



... It's Worth the Trip!



THINKING OUTSIDE THE BOX

Sun-Dried Tomato and Chicken Penne Pasta

"To carb or not to carb?" That is the question. Whether it is nobler to your waistline to ban carbs or to dive into a bowl of pasta. There is a lot of conflicting information related to "carbs" and how to meet your health, fitness and waistline goals. Some popular diets encourage limiting carbs to lose weight and burn fat, while others state that in order to build muscle, your body needs to be supplied with a sufficient amount of carbs. Which is correct? Technically, both are accurate. This does not mean they are the correct way to build a lifelong healthy pattern.

By limiting carbohydrates, the body is forced to use both fat and protein stored as fuel. For most, this approach results in a quick weight loss mainly of water and the important glycogen stored in muscle. The majority who try this approach can't maintain it. They gain back the lost weight once they begin eating a higher level of carbs. Regarding muscles, it is true that in order to effectively build muscle, the body does need a good amount of carbohydrates. Yet, an excessive amount and/or the wrong type may lead to stored body fat.

So what is the answer? Just like everything else, it is all about balance and selecting the best sources. Carbohydrates do not need to be banned from the diet. The majority of them should be fruits and vegetables and whole grain products. Added sugar is nothing but empty calories and should be limited.

Pasta and bread are not the enemy. They can be included in a healthy diet even for those trying to lose weight. The key is to focus on the portion size, choose whole grain versions, and pair them with nutrient-rich vegetables and lean meats. In other words, people just need to rework how they have eaten pasta and bread. Just remember this: a heaping plate of anything loaded up with meat and cheese is likely to result in excessive calories. This is what usually happens with a typical American plate or dish of pasta.

This recipe uses a whole grain pasta in the correct portion combined with lots of fresh vegetables, herbs, and spices and a lean meat, resulting in a very satisfying, waist-friendly dish. Serve it alongside a piece of your favorite in-season melon or fruit to round out the meal.



Ingredients: 4 Servings

- 12 oz. rotisserie chicken (skin and bones removed)
- 4 oz. sun-dried tomatoes in olive oil (drained but keep the oil)
- 2 tbsp. olive oil from the sun-dried tomatoes
- 4 garlic cloves (minced)
- 1 small onion (minced)
- ½ cup evaporated skim milk or skim milk
- 1 cup chicken or vegetable broth
- 1½ tsp. dried oregano
- Pinch of salt
- 1 12-14 oz. can crushed tomatoes
- 8 oz. fresh baby spinach leaves (chopped)
- ¼ tsp. paprika (optional)
- 8 oz. whole wheat pasta
- 3 oz. grated Parmesan cheese
- Fresh basil leaves

Directions:

1. Cook pasta to *al dente* according to package instructions; drain and set aside.
2. While the pasta is cooking, sauté the garlic, onion, and drained sun-dried tomatoes in a large frying pan for 1 minute using the oil you drained from the sun-dried tomatoes. Sprinkle with a pinch of salt, oregano, and the optional paprika. Cook on medium heat while stirring for about 2 minutes or until the onions look clear.
3. Add the milk, canned tomatoes and cooked chicken to the pan and bring the sauce to a simmer.
4. Remove the sauce from heat. Add the pasta to the sauce and mix well. Add the chopped baby spinach and toss gently.
5. For each serving, place ¼ of the pasta on a plate and then top with a little freshly chopped basil and grated Parmesan. Add a large piece of your favorite in-season melon or fruit to round out the meal.

Tips:

- If the sauce is too thick, add more milk.
- This meal is a great way to use up extra cooked chicken.
- Use any unused chicken to top a salad for lunch or make a quick soup.
- Spice up this dish by adding a little crushed red pepper in step 3.

DISCLAIMER:

THIS RECIPE DOES NOT CONSTITUTE AN ENDORSEMENT BY DOD OF ANY INDIVIDUAL VENDOR. ANY PRODUCT OF SIMILAR SPECIFICATION MAY BE USED TO MAKE THIS HEALTHY CHOICE MEAL.

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