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*Recipes excerpted from **Big Green Cookbook** by Jackie Newgent, RD. Published by John Wiley & Sons, Inc. Hoboken, NJ. Copyright 2009. Reprinted with permission of the publisher. All rights reserved.*

Orzo looks like rice, but cooks much faster since it is pasta. It cooks even quicker using the green “lid cooking” approach, too. In fact, it’ll help you save several minutes of cooking time – and the accompanying cooking gas or electricity. The end result: a beautiful, full-flavored, perfectly cooked orzo salad that will become a favorite for picnics or your everyday menu.

Baby Spinach Orzo Salad

- 1 cup whole-wheat orzo
- 3 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
- Juice and zest of 1/2 large lemon, or to taste (about 2 tablespoons juice)
- 3/4 teaspoon sea salt, or to taste
- 2 cups baby arugula or fresh baby spinach leaves
- 6 ounces organic or locally produced feta or soft goat cheese, crumbled (about 1/2 cups)
- 2 scallions, green and white parts, thinly sliced
- 1 cup grape tomatoes, halved lengthwise
- 1/2 cup chopped fresh herbs, such as a mixture of basil, flat-leaf parsley, and mint
- 1/3 cup finely diced unpeeled hothouse cucumber or celery
- 1/4 cup raw pine nuts

1. Add the orzo and 3 cups fresh water to a small saucepan. Bring to a boil over high heat. Cover and turn off the heat. Let “lid cook”(cook covered while the burner is off) until the orzo is *al dente*, about 7 minutes. Drain well. (Do not rinse).
2. Meanwhile, whisk together the oil, lemon juice, and salt in a large bowl.
3. Add the hot, drained orzo to the lemon dressing and toss. Set aside to cool slightly, about 30 minutes. Stirring occasionally to help prevent sticking. Then chill in the refrigerator.
4. When the orzo is at room temperature or cooler, add the arugula or baby spinach, cheese (if using), scallions, tomatoes, herbs, and cucumber and gently toss. Stir in the lemon zest. Taste and adjust seasoning, if necessary.
5. Sprinkle with pine nuts. Serve at room temperature.

Per Serving: 280 calories, 17g total fat, 6g saturated fat, 0g trans fat, 25mg cholesterol, 610mg sodium, 23g total carbohydrates, 3g dietary fiber, 9g protein.