

Creamy Parmesan Orzo with Spinach & Seared Salmon: One-Pan Dinner!

Creamy Parmesan Orzo with Spinach & Seared Salmon: A One-Pan Delight!



TIME
35 min

TEMP
145°F

PRINT
Recipe Card

SAVE
PDF

INGREDIENTS

2-4 salmon fillets (skin-on or skinless), about 6 oz each
Salt and black pepper, to taste
1 tablespoon olive oil
1 tablespoon unsalted butter
Juice of ½ lemon (optional, for squeezing over salmon)
1 tablespoon olive oil or unsalted butter
3 cloves garlic, minced
1 cup orzo pasta
2 cups low-sodium chicken or vegetable broth
½ cup heavy cream
½ cup grated Parmesan cheese (plus extra for garnish)
2-3 cups baby spinach
Optional: pinch of red pepper flakes, fresh lemon zest

DIRECTIONS

1. Cook the Salmon: Season the salmon fillets generously on both sides with salt and black pepper. In a large, oven-safe (if desired for keeping warm) skillet or non-stick pan, heat 1 tablespoon olive oil and 1 tablespoon unsalted butter over medium-high heat. Once the butter is melted and shimmering, carefully place the salmon fillets in the pan, skin-side down (if using skin-on). Sear for 4-5 minutes until the skin is crispy and golden, and the flesh is opaque about halfway up. Then, flip the salmon and cook for another 2-4 minutes, or until the salmon is cooked through and flakes easily with a fork (internal temperature should reach 145°F / 63°C). If desired, squeeze a little fresh lemon juice over the cooked salmon. Remove the salmon from the skillet and set aside on a plate. You can cover it loosely with foil to keep warm, or place it in a low oven if your skillet is oven-safe.
2. Make the Creamy Orzo Base: In the same skillet (no need to clean it; the salmon bits add flavor!), reduce the heat to medium. Add a little more olive oil or butter (about 1 tablespoon) to the pan if needed. Add the 3 cloves minced garlic and sauté for about 30 seconds until fragrant. Be careful not to let the garlic burn. Stir in the 1 cup orzo pasta. Toast the orzo for 1-2 minutes, stirring constantly, until it's lightly golden and smells nutty. This step brings out its flavor. Pour in the 2 cups low-sodium chicken or vegetable broth. Bring the mixture to a gentle simmer. Stir occasionally, cooking the orzo for 8 to 10 minutes, or until it's al dente and most of the liquid has been absorbed. The consistency should be like a thick, loose risotto.

3. 3. Finish with Cream, Cheese, and Spinach: Reduce the heat to low. Stir in the $\frac{1}{2}$ cup heavy cream and $\frac{1}{2}$ cup grated Parmesan cheese. Mix until the cheese is melted, and the orzo is wonderfully creamy and well combined. Add the 2-3 cups baby spinach. Stir constantly until the spinach is fully wilted into the creamy orzo, which will only take about 1-2 minutes. Season the creamy orzo with salt and black pepper to taste. If desired, add a pinch of red pepper flakes for heat or a little fresh lemon zest for brightness.
4. 4. Combine & Serve: Return the cooked salmon fillets to the skillet, placing them back on top of the creamy orzo (or gently flake the salmon into the orzo, if you prefer). Garnish with more grated Parmesan cheese, fresh herbs (like chopped parsley or basil), or extra lemon wedges for squeezing. Serve immediately and enjoy your delicious, comforting, and elegant meal!

TIPS FOR SUCCESS

Dry Salmon for Sear: Patting salmon dry before seasoning ensures a beautiful, crispy skin (if using skin-on) and a good sear.

Don't Overcook Salmon: Salmon cooks quickly.

Remove it from heat as soon as it flakes easily to keep it moist and tender.

Toast Orzo: Briefly toasting the orzo before adding liquid enhances its flavor.

