

Fresh From the Kitchen

Recipes excerpted from ***Thirty Minute Pasta*** by Giuliano Hazan. Published by Stewart, Tabori & Chang. New York, NY. Copyright 2009. Reprinted with permission of the publisher. All rights reserved.

I discovered this classic, refreshing Neapolitan summer dish at a restaurant called Cambusa in Positano. It is an uncooked sauce in which the ingredients are simply scalded with hot oil before being tossed with the pasta, releasing the bright flavors. The mozzarella is tossed with the hot pasta at the end, then the dish stands briefly before serving so that the cheese melts slightly.

Spaghetti with Raw Tomatoes, Herbs and Mozzarella

Spaghetti alla Checca

2 pounds fresh tomatoes
Salt
1 pound spaghetti
6 tablespoons extra-virgin oil
8 ounces fresh whole-milk mozzarella
6-8 fresh basil leaves
4-5 sprigs fresh thyme
3-4 sprigs fresh thyme
Freshly ground black pepper

Serves 4.

1. Fill a pot for the pasta with about 6 quarts of water, place over high heat, and bring to a boil.
2. Peel the tomatoes, remove the seeds, and cut into small 1/4-inch dice. Put the tomatoes in the serving bowl you'll be serving the pasta in.
3. When the water for the pasta is boiling, add about 2 tablespoons salt, add the spaghetti, and stir until all the strands are submerged. Cook until very al dente (about 30 seconds less than you normally would).
4. While the pasta is cooking, put the olive oil in a small saucepan and place over medium heat. Heat until the oil just begins to smoke, then remove from the heat.
5. While the oil is heating, cut the mozzarella into 1/4-inch dice. Coarsely chop the basil. Finely chop enough thyme to measure about 1 teaspoon. Add the herbs to the bowl with the tomatoes and season well with salt and pepper. Pour the hot oil into the bowl with the herbs and mix thoroughly.
6. When the pasta is done, drain well and toss it with the ingredients in the serving bowl. Add the mozzarella, toss again, then cover the bowl and let stand for about a minute to allow the cheese to melt a bit. Uncover the bowl, toss one last time, and serve at once.