

# ITALIAN PASTA SALAD

## Ingredients

- 16 oz. dry rotini
- 10 oz. hard salami, sliced 1/4-inch thick then chopped
- 3 cups (16 oz.) grape tomatoes, halved
- 1 (6 oz.) can black olives, sliced
- 2 cups chopped bell peppers (yellow and green)
- 1/2 cup chopped red onion
- 8 oz. fresh mozzarella pearls\*
- 3 oz. freshly grated parmesan\*\* (3/4 cup)
- 1/2 cup chopped fresh parsley
- 1/3 cup chopped fresh basil\*\*\*

### Dressing:

- 1 cup olive oil
- 1/4 cup fresh lemon juice
- 1 tsp dried oregano
- 2 tsp Dijon mustard
- 1 tsp honey
- 2 tsp minced garlic
- 1/2 tsp red pepper flakes, or to taste
- Salt and freshly ground black pepper

\*Chopped fresh mozzarella (log or ball shape) can be substituted; cut into small cubes

\*\*To grate parmesan, cut into chunks about 1-inch then add to food processor; process for a minute or until finely ground

\*\*\*1 1/2 tsp dried basil can be used in place of fresh but mix it into the dressing

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## Directions

1. Cook pasta according to directions on package just barely to al dente. Reserve 1/2 cup pasta water then drain pasta.
2. Immediately transfer pasta to a rimmed 18x13-inch baking sheet and spread out to cool for 15 minutes.
3. While pasta is cooking and cooling, chop ingredients and prepare dressing.
4. For the dressing, whisk together olive oil, lemon juice, oregano, mustard, honey, garlic, red pepper flakes, and season lightly with salt and pepper to taste.
5. Add cooled pasta to an extra large bowl along with salami, tomatoes, olives, bell peppers, red onion, mozzarella pearls, parmesan, parsley, and basil.
6. Whisk dressing once more, then pour over ingredients in bowl along with 1/4 cup pasta water. Toss well to evenly coat. Thin with more pasta water as desired and season with more salt as needed.
7. Serve immediately or for a colder, more refreshing pasta salad, chill for 1 to 2 hours, or up to 3 days.

Serves: 12 (makes about 18 cups)