

Rigatoni with Mushrooms and Pancetta

You'll crave this rigatoni dish on either side of winter, when the crisp cool air pulls you into fall or when the thaw hits and spring starts to warm everything up. This is a recipe that can bend with the seasons, depending on the vegetables you use. It can be made with fall mushrooms and frozen peas, as we do here, or brightened up in spring with asparagus, fresh peas and a hint of lemon zest. It's the kind of warming comfort food that Nonna would make, and you can bet she'd send the leftovers home with you.

ingredients

3 tablespoons plus 1 teaspoon kosher salt, plus more to taste
4 ounces pancetta, cubed
2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
½ red onion, finely diced
10 ounces cremini mushrooms, cleaned and sliced
6 garlic cloves, sliced thinly
Freshly ground black pepper, to taste
1 pound rigatoni
1¼ cups fresh ricotta
1 cup thawed, frozen peas
½ cup freshly grated Parmigiano-Reggiano
¼ cup chopped Italian parsley
¼ cup chopped chives
¼ cup chopped mint leaves

instructions

Bring 6 quarts of water and 3 tablespoons of kosher salt to a rolling boil.

In a deep saute pan, add the pancetta and gradually render over medium-low heat. Once rendered and crisp, raise heat to medium, add the olive oil and onion and cook until translucent and tender, 5 minutes. Add the mushrooms, fresh black pepper, garlic and 1 teaspoon of salt. Stir and then let cook until tender. Raise the heat to medium-high and brown the mushrooms slightly, stirring occasionally, 3 to 5 minutes – be careful not to burn the garlic in the process. Add a ladleful (about ½ cup) of salted water from the pasta pot, deglaze the mushroom pan then reduce heat to low.

Drop the pasta into the boiling salted water and cook until al dente. Reserve ½ cup pasta water and drain the pasta.

Add the pasta to the mushrooms. Add the thawed peas, ricotta, Parmigiano-Reggiano and ¼ cup of the pasta water, or more as needed to make a smooth, thick sauce. Remove from heat and fold in the chopped herbs. Season again with fresh black pepper.

Serve immediately.

total time: 30 minutes

active prep: 20 minutes

serves: 4

difficulty: *easy*