Tomato Turkey and Ricotta Stuffed Shells

24 stuffed jumbo pasta shells; 4 shells per serving; divide all surrounding filling and sauce equally as well. | