

Summer Dinner, Sorted

Fill your plate with pasta salads that are chock-full of colorful veggies and satisfying proteins.

BY ANDREA GEARY



Like the psychic who locates much-missed items or the dowser with a mystical ability to find water in a drought, I have an uncanny gift: I can reliably ferret out the best pasta salad at any summer picnic or potluck.

I'm not guided by magic so much as discernment and high standards. The pasta must be tender, but never mushy, and its shape must include cavities and folds for catching a thick, zingy dressing. Potent nuggets such as olives and pickled peppers should be scattered generously throughout, providing contrasting chew and hits of salinity.

As I zero in on the ideal specimen, I steel myself, fighting the urge to fill my plate, because the charms of pasta salad inevitably diminish halfway through eating a meal-sized portion. There's just not enough textural variety to hold my interest, nor enough sustenance.

But what if you folded in protein for satisfaction, added extra veggies for color and crunch, and then topped it all with vibrant garnishes? That would make pasta salad downright dinner-worthy.

I eased into the concept with a Tex-Mex number. Roasted corn and squash tastily fulfilled my

Parmesan cheese crisps dress up this satisfying salad.

vegetable requirement, along with raw carrot and radishes. Cooked chicken provided the protein (and a handy use of leftover poultry). I whizzed scallions, pickled jalapeños, oil, and lime juice in the blender to make a speedy dressing with body and oomph. Orecchiette, cooked beyond al dente so that it would be tender when cold, provided places for the dressing to pool.

For my next rendition, cheese tortellini captured a vinaigrette thick with pureed olives, banana peppers, and garlic; cannellini beans made the dish satiating; and cherry tomatoes and blanched broccoli lent the dish cheery shades of green and red. A special flourish of Parmesan crisps made this vegetarian salad elite.

My last variation started with poached shrimp. A scallion-and-ginger dressing spiked with sriracha gathered between the swirls of campanelle pasta, edamame added pops of emerald protein, and bagged coleslaw mix was a quick route to crunch.

Would you like some pasta salad? Go ahead, fill your plate. —Edited by *Rebecca Hays*

TORTELLINI SALAD WITH BROCCOLI, CANNELLINI BEANS, AND OLIVE-BANANA PEPPER DRESSING

SERVES 4 TO 6 TOTAL TIME: 45 MINUTES

Sliced pickled cherry peppers or pepperoncini can be substituted for the banana peppers. We like mild, meaty Castelvetrano olives for this recipe, but any pitted green olives will work. We intentionally overcook the pasta in this recipe so that it remains tender, even when served cold. If making this salad ahead, dress the salad and garnish it with cheese crisps right before serving.

DRESSING
banana peppers and
brine, Castelvetrano
olives, olive oil,
garlic

12 ounces frozen cheese tortellini
3/4 teaspoon table salt, plus salt for cooking pasta
1 pound broccoli crowns, stems sliced 1/4 inch thick, florets cut into bite-size pieces
1 (15-ounce) can cannellini beans, drained
1 ounce Parmesan cheese, grated (1/2 cup)
2 tablespoons panko bread crumbs
1/4 teaspoon pepper
1/2 cup jarred sliced banana peppers, divided, plus 1/4 cup brine
1/2 cup pitted Castelvetrano olives, halved, divided
2 garlic cloves, chopped
1/2 cup extra-virgin olive oil
10 ounces multicolor cherry tomatoes, halved

1. Line rimmed baking sheet with dish towel. Bring 2 quarts water to boil in large saucepan. Add pasta and 1 1/2 teaspoons salt and cook until tender, about 5 minutes. Add broccoli and beans to saucepan with pasta and cook until broccoli is crisp-tender, 1 to 2 minutes. Drain well and transfer to prepared sheet.

2. Combine Parmesan, panko, and pepper in small bowl and toss until well mixed. Spray large plate lightly with vegetable oil spray. Transfer Parmesan mixture to plate and spread into 8-inch round. Microwave for 2 minutes. Continue to microwave in 30-second increments until mixture is golden brown. Run thin metal spatula under cheese crisp and turn over (it's OK if cheese breaks). Microwave for 30 seconds. Set aside to cool (cheese will continue to crisp as it cools).

3. Combine 1/4 cup banana peppers, brine, 1/4 cup olives, garlic, and salt in blender and process until coarse paste forms, about 30 seconds. With blender running, drizzle in oil and continue to process until dressing is emulsified and smooth, about 1 minute.

4. Combine pasta, broccoli, beans, tomatoes, remaining 1/4 cup banana peppers, and remaining 1/4 cup olives in large bowl. Add dressing and toss to coat. Transfer to serving bowl. Crumble cheese crisp over salad and serve.

ORECCHIETTE SALAD WITH ROASTED VEGETABLES, CHICKEN, AND JALAPEÑO-LIME DRESSING

SERVES 4 TO 6 TOTAL TIME: 45 MINUTES

Rotisserie chicken works well here. We intentionally overcook the pasta in this recipe so that it remains tender, even when served cold. If making this salad ahead, dress the salad and garnish it with the reserved cilantro right before serving.

