

QUICK & HEALTHY

DIET STRATEGY
USE A LITTLE OIL AND
HERBS IN PLACE OF
HIGH-FAT SAUCES.



Pasta primavera supplies 150 per cent of the vitamin C you need daily.

LIGHTEN UP YOUR PASTA

THESE DISHES ARE LOW IN CALORIES BUT LOADED WITH FLAVOUR.

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WE KNOW. WE SAY "PASTA," YOU THINK "HEAVY." But combining noodles with plenty of fresh vegetables or beans gives you a feel-good carb hit without the excess calories. What's more, produce and legumes add fibre – which keeps you fuller for longer – and disease-fighting vitamins and minerals. These three dishes taste delicious served cold or at room temperature. The best part? No matter which one you choose, you can enjoy a low-cal dish with a clear conscience and a satiated appetite.

PASTA PRIMAVERA (serves 4)

You can use any vegetable combination in this dish, depending on what looks good at the market.

Prep time: 15 minutes
Cooking time: 15 minutes

You'll need:

3 tbsp extra-virgin olive oil
1 cup sliced red onion
¼ tsp salt
1½ cups small broccoli florets
1½ cups small cauliflower florets
1 tbsp minced garlic, divided
1½ cups green beans, halved lengthwise
1 cup snow peas, ends trimmed
½ medium red or orange bell pepper (or both), thinly sliced
½ small yellow squash or pumpkin, sliced
250g uncooked rainbow fusilli
2 scallions, minced
3 tbsp minced flat-leaf parsley
3 tbsp minced basil
2 tbsp freshly grated Parmesan
Freshly ground black pepper
2 to 3 tbsp pine nuts, lightly toasted (optional)

To prepare:

- Bring a large pot of water to a boil. Meanwhile, heat oil in a large skillet. Add onion and salt and saute over medium heat until onions soften.
- Add broccoli, cauliflower and half the garlic to skillet. Stir and cook for about 5 minutes or until vegetables are just barely tender. Add green beans, peas, bell pepper and squash. Cook for 5 more minutes, then stir in remaining garlic. Cook another minute and set aside.
- Once water is boiling, add fusilli and cook about 12 minutes, or until tender but still *al dente*. Drain thoroughly and transfer to a large bowl. Add vegetable saute and toss with tongs to combine thoroughly.
- Sprinkle in scallions, parsley, basil and Parmesan and toss again. Grind in black pepper and serve topped with pine nuts (if using).

Nutrition score per serving (3 cups):

376 calories, 12g fat (28 per cent of calories), 2g saturated fat, 57g carbs, 12g protein, 6g fibre, 112mg calcium, 4mg iron, 214mg sodium

ASIAN NOODLES WITH SHIITAKES AND CASHEWS (serves 4)

This dish will keep for at least five days if stored in a tightly covered container in the refrigerator.

Prep time: 15 minutes
Cooking time: 4 minutes

You'll need:

30g dried shiitake mushrooms
2 tbsp light-coloured honey
2 tbsp cider vinegar
4 tsp low-sodium soya sauce
250g uncooked buckwheat noodles (soba)
3 tbsp dark sesame oil
1½ to 2 tsp minced garlic

Salt

1 medium carrot, cut into 3cm-long sticks
1 to 2 scallions, cut into thin strips
10 radishes, cut into thin strips
½ cup chopped roasted cashews
Crushed red pepper

To prepare:

- At least 2 hours ahead, place shiitakes in a medium bowl and pour in 2 cups boiling water to rehydrate them; cover and let stand. Drain shiitakes, squeeze out excess water, and slice into thin strips. Set aside.
- Place honey in a medium bowl. Add vinegar and soya sauce and stir until honey dissolves. Set aside.
- Bring a large pot of water to a boil. Cook noodles for about 4 minutes or until tender but still *al dente*. Drain noodles and add them to the bowl with the honey mixture.
- Add oil and garlic and mix with a fork or tongs until noodles are coated. Taste and add salt, if desired.
- Stir in sliced shiitakes and let



Asian noodles with shiitakes and cashews can also be made with peanuts.

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Whole-wheat shells with chickpeas and arugula fulfils 30 per cent of your daily iron needs.

noodles cool to room temperature. Add carrots, scallions and radishes and toss again with a fork or tongs until well combined. Top with cashews and red pepper flakes and serve.

Nutrition score per serving (2 cups):

459 calories, 19g fat (36 per cent of calories), 3g saturated fat, 64g carbs, 13g protein, 4g fibre, 43mg calcium, 3mg iron, 668mg sodium

WHOLE-WHEAT SHELLS WITH CHICKPEAS AND ARUGULA (serves 4)

Use baby arugula for this dish if you can; the flavour is more mellow.

Prep time: 15 minutes
Cooking time: 10 minutes

You'll need:

250g uncooked whole-wheat shells
3 tbsp extra-virgin olive oil
1¾ cups cooked chickpeas (about one 15oz or 400g can)
4 packed cups arugula, chopped

⅓ cup packed golden raisins
½ cup oil-packed sun-dried tomatoes, sliced
120g crumbled feta
Salt and freshly ground black pepper
½ cup chopped walnuts (optional)

To prepare:

- Bring a large pot of water to a rolling boil. Add shells and cook for 8 minutes, or until tender but still *al dente*. Drain and transfer to a medium-large bowl. Immediately drizzle with olive oil and toss to distribute.
- While pasta is still hot, add chickpeas, arugula, raisins and tomatoes and toss gently. Cool to room temperature, then stir in feta. Taste and add salt (feta tends to be salty, so go easy) and black pepper if desired. Top with toasted walnuts, if using, and serve.

Nutrition score per serving (2½ cups):

588 calories, 21g fat (32 per cent of calories), 5g saturated fat, 83g carbs, 21g protein, 12g fibre, 241mg calcium, 5mg iron, 628mg sodium

*the secret to delicious pasta

You've probably heard the term *al dente* but may be confused about what it means or why it matters. Translating literally as "to the tooth", it's key to maximising the flavour of any pasta dish. "*Al dente* pasta is firm – it even gives the slightest crunch when you bite into it," says US-based Italian chef and restaurateur Lidia Bastianich. "That texture sets off your sensory receptors and gives you a more satisfying feel in your mouth. After all, no one enjoys a forkful of slippery mush!"

Nutritionally, you're better off as well. *Al dente* pasta is digested more slowly, so it keeps blood sugar levels in check and helps you stay fuller longer. So how do you achieve it? Subtract one minute from the cooking instructions on the box and then test a piece, says Lidia. "Cut shapes like shells in half; you should see a thin line of starch in the centre; for long varieties, the pasta should barely bend against the pressure from your fork."

Pasta shapes take more time to cook than long noodles.

