

One-Pan Creamy Chicken Orzo: The Ultimate 30-Minute Dinner

, and today I'm sharing a recipe that has become a staple in my household:



TIME
6 min

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INGREDIENTS

2 tbsp olive oil: For searing and sautéing.
1 lb (450 g) chicken breast or thighs: Diced into bite-sized pieces. Thighs stay juicier!
Salt and black pepper: To taste.
1 tsp Italian seasoning: A blend of dried herbs for that classic Mediterranean vibe.
3 cloves garlic: Minced fresh for the best aroma.
8 oz (225 g) mushrooms: Sliced (Cremini or Baby Bella work best).
1 cup dry orzo pasta: Look for it in the pasta aisle.
2% cups chicken broth: Use low-sodium to control the salt.
% cup heavy cream: Or half-and-half for a slightly lighter touch.
2 cups fresh spinach: Packed tightly.
1/3 cup basil pesto: Store-bought or homemade.
... cup grated Parmesan cheese: The "glue" that brings the sauce together.
Optional: Red pepper flakes for heat, or fresh basil for a pop of color.

DIRECTIONS

- 1. Sear the Chicken:** Heat the olive oil in a large, deep skillet over medium-high heat. Season your diced chicken with salt, pepper, and Italian seasoning. Once the oil is shimmering, add the chicken. Cook for 4-6 minutes until the pieces are golden-brown and cooked through. Remove the chicken and set it aside on a plate; we'll add it back later to keep it tender.
- 2. Sauté the Vegetables:** In the same skillet (don't wash it-those brown bits are flavor gold!), add the sliced mushrooms. Cook them for 4-5 minutes until they release their moisture and turn golden. Stir in the minced garlic and cook for just 30 seconds until fragrant.
- 3. Toast the Orzo:** Stir the dry orzo directly into the mushrooms and garlic. Let it cook for 1-2 minutes. Toasting the pasta lightly gives it a nutty depth and helps it maintain its structure during the simmer.
- 4. Simmer the Pasta:** Pour in the chicken broth. Bring the mixture to a gentle boil, then reduce the heat to medium-low. Cover and simmer for 8-10 minutes. Make sure to stir occasionally so the orzo doesn't stick to the bottom. It's ready when the pasta is tender and most of the liquid has been absorbed.
- 5. Make it Creamy:** Stir in the heavy cream, fresh spinach, and the cooked chicken (along with any juices on the plate). Cook for another 2-3 minutes until the spinach has wilted and the sauce has thickened into a silky coating.
- 6. The Pesto Finish:** Remove the pan from the heat. This is crucial-you don't want to cook the pesto too much, or it will lose its bright green color and fresh flavor. Stir in the basil pesto and Parmesan cheese.

If the sauce looks too thick, add a tiny splash of broth to loosen it up.

SWAPS & NOTES

The Protein: Swap chicken for shrimp or even chickpeas for a vegetarian version.

The Veggies: If you aren't a fan of mushrooms, try diced

zucchini or sun-dried tomatoes.

The Dairy: To keep it lighter, you can use evaporated milk, or for a tangy twist, stir in a dollop of Greek yogurt after removing the pan from the heat.

Gluten-Free: Use a gluten-free orzo or arborio rice (though rice will require more liquid and a longer cook time).

TIPS FOR SUCCESS

Don't Overcook the Orzo: Like any pasta, orzo can get mushy if left too long.

Start checking for doneness at the 8-minute mark.

Use Fresh Parmesan: Pre-shredded cheese in a green can won't melt the same way.

Freshly grated Parm creates that signature velvety texture.

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

Original recipe: <https://chefmaniac.com/one-pan-creamy-chicken-orzo-the-ultimate-30-minute-dinner/>