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penne alla vodka

from Elle A Cooking @ Home

prep time: 5 min
cook time: 25 min
ready in: 30 min

servings: 4

ingredients:

- 2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
- 2 garlic cloves, minced
- 2 shallots, minced
- 1/4 teaspoon piment d'Espelette or crushed red pepper flakes, optional
- 1/2 cup vodka
- 1 28-ounce can whole, peeled tomatoes
- 1/3 cup heavy cream
- 1/2 cup freshly grated Parmigiano-Reggiano, plus more for serving
- 1/4 cup loosely packed fresh basil leaves
- 1 pound penne
- salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste

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directions:

In a large heavy-bottomed French or Dutch oven, heat the oil over medium high heat. Add the garlic and shallots and gently saute for 3-5 minutes, stirring constantly until fragrant and translucent. Lower the heat if the garlic starts to brown. Add the piment d'Espelette or red pepper flakes, if using.

Pour in the vodka and let reduce by half, another 3-5 minutes.

Add in the tomatoes and a sprinkling of salt. Bring to a boil and let simmer, uncovered, stirring often to break up the tomatoes, until sauce is thick, about 15 minutes.

Meanwhile, bring a large stockpot of water to a boil over high heat. Once the water boils, salt the water and cook penne until just under al dente, about 9 minutes and then drain in a colander.

While the pasta cooks, stir cream into the thickened tomato sauce. Bring to a boil and lower heat to a simmer. Season again with salt and pepper to taste.

Add the drained pasta to the tomato sauce and stir to coat the pasta with the sauce. The sauce should be thick enough to coat the pasta; continue to stir and reduce if needed.

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Turn off the heat and sprinkle Parmigiano-Reggiano over the pasta and toss to coat evenly.

Just before serving, thinly slice or tear up the basil leaves. Divide pasta among 4 serving platters. Garnish with a sprinkling of Parmigiano-Reggiano and basil.

notes:

Since basil tends to bruise easily, wait until the last minute to prepare the basil garnish. You can stack up the basil leaves, roll them tightly like a cigar, and use a sharp knife to chiffonade or cut the basil into fine ribbons. Note that a steel knife will oxidize the basil quite rapidly and turn the cut edges of the basil black. Simply tearing the basil leaves by hand will slow down the oxidation process and will provide your dish with a more rustic look.