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Greek-style Pasta Salad

Makes 8-10 servings

One of our favorite salads, Greek salad, marries with another favorite, pasta, in this garden-meets-grain salad. Red ripe tomatoes, cucumbers, green pepper, and red onion carry the traditional Greek-style salad forward. The Kalamata olives, quartered, provide a spike of saltiness and a nice color contrast. Feta cheese completes the Greek-style profile along with a lemony vinaigrette dressing. Choose a pasta that offers a lot of nooks and crannies for holding the finely diced vegetables and dressing. It's a favorite at our house and bound to become a favorite at your home, too.

Ingredients

1 lb. pasta
Salt for boiling water
50 grape tomatoes, quartered
1 cup Kalamata olives, pitted and quartered
2 cucumbers, peeled, seeded and diced 1/4-inch pieces
(or 1 large English cucumber)
1 green pepper, diced 1/4-inch pieces
1 small red onion, diced
1/4 cup fresh parsley, minced
1/2 cup sun-dried tomatoes (oil pack), finely chopped
8 oz feta cheese, crumbled
2 cups arugula (or baby spinach)

Dressing

1 tsp. dried oregano
1/2 tsp. dried thyme
1/2 tsp. dried basil
3 cloves garlic, crushed
1 tablespoon Dijon mustard
1/2 cup olive oil
1/2 cup fresh lemon juice
1/4 cup white wine vinegar
1/2 tsp. kosher salt
1/2 tsp. black pepper

Directions:

1. WASH the vegetables, pat dry. CUT the tomatoes and olives into quarters, and the cucumber, green pepper, onion into a fine dice. MINCE the parsley. PLACE in a large bowl.

2. DRAIN the oil-packed sun-dried tomatoes well, chop finely, add to the chopped vegetables. CRUMBLE the feta cheese and set aside in a separate bowl. WASH the arugula, remove any large stems, also set aside in a separate bowl.

Continued on Page 2



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Page 2, continued

3. MIX all the dressing ingredients together in deep measuring cup or bowl. BLEND with an immersion blender, or WHISK vigorously.
3. BRING 4 quarts of water to a boil in a large saucepot. ADD 1-1/2 tablespoons salt to the boiling water, then add the pasta. BOIL the pasta until the pasta is *al dente* – just “tender to the tooth.”
4. DRAIN the pasta well in a colander, transfer to a large bowl. While still warm, TOSS the pasta with the dressing. The warm pasta will absorb the wonderful dressing flavors. Allow the dressed pasta to cool – (cool pasta is important for the next step).
5. ADD the prepared vegetables (tomatoes, olives, cucumber, green pepper, red onion, parsley), the sun-dried tomatoes, feta cheese, and arugula to the cooled pasta. TOSS to combine. STORE in the refrigerator until ready to serve.