

Pantry Pasta

From Alison Roman

Ingredients

4-6 garlic cloves

1 lemon, halved

⅓ cup olive oil

2 tablespoons butter or olive oil

2 large shallots or 1 medium onion, finely chopped

1 2 oz. tin anchovies

2 tablespoons capers, finely chopped

Crushed red pepper flakes

12 ounces whatever pasta you've got

1 cup herbs such as parsley, chives, tarragon or even dill, finely chopped

Parmesan or pecorino for serving, optional

Instructions

1. Get a large pot of water on to boil, season it heavily with salt.
2. Finely chop one garlic clove and place in a small bowl; set aside. Thinly slice remaining garlic cloves; set aside.
3. Finely chop half of the lemon (making sure to remove any seeds), add to the bowl with the finely chopped garlic and season with salt and pepper; set aside, this is for topping the pasta later. Set the rest of the lemon aside for squeezing over.
4. Heat olive oil and butter (if using) in a large skillet over medium heat. Add shallots and thinly sliced garlic and season with salt and pepper. Cook, stirring occasionally until they're lightly browned at the edges, but mostly starting to melt into each other into a sort of translucent paste, 8–10 minutes. Add anchovies, capers, and crushed red pepper flakes, stirring to encourage the anchovies to melt into the oil. Cook, stirring occasionally, until you've got a thick, concentrated paste, just a few minutes. Taste it— it should be almost too intense, too salty, and definitely not “saucy” (you dilute the paste with pasta water). Set this aside (you can make this a few hours ahead of time— a few days, if you wanted. If I were smart, I'd figure out how to bottle this stuff so you can use it any time).
5. Cook pasta until just before al dente. Pre-al dente, even. Using tongs, transfer the pasta to the skillet along with about a cup of pasta water (alternatively, drain the pasta, just don't forget to save at least 1 ½ cups pasta water— we are using it, I promise).
6. Cook the pasta, stirring often (I like tongs for this, too), until the pasta is al dente and the sauce has thickened, 3–5 minutes. Add herbs and toss to coat, adding a splash or two of pasta water if you feel like it needs it. Despite the original mixture not being “saucy,” your end result should most definitely be saucy.

7. To serve, divide among bowls (or eat out of skillet), squeezing lemon juice over and scattering over some of that lemon-garlic mixture.