

Roasted Eggplant and Tomato Pasta

By Melissa Clark

Total Time 1 hour

Rating ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ (1,497)



Andrew Scrivani for The New York Times

This summery pasta is just as much about the vegetables as it is about the pasta itself. The star of the dish is the roasted eggplant, which caramelizes and softens in the oven. Those tender browned cubes then get tossed with cooked pasta and a quickly made sauce of fresh grated tomatoes, capers and chile flakes. Because the tomatoes need to be ripe and soft enough to fall into a purée when you rub the cut sides over the holes of a grater, heirloom tomatoes (which haven't been bred for sturdiness during shipping) are a good choice here. But any juicy, flavorful, fleshy tomatoes will work. The cheese at the end is strictly optional, as is the butter. If you don't eat dairy, feel free to leave them out.

INGREDIENTS

Yield: 4 to 6 servings

1¾ pounds eggplant, cut into 1-inch cubes

1 to 2 banana or Italian frying peppers, halved, seeded and thinly sliced

4 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil, more for drizzling

Kosher salt

12 ounces pasta, such as campanelle or farfalle

2 pounds very ripe heirloom tomatoes, halved through their equators

1 to 2 fat garlic cloves, grated on a Microplane or minced

Large pinch crushed red pepper flakes

2 tablespoons brine-packed capers, drained

PREPARATION

Step 1

Heat oven to 450 degrees. Spread out eggplant cubes and peppers on a rimmed baking sheet. Toss with 3 tablespoons oil and season well with salt. Roast, turning everything, until eggplant and peppers are very soft and deeply golden brown, 30 to 40 minutes.

Step 2

Meanwhile, cook pasta in well-salted boiling water until about 1 minute shy of al dente. Drain.

Step 3

Using the large holes of a box grater, grate tomatoes over a large skillet so the pulp falls into the skillet. To do this, hold on to the curved side of the tomato in your hand and slide the cut, flat side across the holes. Stop grating just before you reach the skin.

Step 4

Add the garlic, red pepper flakes and 1 tablespoon olive oil to the pan with the tomatoes and bring to a simmer. Simmer until tomato pulp is reduced by half, then season to taste with salt.

2 tablespoons unsalted butter
(optional)

Grated ricotta salata or Parmesan
cheese, for serving (optional)

Fresh mint or basil leaves, for
serving

Step 5

Add the pasta, capers and butter, if using, to the pan with the tomatoes and bring to a simmer, tossing until butter melts and pasta finishes cooking, about 1 minute. Turn off the heat and toss in eggplant and cheese, if using.

Step 6

Serve pasta drizzled with a little more oil and the herbs.