

Herb Garlic Chicken Bites with Cheesy Penne - The Ultimate Comfort Food Combo

Herb Garlic Chicken Bites with Creamy Cheesy Penne Pasta



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40 min

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INGREDIENTS

For the Herb Garlic Chicken Bites:

1 lb chicken breast, cut into bite-sized pieces

2 tbsp olive oil

2 tbsp butter

3 cloves garlic, minced

1 tsp salt

$\frac{1}{8}$ tsp black pepper

$\frac{1}{8}$ tsp paprika

1 tsp Italian seasoning

$\frac{1}{8}$ tsp red pepper flakes (optional)

For the Creamy Cheesy Penne Pasta:

12 oz penne pasta

1 cup heavy cream

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup chicken broth

1 $\frac{1}{2}$ cups shredded mozzarella cheese

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup grated Parmesan cheese

... tsp red pepper flakes (optional)

... cup chopped fresh parsley (for garnish)

How to Make Herb Garlic Chicken Bites with Cheesy Penne:

1. Cook the Pasta:

2. Prepare the Chicken:

3. Make the Creamy Cheese Sauce:

4. Bring It All Together:

5. Garnish and Serve:

My Tips for Perfect Creamy Chicken Penne:

Use fresh garlic: Pre-minced garlic can't compare to the punchy flavor of fresh cloves.

Shred your own cheese: Pre-shredded cheese often has anti-caking agents that prevent smooth melting.

Adjust the spice level: Skip the red pepper flakes for a mild version, or add extra for more heat.

Make it extra creamy: If you love an ultra-rich sauce, add an extra splash of heavy cream.

What to Serve with This Dish:

Garlic bread: Because who doesn't love extra garlic and carbs?

A crisp side salad: Something fresh and tangy, like an arugula and balsamic salad, balances the richness.

Roasted veggies: Try asparagus, zucchini, or cherry tomatoes for a delicious contrast.

FAQs (Because I Know You're Wondering...):

Final Thoughts:

DIRECTIONS

- 1. Cook the Pasta:** Bring a large pot of salted water to a boil and cook the penne according to package instructions. Drain and set aside. (Pro tip: Save about $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of pasta water in case you need to thin the sauce later.)
- 2. Prepare the Chicken:** In a large skillet, heat olive oil over medium-high heat. Add the chicken pieces, seasoning them with salt, black pepper, paprika, Italian seasoning, and red pepper flakes (if using).
- 3. Cook for 5-7 minutes,** stirring occasionally, until the chicken is golden brown and fully cooked.
- 4. Add butter and minced garlic,** letting it sauté for about 30 seconds until fragrant. Remove the chicken from the skillet and set aside.
- 5. Make the Creamy Cheese Sauce:** Using the same skillet (no need to wash it-those flavors are gold!), melt butter over medium heat and sauté garlic until fragrant. Pour in heavy cream and chicken broth, stirring well to combine.
- 6. Once the sauce starts to simmer,** gradually stir in mozzarella and Parmesan cheese until fully melted. Add Italian seasoning, black pepper, and red pepper flakes, stirring until the sauce thickens.
- 7. Bring It All Together:** Toss in the cooked penne pasta, mixing well to coat every piece with that creamy, cheesy goodness. Add the garlic herb chicken bites back into the skillet and stir everything together.
- 8. If the sauce is too thick,** you can add a splash of reserved pasta water to loosen it up.
- 9. Garnish and Serve:** Top with freshly chopped parsley and an extra sprinkle of Parmesan cheese. Serve hot

and enjoy!

10. My Tips for Perfect Creamy Chicken Penne: Use fresh garlic: Pre-minced garlic can't compare to the punchy flavor of fresh cloves.
11. Shred your own cheese: Pre-shredded cheese often has anti-caking agents that prevent smooth melting.
12. Adjust the spice level: Skip the red pepper flakes for a mild version, or add extra for more heat.
13. Make it extra creamy: If you love an ultra-rich sauce, add an extra splash of heavy cream.
14. What to Serve with This Dish: This pasta is already rich and satisfying, but if you want to round out your meal, here are some great pairings:
15. Garlic bread: Because who doesn't love extra garlic and carbs?
16. A crisp side salad: Something fresh and tangy, like an arugula and balsamic salad, balances the richness.
17. Roasted veggies: Try asparagus, zucchini, or cherry tomatoes for a delicious contrast.
18. FAQs (Because I Know You're Wondering...): Q: Can I use a different type of pasta?A: Absolutely! This recipe works well with fettuccine, rigatoni, or even shells.
19. Q: Can I substitute the heavy cream?A: If you want a lighter version, you can use half-and-half or even a mix of milk and cream cheese for creaminess.
20. Q: How do I store leftovers?A: Store in an airtight container in the fridge for up to 3 days. Reheat with a splash of milk or cream to loosen up the sauce.
21. Q: Can I make this ahead of time?A: Yes! You can prep the chicken and sauce in advance, then reheat and toss with fresh pasta when ready to serve.
22. Final Thoughts: This Herb Garlic Chicken Bites with Creamy Cheesy Penne Pasta is the perfect balance of flavor, texture, and comfort. The juicy, seasoned chicken bites paired with a rich, cheesy sauce make this dish an instant favorite in any household.
23. Whether you're serving it for a family dinner, meal prep, or a special occasion, it's guaranteed to impress. If you try this recipe, let me know how it turns out-I'd love to hear your twists and variations!
24. Now, grab your skillet and get cooking-this creamy, dreamy pasta won't make itself!

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