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Creamy, Oven Sun-Dried Tomato Pasta

Serves 6 - 8

This dish is a great summertime comfort food pasta-style. These homemade, oven “sun-dried” tomatoes have an intense, sweet, and tart flavor that compliments the rich sausage, cheese, and creamy pasta. Traditional sun-dried tomatoes are made using the power of the sun, but we found it was easier to control the many variables by using a low-and-slow oven. The results are delicious!

Ingredients:

16 oz penne pasta
1 smoked kielbasa sausage link, thinly sliced
1 tablespoon olive oil
1 small shallot, minced
3 garlic cloves, minced
2 tablespoons butter
6-8 oven "sun-dried" tomatoes, cut into thin slices
2 tablespoons flour
1 cup chicken broth
2 cup half and half
1/4 teaspoon dried oregano
1/4 teaspoon dried basil
1/4 teaspoon crushed red pepper flakes
1/4 teaspoon Kosher salt
1/4 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
2 tablespoons chopped fresh basil leaves
1/4 cup freshly shaved Parmesan cheese

Directions:

1. Cook the pasta in a large pot of boiling water until *al dente*. Reserve 1 cup of pasta water.
2. In a large sauté pan, cook the sausage until browned on all sides, turning with tongs often. Add a few tablespoons of water, as needed, while cooking to prevent any scorching. Once the sausage has browned, remove the cooked sausage from the pan, and set aside.
3. Add 1 tablespoon of olive oil to the sauté pan and sauté the shallot and garlic for two minutes.
4. Add 2 tablespoons of butter to the pan. Whisk in the flour to form a roux. Add the chicken broth, and half and half and whisk until combined. Season with oregano, basil, crushed red pepper flakes, salt, and pepper. Bring the sauce to a simmer, and cook until the sauce begins to bubble and thicken.
6. Add the cooked pasta, cooked sausage, and sliced sun dried tomatoes to the sauce and stir until pasta is coated with the sauce. Add any reserved pasta sauce, as needed until a silky coating is formed.
7. Garnish with basil and cheese.