatoes (about 2 tablespoons), then the olive oil. You should have about 6 tablespoons of fat total, but if you're a bit short, add enough olive oil to make up the difference. Add the 1/2 teaspoon of salt, the vinegar, dried oregano, dried basil, honey, if using (it helps emulsify the dressing), black pepper and crushed red pepper flakes, if using. Whisk or shake well to form a smooth dressing.

Step 5

When the tortellini are done, drain and transfer immediately to the large bowl. Pour the dressing over the top and gently stir to combine. Serve, or cover and refrigerate until needed. (The flavor will deepen as it chills.) When ready to serve, stir in the fresh basil and Parmigiano-Reggiano.

Substitutions

Tortellini >> fusilli, rotini or other medium pasta shape.
Can't have pork? >> Use beef or turkey pepperoni, or skip it and use an additional 1 tablespoon of olive oil to replace the rendered fat.
Diced pepperoni >> sliced pepperoni, coarsely chopped.
Can't find oil-packed sun-dried tomatoes? >> Use about 1 cup (5 ounces) sun-dried tomatoes, along with 2 tablespoons plain olive oil instead of the oil from the jar.
Mozzarella >> crumbled feta or fresh goat cheese (chèvre).
Red wine vinegar >> white wine vinegar.
Instead of two types of dried herbs >> use just one or the other, or an Italian seasoning blend.
Parmigiano-Reggiano >> pecorino Romano or grana Padano.
Cherry tomatoes >> grape tomatoes.
Honey >> agave.

Notes

Pepperoni package sizes vary depending on whether you are buying a whole log or pre-diced. Either amount will work here, so use whatever you have on hand.

If all you can find are water-packed mozzarella pearls, simply drain and pat them dry before using.

We preferred dried tortellini here for its smaller size, but if what you have is fresh or frozen, use that.

