

Easy Italian Pasta Salad: A Zesty Crowd-Pleaser

Here's what you'll need to create this vibrant Easy Italian Pasta Salad:



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15 min

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INGREDIENTS

1 box (12-16 ounces) tricolor rotini pasta (or other short pasta like penne, fusilli, or farfalle)
1 pint (about 2 cups) cherry tomatoes, halved or quartered
1 large cucumber, peeled (if desired) and diced into 1/2-inch pieces
1/2 medium red onion, thinly sliced or finely diced
1 (16-ounce) bottle Zesty Italian dressing (such as Kraft Zesty Italian, or your preferred brand)
1-2 tablespoons McCormick Salad Supreme seasoning (or similar blend), plus more to taste
1/2 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper, or to taste
Kosher salt, to taste (optional, adjust based on dressing and seasoning salt content)
1/2 cup black olives, sliced
1/2 cup green olives, sliced
1/2 cup mini mozzarella balls (bocconcini), halved
1/4 cup grated Parmesan cheese
1/2 cup cooked pepperoni or salami, diced
1 (15-ounce) can chickpeas, rinsed and drained
1/4 cup fresh parsley, chopped

DIRECTIONS

1. Cook the : Pasta:
2. Bring a large pot of salted water to a rolling boil.
3. Add the entire box of tricolor rotini pasta and cook according to package directions until al dente (firm to the bite). Do not overcook.
4. Once cooked, immediately drain the pasta in a colander.
5. Rinse the drained pasta thoroughly with cold water. This stops the cooking process and prevents the pasta from sticking together, which is crucial for pasta salad. Let it drain well.
6. Prepare the : Vegetables:
7. While the pasta is cooking, prepare your vegetables: Halve or quarter the cherry tomatoes.
8. Peel the cucumber (if desired) and dice it into 1/2-inch pieces.
9. Thinly slice or finely dice the red onion.
10. Combine : Ingredients:
11. In a large mixing bowl, combine the cooled and drained rotini pasta, halved cherry tomatoes, diced cucumber, and sliced or diced red onion.
12. Add about 3/4 of the 16-ounce bottle of : Zesty Italian dressing to the pasta and vegetables.
13. Sprinkle 1 to 2 tablespoons of : McCormick Salad Supreme seasoning over the mixture.
14. Add 1/2 teaspoon of freshly ground black pepper.
15. (Optional: If adding any of the optional ingredients like olives, mozzarella, pepperoni, or chickpeas, add them now.)
16. Toss all the ingredients together gently but thoroughly to ensure everything is evenly coated with the dressing and seasonings.

17. Chill the : Pasta Salad:
18. Cover the bowl of pasta salad tightly with plastic wrap.
19. Place the pasta salad in the refrigerator to chill for at least 2 hours, or ideally overnight. This chilling time allows the flavors to meld and the pasta to absorb the dressing, which is key for maximum flavor.
20. Adjust and : Serve:
21. Before serving, remove the pasta salad from the refrigerator. The pasta will likely have absorbed a lot of the dressing.
22. If the salad looks a bit dry, add more : Zesty Italian dressing (from the remaining 1/4 bottle or a fresh bottle) until it reaches your desired moistness.
23. Taste the salad and adjust seasonings as needed - you might want more Salad Supreme seasoning, black pepper, or a pinch of salt.
24. (Optional: If using fresh parsley, stir it in just before serving.)
25. Serve chilled as a delicious side dish.

SWAPS & NOTES

Pasta: Tricolor rotini adds visual appeal, but any short, sturdy pasta shape like penne, fusilli, or farfalle will work well as they hold the dressing and ingredients nicely.

Bell peppers (any color, diced), blanched broccoli florets,

artichoke hearts (canned, drained and chopped), or sun-dried tomatoes (oil-packed, drained and chopped) are great additions.

Italian Dressing: "Zesty" Italian dressing typically has a good balance of tang and herbs.

For a healthier option, look for light Italian dressing, or make your own vinaigrette.

TIPS FOR SUCCESS

Al Dente Pasta: Cook your pasta to al dente.

It will continue to absorb liquid and soften as it chills, so starting slightly firm prevents mushy pasta.

Rinse with Cold Water: This is essential for pasta salad.

It stops cooking, removes excess starch, and prevents clumping.

More recipes: [ChefManiac.com](https://chefmaniac.com)

Original recipe: <https://chefmaniac.com/easy-italian-pasta-salad-a-zesty-crowd-pleaser/>