

## Fresh & Flavorful Pasta Salad: A Light and Easy Side Dish

quick, vibrant, and refreshing dish



**TIME**  
**20 min**

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### INGREDIENTS

For the Salad:

12 ounces rotini pasta (or bowtie, penne, or fusilli)

1 cup cherry tomatoes, halved

1 cup cucumber, diced

$\frac{1}{2}$  cup red bell pepper, diced

$\frac{1}{2}$  cup black olives, sliced

$\frac{1}{4}$  cup red onion, thinly sliced

$\frac{1}{2}$  cup feta cheese, crumbled (or mozzarella balls)

$\frac{1}{2}$  cup fresh basil, chopped

For the Dressing:

$\frac{1}{3}$  cup olive oil

2 tablespoons red wine vinegar (or lemon juice for extra freshness)

1 teaspoon Dijon mustard

1 teaspoon honey (or maple syrup)

$\frac{1}{2}$  teaspoon garlic powder

$\frac{1}{2}$  teaspoon dried oregano

$\frac{1}{2}$  teaspoon salt

$\frac{1}{4}$  teaspoon black pepper

How to Make Fresh & Flavorful Pasta Salad:

1. Cook the Pasta:

2. Prepare the Dressing:

3. Assemble the Salad:

4. Toss with Dressing:

5. Chill and Serve:

#### My Best Tips for the Perfect Pasta Salad:

Use a short pasta shape - Rotini, penne, or bowtie pasta hold the dressing best.

Let it chill before serving - This allows the flavors to fully develop.

Make it protein-packed - Add grilled chicken, shrimp, or chickpeas for a heartier meal.

Try different dressings - A balsamic vinaigrette or creamy Italian dressing works great, too!

#### What to Serve with Pasta Salad:

Grilled chicken or shrimp - A light and healthy protein option.

Garlic bread or bruschetta - For an extra Italian-inspired touch.

Fresh fruit or a side salad - Keeps the meal balanced and refreshing.

A crisp white wine or lemonade - Perfect for summer gatherings.

#### FAQs:

## DIRECTIONS

1. **Cook the Pasta:** Bring a large pot of salted water to a boil. Cook the rotini pasta according to package instructions until al dente. Drain and rinse under cold water to stop the cooking process.
2. **Prepare the Dressing:** In a small bowl or jar, whisk together the olive oil, red wine vinegar, Dijon mustard, honey, garlic powder, oregano, salt, and black pepper. Set aside.
3. **Assemble the Salad:** In a large bowl, combine the cooked pasta, cherry tomatoes, cucumber, red bell pepper, black olives, red onion, feta cheese, and fresh basil.
4. **Toss with Dressing:** Pour the dressing over the pasta salad and toss until everything is well coated.
5. **Chill and Serve:** For the best flavor, cover and refrigerate for at least 30 minutes before serving. Enjoy cold or at room temperature.
6. **My Best Tips for the Perfect Pasta Salad:** Use a short pasta shape - Rotini, penne, or bowtie pasta hold the dressing best.
7. **Let it chill before serving -** This allows the flavors to fully develop.
8. **Make it protein-packed -** Add grilled chicken, shrimp, or chickpeas for a heartier meal.
9. **Try different dressings -** A balsamic vinaigrette or creamy Italian dressing works great, too!
10. **What to Serve with Pasta Salad:** This pasta salad is versatile and pairs well with:
11. **Grilled chicken or shrimp -** A light and healthy protein option.

12. Garlic bread or bruschetta - For an extra Italian-inspired touch.
13. Fresh fruit or a side salad - Keeps the meal balanced and refreshing.
14. A crisp white wine or lemonade - Perfect for summer gatherings.
15. FAQs: Can I make this pasta salad ahead of time? Yes! This salad actually tastes better after sitting for a few hours. Store it in the fridge for up to 3 days.
16. Can I make this pasta salad gluten-free? Absolutely! Use your favorite gluten-free pasta for the same great flavors.
17. Can I add more vegetables? Of course! Bell peppers, artichokes, zucchini, or roasted asparagus all make great additions.
18. This : Fresh & Flavorful Pasta Salad is a light, tangy, and refreshing dish that's perfect for any meal or occasion. Whether you're making it for a picnic, cookout, or simple weeknight dinner, this easy recipe is sure to be a favorite.
19. Give it a try and let me know how it turns out!

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