

Poppy Seed Chicken Pasta Salad: A Creamy and Delicious Summer Side Dish

Poppy Seed Chicken Pasta Salad



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INGREDIENTS

For the Salad:

1 lb pasta (rotini, fusilli, or bowtie), cooked and cooled

2 cups cooked chicken, shredded or cubed

1/2 cup sliced almonds, toasted

1 cup chopped celery

1/2 cup chopped red onion

1/2 cup dried cranberries

For the Dressing:

1 cup mayonnaise

1/4 cup white vinegar

3 tbsp sugar

2 tbsp poppy seeds

1/2 tsp salt

1/4 tsp black pepper

Swaps and Notes:

Pasta: Rotini, fusilli, and bowtie are great pasta choices because they have lots of nooks and crannies to hold the creamy dressing.

Chicken: You can use leftover roasted chicken, rotisserie chicken, or simply boil and shred a couple of chicken breasts.

Almonds: Toasting the almonds is a simple step that adds a ton of flavor and crunch. You can do this in a dry pan over medium heat for a few minutes until fragrant.

Vegetables: Feel free to add other crunchy vegetables like diced bell peppers, shredded carrots, or even some fresh peas.

Dressing: You can use a bit of plain Greek yogurt to replace some of the mayonnaise for a lighter dressing.

Instructions:

Prepare the Salad Ingredients:

Cook the Pasta: Cook the pasta according to the package directions. Once cooked, drain and rinse it with cold water until it's completely cooled. This stops the cooking process and prevents the pasta from sticking together.

Combine: In a large bowl, combine the cooked and cooled pasta, shredded chicken, toasted almonds, chopped celery, chopped red onion, and dried cranberries.

Make the Poppy Seed Dressing:

Whisk: In a separate medium bowl, whisk together the mayonnaise, white vinegar, sugar, poppy seeds, salt, and black pepper until the dressing is smooth and the sugar has dissolved.

Assemble and Chill:

Dress the Salad: Pour the dressing over the pasta and chicken mixture. Toss everything together until all the ingredients are evenly coated.

Chill: Cover the bowl and refrigerate the salad for at least 1 hour before serving. This allows the flavors to meld together and the pasta to absorb some of the dressing.

Tips for Success:

Cool the Pasta Completely: Make sure your pasta is completely cooled before you add the other ingredients. If it's still warm, it can cause the mayonnaise to break and get an oily texture.

Toast the Almonds: Don't skip toasting the almonds! It's a simple step that makes a huge difference in flavor and crunch.

Let It Marinate: This salad gets even better as it sits. If you can, make it a few hours or even a day ahead of time.

Adjust Consistency: If the salad seems a little dry after chilling, you can add a tablespoon or two of milk or a little more mayonnaise to loosen it up.

Serving Suggestions and Pairings:

DIRECTIONS

1. **Prepare the Salad Ingredients:: Cook the Pasta:** Cook the pasta according to the package directions. Once cooked, drain and rinse it with cold water until it's completely cooled. This stops the cooking process and prevents the pasta from sticking together.
2. **Combine:** In a large bowl, combine the cooked and cooled pasta, shredded chicken, toasted almonds, chopped celery, chopped red onion, and dried cranberries.
3. **Make the Poppy Seed Dressing:: Whisk:** In a separate medium bowl, whisk together the mayonnaise, white vinegar, sugar, poppy seeds, salt, and black pepper until the dressing is smooth and the sugar has dissolved.
4. **Assemble and Chill:: Dress the Salad:** Pour the dressing over the pasta and chicken mixture. Toss everything together until all the ingredients are evenly coated.
5. **Chill:** Cover the bowl and refrigerate the salad for at least 1 hour before serving. This allows the flavors to meld together and the pasta to absorb some of the dressing.
6. **Tips for Success: Cool the Pasta Completely:** Make sure your pasta is completely cooled before you add the other ingredients. If it's still warm, it can cause the mayonnaise to break and get an oily texture.
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9. Adjust : Consistency: If the salad seems a little dry after chilling, you can add a tablespoon or two of milk or a little more mayonnaise to loosen it up.
10. Serving Suggestions and Pairings: This Poppy Seed Chicken Pasta Salad is a perfect side dish for any summer meal. It pairs wonderfully with grilled chicken, burgers, or hot dogs. For another easy and delicious meal to serve with it, my Easy Cheesy Chicken Sliders with Marinara Garlic Butter are always a huge hit.
11. Nutritional Information (Per Serving): Please note: This is an approximation and can vary based on the specific ingredients used.
12. Calories: Approximately 450
13. Protein: 25g
14. Fat: 25g
15. Carbohydrates: 35g
16. This is a hearty and satisfying salad that's packed with protein and a good amount of fiber.
17. Storage and Leftover Tips: Leftover pasta salad can be stored in an airtight container in the refrigerator for up to 3 days. The pasta will continue to absorb the dressing, so you may need to add a little more mayonnaise or milk to refresh it before serving.
18. More Recipes You Will Love: If you're a fan of simple, delicious chicken recipes, you'll love some of my other creations. For another crowd-pleasing dinner, my recipe for These Chicken Enchiladas are My Go-To for Cozy Crowd-Pleasing Dinners is always a huge hit. For a fast and fun meal, my These Sheet Pan Quesadillas are My Favorite Way to Feed a Crowd Fast is a lifesaver. And for a great weeknight dinner shortcut, my This Dorito Casserole is My Favorite Weeknight Dinner Shortcut is a lifesaver.
19. Final Thoughts: This Poppy Seed Chicken Pasta Salad is a recipe that is sure to become a staple in your kitchen. It's simple, flavorful, and a perfect addition to any meal. It's a great way to showcase a classic flavor combination in a fresh, new way.
20. I'd love to know what your favorite pasta salad additions are! Let me know in the comments below. And don't forget to follow me for more delicious recipes. Happy cooking!

SWAPS & NOTES

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Almonds: Toasting the almonds is a simple step that adds a ton of flavor and crunch.

You can do this in a dry pan over medium heat for a few minutes until fragrant.

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

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