DRESSING
jarred jalapeños, lime juice, scallion whites, vegetable oil

- 1 pound zucchini, quartered lengthwise and sliced $\frac{1}{4}$ inch thick
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cups frozen corn
- 2 tablespoons plus $\frac{1}{2}$ cup vegetable oil, divided
- $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoons table salt, divided, plus salt for cooking pasta
- 8 ounces (2 $\frac{1}{4}$ cups) orecchiette
- $\frac{1}{3}$ cup plus $\frac{1}{4}$ cup jarred sliced jalapeños, drained, divided
- 4 scallions, white parts sliced thin, green parts cut into 1-inch pieces
- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup lime juice (2 limes)
- 1 pound cooked chicken, torn into bite-size pieces (3 cups)
- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup fresh cilantro leaves, divided
- 8 radishes, trimmed, halved, and sliced thin
- 1 large carrot, peeled and shredded

1. Arrange oven rack 4 inches from broiler element and heat broiler. Combine zucchini, corn, 2 tablespoons oil, and $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon salt in large bowl and toss to coat. Transfer to rimmed baking sheet (do not wash bowl) and spread into even layer. Broil until spotty brown in places, 8 to 10 minutes, stirring halfway through broiling. Transfer sheet to wire rack to cool.

2. Meanwhile, bring 2 quarts water to boil in large saucepan. Add pasta and $1\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoons salt and cook until pasta is tender throughout, 2 to 3 minutes past al dente. Drain well and rinse with cold water. Drain well and transfer to now-empty bowl.

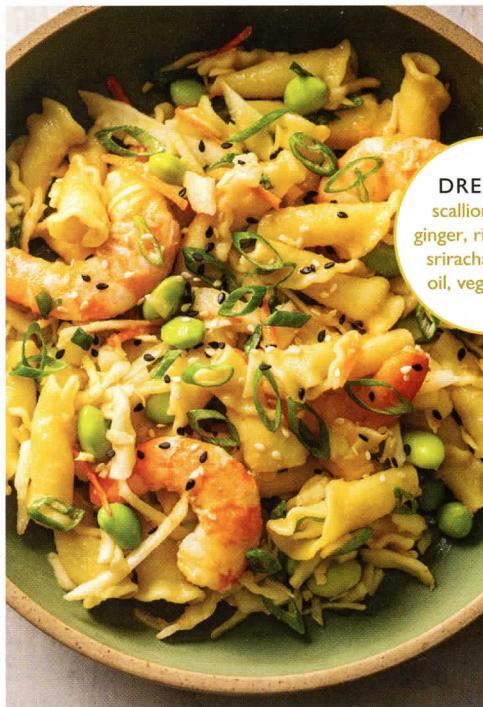
3. Process $\frac{1}{3}$ cup jalapeños, scallion whites, lime juice, and remaining 1 teaspoon salt in blender until coarse paste forms, about 30 seconds. With blender running, drizzle in remaining $\frac{1}{2}$ cup oil and continue to process until dressing is emulsified and smooth, about 1 minute.

4. Chop remaining $\frac{1}{4}$ cup jalapeños and add to pasta along with chicken, $\frac{1}{2}$ cup cilantro, radishes, carrot, zucchini and corn, and scallion greens. Pour dressing over salad and toss to coat. Transfer to serving bowl. Sprinkle with remaining $\frac{1}{4}$ cup cilantro and serve.



SCIENCE Why You Should Overcook Pasta for Salad

When cooked pasta is refrigerated, it goes through a process called retrogradation in which the water in the noodles becomes bound up in starch crystals, making the pasta firm and dry. But if you're making a cold pasta salad, you can make retrogradation work to your advantage by boiling the pasta 2 or 3 minutes beyond al dente. This way, the pasta's starch absorbs more water and becomes extra-soft so that when it firms up with cooling, the final texture is just right.



DRESSING
scallion whites, ginger, rice vinegar, sriracha, sesame oil, vegetable oil

CAMPANELLE SALAD WITH SHRIMP, CABBAGE, AND SCALLION-GINGER DRESSING

SERVES 6 TOTAL TIME: 50 MINUTES

If campanelle is unavailable, substitute penne. There's no need to peel the ginger; just give it a thorough wash. Use the full amount of sriracha if you're a fan of spice. We intentionally overcook the pasta in this recipe so that it remains tender, even when served cold. If making this salad ahead, dress the salad and then garnish it with the scallion greens and sesame seeds right before serving. We like a mix of white and black sesame seeds here, but it's fine to use 2 teaspoons of either.

- 1 pound large shrimp (26 to 30 per pound), peeled, deveined, and tails removed
- $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoons table salt, plus salt for cooking pasta and shrimp
- 8 ounces (2 $\frac{1}{2}$ cups) campanelle
- 8 ounces frozen shelled edamame
- 4 cups (11 ounces) shredded green coleslaw mix
- 4 scallions, white parts chopped, green parts sliced thin on bias, divided
- $\frac{1}{3}$ cup chopped fresh ginger
- $\frac{1}{3}$ cup unseasoned rice vinegar
- $\frac{1}{2}$ tablespoons sriracha
- 2 teaspoons toasted sesame oil
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup vegetable oil
- 1 teaspoon black sesame seeds, toasted
- 1 teaspoon white sesame seeds, toasted

1. Bring 3 cups water to boil in large saucepan over high heat. Stir in shrimp and 1 tablespoon salt. Cover and let stand off heat until shrimp are opaque, about 5 minutes, shaking saucepan halfway through. Using spider skimmer or slotted spoon, transfer shrimp to colander; rinse with cold water until cool. Drain well and transfer to large bowl.

Add 1 quart water to water in saucepan and return to boil.

2. Add pasta and $1\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoons salt to boiling water and cook until pasta is al dente. Add edamame to saucepan with pasta and cook 2 minutes more. Drain and rinse with cold water. Drain well and add to shrimp along with coleslaw mix and two-thirds of scallion greens.

3. Process scallion whites, ginger, vinegar, sriracha, sesame oil, and salt in blender until coarse paste forms, about 30 seconds. With blender running, slowly drizzle in vegetable oil until dressing is emulsified and smooth, about 1 minute.

4. Pour dressing over salad and toss to combine. Transfer to serving bowl. Sprinkle with remaining scallion greens and sesame seeds and serve.