

Penne alla Vodka

Classic Penne alla Vodka with creamy tomato sauce infused with vodka. Rich, flavorful Italian pasta dish perfect for weeknight dinners or special occasions.

30 min

PREP

15 min

COOK

45 min

TOTAL

4

SERVINGS

Easy

DIFFICULTY

Ingredients

- 16 oz pasta
- 2 tbsp olive oil
- 1 onion
- 2 clove garlic
- 1 cup vodka
- 1 cup heavy cream
- 1 tsp salt
- 1 tsp salt
- 1 tsp black pepper
- 1 tsp crushed red pepper
- 1 cup parmesan cheese

Instructions

1 Cook the pasta

Bring a large pot of salted water to a rolling boil over high heat. Add 16 oz penne pasta and cook according to package directions until al dente, usually 10-12 minutes.

2 Reserve 1 cup of pasta cooking water, then drain the pasta and set aside.

3 Start the sauce

Heat 2 tablespoons olive oil in a large skillet over medium heat. Add 1 diced onion and cook for 3-4 minutes until softened and translucent, stirring occasionally.

4 Add 2 minced garlic cloves and cook for 30 seconds until fragrant, stirring constantly to prevent burning.

5 **Add vodka and reduce**

Pour in 1 cup vodka and bring to a simmer. Cook for 4-5 minutes until the liquid reduces by half and the alcohol smell dissipates.

6 **Build the tomato sauce**

Add 1 cup crushed tomatoes, 1 teaspoon salt, 1 teaspoon black pepper, and 1 teaspoon red pepper flakes. Simmer for 10-12 minutes until the sauce thickens and coats the back of a spoon.

7 **Finish with cream**

Reduce heat to low and slowly stir in 1 cup heavy cream. Simmer gently for 2-3 minutes until heated through and the sauce is smooth and creamy.

8 **Combine and serve**

Add the cooked penne to the sauce and toss until evenly coated. If the sauce is too thick, add reserved pasta water 1-2 tablespoons at a time until desired consistency is reached.

9 **Remove from heat and stir in half the Parmesan cheese. Serve immediately topped with remaining Parmesan cheese and fresh basil if desired.**

Tips

Use high-quality crushed tomatoes for the best flavor base. San Marzano tomatoes are ideal, but any good-quality canned crushed tomatoes will work beautifully.

Don't skip the vodka—it truly enhances the tomato flavors by extracting compounds that are only alcohol-soluble. Any mid-range vodka will work perfectly.

Cook the pasta just until al dente, as it will continue cooking when combined with the hot sauce. This prevents mushy pasta and ensures the perfect texture.

Reserve some pasta cooking water before draining. The starchy water helps bind the sauce to the pasta and can thin the sauce if needed.

Let the vodka simmer and reduce for at least 3-5 minutes to cook off the alcohol completely and concentrate the flavors.

Add the cream at the end and don't let it boil vigorously, as this can cause it to curdle. Gentle simmering is key to a smooth sauce.

Freshly grated Parmesan cheese melts better and tastes superior to pre-grated varieties. Grate it just before serving for the best results.

Taste and adjust seasoning at the end—the cheese adds saltiness, so season carefully to avoid over-salting the dish.

