

06/05/14 - Pasta With Shitake Mushrooms, Figs, and Pesto

Protein, protein, protein,, should we eat less, should we eat more? Today one of my doctors said older people need to eat more. Only lean beef?, only fish or does it have mercury or Fukushima radiation?, only chicken, or is it so over processed, the birds so produced that it is toxic? Sometimes it is nice to have just some pasta with vegetables and give it a rest.

The farm market is so full of fresh produce, the smell of fresh basil so overpowering I hatched my dinner plan. Pasta for dinner. I found a box of organic *Fusilli* in the pantry, it seemed to go together with Shitake mushrooms (my favorite), figs, zucchini, red pepper for color and garlic . Then I added some fresh Buffalo Mozzarella, grated *Grana Padano* cheese (since the source of kosher Parmesano Reggiano from Italy has dried up lately) and a big dollop of pesto.

To serve 2 big eaters as a main course

1/ 2 box organic *Fusilli* pasta

sea salt

olive oil

6 large Shitake mushrooms(about 3 to 5 inches across), wiped clean with a damp cloth and stems removed

2 tablespoon extra virgin olive oil

2 large cloves garlic, peeled, minced

2 zucchini, washed, dried sliced in thin half moons

4 fresh figs, washed, dried, quartered

1/ 4 red bell pepper, diced small

1 Buffalo Mozzarella oval , cut in one inch pieces

1/2 cup grated *Grana Padano* cheese

1/2 cup fresh basil leaves

1. Fill a large stockpot with cold water and bring to a boil over high heat. Add a teaspoon salt to boiling water and a tablespoon or so of oil, add pasta and cook for about 8 minutes. In the meantime see step two.

2. Slice mushrooms into 1/3 inch wide slices and then half length wise.

3. Heat a large non stick sauté pan over medium high heat, add oil, and then garlic, add mushrooms. Sauté mushrooms until some are beginning to turn golden, you may have to add a bit more oil.

4. Add sliced zucchini to sauté pan and stir. Cook for another minute, add figs, and red pepper, stir. Add a spoonful or so of boiling pasta water. Add more if the vegetables don't seem quite done and are starting to stick.

1. Stir 1/4 cup of grated cheese into vegetables and turn off. Stir, cheese will melt and blend with pasta water to make a little sauce.
2. Drain pasta and toss into vegetables
3. To serve, split pasta onto plates or place in serving dish, garnish with fresh basil leaves, pieces of Buffalo Mozzarella, more grated Grana Padano cheese and a dollop of fresh Pesto.

Fresh Basil Pesto

Makes 3/4 cup

1 bunch fresh basil leaves, washed and patted dry (around 1 cup packed)

1/4 cup Spanish pine nuts

1/2 cup grated *Parmesano Reggiano* or *Grana Padano* cheese

1/2 cup extra virgin olive oil

Place everything in a mini food processor and blend. Use a little at a time for flavor. Store in the refrigerator.

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