

Easy Seafood Pasta Salad: The Ultimate Summer Side Dish

3 boxes tri-color rotini, cooked according to package directions



TIME
2-3 min

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INGREDIENTS

3 boxes tri-color rotini, cooked according to package directions
1 1/2 sticks of butter
3 small cucumbers, diced
2 bags of large raw shrimp, peeled and deveined
3 packs of imitation crab meat, flaked or chopped
1 bunch of green onions, chopped
1 pack cherry tomatoes, halved
1 bottle (16 oz) Olive Garden Italian dressing
Salad Supreme seasoning, to taste
Old Bay seasoning, to taste
Complete Season, to taste

Swaps and Notes:

Pasta: I love tri-color rotini for this recipe because it holds the dressing well and adds a nice visual pop. You can use any short pasta shape you prefer, like fusilli, farfalle, or even elbow macaroni.

Seafood: This recipe uses shrimp and imitation crab meat, which is a budget-friendly and delicious choice. If you want to use real crab meat, go for it! You could also add some lobster or even scallops for a truly decadent salad.

Veggies: The cucumbers and cherry tomatoes add freshness and texture. Feel free to add other veggies like bell peppers, red onion, or black olives.

Dressing: The Olive Garden Italian dressing is a favorite for this recipe because it's tangy and full of herbs, but any robust Italian dressing will work.

Seasoning: Don't be shy with the Old Bay! It's the secret ingredient that gives the seafood its signature flavor. Salad Supreme is a great addition for a little extra crunch and spice.

How to Make Seafood Pasta Salad:

Cook the Pasta: Bring a large pot of salted water to a boil. Add the tri-color rotini and cook according to the package directions until al dente. Drain the pasta and rinse with cold water to stop the cooking process. Set it aside to cool completely.

Prepare the Seafood: While the pasta is cooking, melt the butter in a large skillet over medium heat. Season the raw shrimp generously with Old Bay and Complete Season. Add the seasoned shrimp to the skillet and cook for 2-3 minutes per side, or until they turn pink and opaque. Add the flaked crab meat to the skillet and warm it through for a minute or two. Remove the seafood from the heat and let it cool.

Chop the Veggies: While everything is cooling, dice your cucumbers, halve the cherry tomatoes, and chop the green onions.

Combine Everything: In a large mixing bowl, combine the cooled pasta, cooked shrimp, crab meat, chopped cucumbers, cherry tomatoes, and green onions.

Dress it Up: Pour the entire bottle of Olive Garden Italian dressing over the pasta mixture. Sprinkle generously with Salad Supreme seasoning. Toss everything together until all the ingredients are evenly coated.

Chill and Serve: For the best flavor, cover the bowl and refrigerate the pasta salad for at least 1-2 hours. This gives the flavors time to meld together. Toss it again right before serving.

Tips for Success:

Don't Overcook the Pasta: Cook the pasta to al dente so it holds up well in the salad and doesn't get mushy.

Rinse with Cold Water: Rinsing the pasta with cold water after cooking is a crucial step. It stops the cooking process and prevents the pasta from sticking together, which is exactly what you want for a cold salad.

Season Your Seafood: Don't skip the seasoning on the shrimp! This is where a lot of the flavor comes from.

Chill Time is Key: While you can eat it right away, the flavors truly shine after they've had some time to sit and marinate.

Serving Suggestions and Pairings:

Storage and Leftover Tips:

More Recipes You Will Love:

My A Light Tangy Chicken Salad I Actually Crave and There's No Mayo in Sight is a refreshing twist on a classic.

For a weeknight dinner that's always a hit, try my Classic Spaghetti Recipe with Homemade Sauce.

This Tomato Skillet with Okra and Sausage is another quick and flavorful southern-inspired meal.

DIRECTIONS

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10. **Chill : Time is Key:** While you can eat it right away, the flavors truly shine after they've had some time to sit and marinate.
11. **Serving Suggestions and Pairings:** This seafood pasta salad is a fantastic main dish for a light lunch, but it also shines as a side dish at a summer barbecue. It pairs wonderfully with grilled chicken or burgers. For a perfect Southern-inspired meal, serve it alongside a bowl of my Cajun Chicken Sausage Gumbo or with my Easy Cheesy Chicken Sliders with Marinara Garlic Butter.
12. **Storage and Leftover Tips:** This pasta salad is a great make-ahead dish. Store any leftovers in an airtight container in the refrigerator for up to 3-4 days. The flavors will continue to develop, so it often tastes even better the next day! You may need to add a splash more dressing or a bit of seasoning if you find it's dried out a bit.
13. **More Recipes You Will Love:** Looking for other easy, crowd-pleasing recipes? I've got you covered.
14. **My A : Light Tangy Chicken Salad I Actually Crave and There's No Mayo in Sight** is a refreshing twist on a classic.
15. For a weeknight dinner that's always a hit, try my **Classic Spaghetti Recipe with Homemade Sauce**.
16. **This : Tomato Skillet with Okra and Sausage** is another quick and flavorful southern-inspired meal.
17. **Final Thoughts:** This Seafood Pasta Salad is a testament to the fact that you don't need complicated ingredients or techniques to create something truly memorable. It's all about fresh ingredients, bold flavors, and a little bit of love. I hope this recipe becomes a staple in your home, just as it has in mine.
18. If you give this recipe a try, come back and let me know how it turned out. What's your secret ingredient for the perfect pasta salad? Share your tips in the comments!

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