



Sarah's Creamy Pesto Penne with Steelhead, Mushrooms and Spinach is the perfect meatless dish for Ash Wednesday and Lenten Fridays. Sarah Nasello / The Forum

Creamy Pesto Penne with Steelhead, Mushrooms and Spinach

Ingredients:

Extra virgin olive oil

1 ½ to 2 pounds whole steelhead trout or salmon filet

Kosher salt

Black pepper

1 pound penne pasta

3 cups baby spinach

2 tablespoons unsalted butter

1 cup yellow onion, medium-dice

2 cloves garlic, minced

Pinch crushed red pepper flakes

8 ounces button or baby bella mushrooms, sliced ¼-inch thick

2 cups heavy cream

¼ cup pesto

2 tablespoons grated parmesan cheese

Directions:

Preheat oven to 400 degrees and line a baking sheet with aluminum foil.

Bring a large pot of salted water to a boil over high heat; add penne pasta and cook according to directions on package until al dente. Before draining the water, reserve 1 cup of the pasta water for later use.

Place the spinach in the bottom of a colander and pour the pasta on top of the greens to drain the water. Drizzle the pasta with 1 tablespoon of olive oil and toss to combine; set aside.

As the pasta cooks: Drizzle the baking sheet lightly with olive oil. Place the steelhead filet on the greased foil and drizzle the top with 1 tablespoon of olive oil. Season the top of the filet with ½ teaspoon kosher salt and ¼ teaspoon black pepper. Bake in the center of the oven until fully cooked and opaque, about 15 to 17 minutes (20 to 23 if using salmon). Remove the fish from the oven and set aside until the pasta is ready.

As the fish bakes: In a large pan, melt 2 tablespoons of butter over medium-low heat. Add the onions and cook until translucent, stirring often, about 5 minutes. Add the garlic and red pepper flakes and continue cooking for 1 minute, stirring often.

Add the sliced mushrooms and cook until just tender, about 4 minutes. Add the heavy cream and bring to a boil over medium heat, stirring occasionally. Reduce heat to medium-low and let simmer for 3 to 5 minutes until the cream appears thick, frothy and bubbly.

Reduce heat to low and stir in the pesto. Cook for 2 minutes, then add the parmesan cheese and ¼ cup of the reserved pasta water; stir until combined. Taste and add more salt and pepper as desired.

Add the cooked pasta and wilted spinach; toss until evenly coated with the sauce. Break the fish into penne-sized pieces and stir into the pasta. Add ¼ cup more pasta water and cook until the sauce is silky and smooth, about 2 to 3 minutes. Transfer the pasta to a serving dish and serve immediately.

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“Home with the Lost Italian” is a weekly column written by Sarah Nasello featuring recipes by her husband, Tony Nasello. The couple owned Sarello’s in Moorhead and lives in Fargo with their son, Giovanni. Readers can reach them at sarahnasello@gmail.com.