

GREEK ORZO PASTA SALAD

This salad is healthy, simple, and can be made ahead on hot days. What I love about it, aside from it's ease, is the combination of flavors: briny olives, salty feta, sweet and smoky bell peppers, grassy parsley, sweet tomato and slightly spicy shallot. All of these flavors are bound together with a bright, acidic Greek-style salad dressing. I love roasting peppers at home, but you could also purchase pre-roasted bell peppers if you prefer. We've had the salad on it's own, served alongside grilled chicken, and also with grilled sausages.

Ingredients.

16oz box Orzo pasta
1 red bell pepper
1 yellow or orange bell pepper
1 small shallot, very thinly sliced
1 pint cherry tomatoes, halved
6oz feta, crumbled
1 cup roughly chopped flat leaf italian parsley
12 kalamata olive, pitted and roughly diced
1 tablespoon preserved lemon peel, very finely diced (optional)
1/4 cup red wine vinegar
1/2 cup extra virgin olive oil
1 tablespoon Dijon mustard
several turns freshly ground black pepper
1/2 teaspoon kosher salt
1/2 teaspoon dried oregano

Directions.

Roast the bell peppers over open flame (I do this on my gas stovetop), rotating occasionally, until the peppers are completely black. This should take about 15 minutes. Once blackened and charred, transfer the bell peppers to a bowl and cover the bowl tightly with plastic wrap and let them cool to room temperature. Once cooled, run them under cool water, rubbing them to slip off the blackened skin. Core the peppers and dice the flesh. Set aside.

Soak the sliced shallot in a small bowl of cold water for about 10 minutes to mellow the sharpness a bit. Drain and set aside.

In a small bowl, whisk together the vinegar, mustard, salt, pepper, and oregano. Slowly, while continuously whisking, drizzle in the olive oil until the dressing has emulsified.

Bring a large pot of salted water to a boil, add the Orzo and cook until al dente. Strain and rinse with cold water to cool the pasta.

Transfer the pasta to a large bowl. Add in the peppers, shallot, tomatoes, feta, parsley, olives, and preserved lemon to the bowl with the pasta, pour in the dressing and toss everything together until coated well with the dressing. Enjoy immediately or cover and set in the fridge for up to three hours.

Serves 8, or 4 with leftovers.

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