

Poppy Seed Chicken Pasta Salad: Creamy, Tangy & Perfect for Potlucks

Poppy Seed Chicken Pasta Salad



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INGREDIENTS

8 oz rotini or medium pasta (cooked al dente, rinsed and cooled)
2 cups cooked chicken, shredded or diced (rotisserie chicken works great!)
1 cup celery, finely chopped
 $\frac{1}{2}$ cup red onion, finely diced
1 (15 oz) can sweet peas, drained (or 1 cup frozen peas, thawed)
 $\frac{1}{2}$ cup chopped pecans (optional, toasted for extra flavor)
 $\frac{3}{4}$ cup mayonnaise
... cup milk (whole milk or 2%)
2 tablespoons granulated sugar
2 tablespoons white vinegar or apple cider vinegar
1 tablespoon poppy seeds
 $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon salt
... teaspoon black pepper

DIRECTIONS

1. Cook and Cool Pasta: Cook the 8 oz rotini or medium pasta according to package instructions until al dente. Drain the pasta thoroughly, then rinse it under cold water to stop the cooking process and cool the pasta completely. This also prevents it from sticking together. Drain very well and set aside.
2. Prepare Salad Ingredients: In a large mixing bowl, combine the cooled cooked pasta, 2 cups shredded or diced cooked chicken, 1 cup finely chopped celery, $\frac{1}{2}$ cup finely diced red onion, and 1 (15 oz) can drained sweet peas (or thawed frozen peas). If using, add the $\frac{1}{2}$ cup chopped pecans.
3. Make the Poppy Seed Dressing: In a separate medium bowl, whisk together the $\frac{3}{4}$ cup mayonnaise, ... cup milk, 2 tablespoons granulated sugar, 2 tablespoons white vinegar or apple cider vinegar, 1 tablespoon poppy seeds, $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon salt, and ... teaspoon black pepper. Whisk until the dressing is smooth and well combined.
4. Dress the Salad: Pour the prepared poppy seed dressing over the chicken and pasta mixture in the large mixing bowl. Gently toss everything together with a large spoon or spatula until all the ingredients are evenly coated with the creamy dressing.
5. Chill the Salad: Cover the bowl with plastic wrap and refrigerate the Poppy Seed Chicken Pasta Salad for at least 1 hour (or preferably longer, up to 2-4 hours). This chilling time allows the flavors to meld together and ensures the salad is nicely chilled for serving.

6. **6. Serve:** Give the salad a gentle stir before serving. Serve chilled as a refreshing and satisfying side dish. Enjoy your delicious Poppy Seed Chicken Pasta Salad!

SWAPS & NOTES

Pasta Type: Rotini is excellent for catching the dressing, but any medium-sized pasta like shells, penne, or elbow macaroni would work.

Cook al dente and rinse well to prevent sticking.

Cooked Chicken: Shredded rotisserie chicken is the ultimate shortcut.

You can also boil or bake chicken breasts/thighs and shred or dice them.

TIPS FOR SUCCESS

Cool All Cooked Components: Ensure pasta and chicken are completely cooled before mixing into the salad to prevent wilting of other ingredients and soggy texture.

Rinse Pasta Thoroughly: Rinsing pasta with cold water is crucial for pasta salads to remove excess starch and prevent stickiness.

Adjust Sweetness/Tanginess: Taste the dressing before adding it to the salad and adjust the sugar or vinegar to your preference.

Don't Overdress: Add the dressing gradually until everything is coated to your liking.

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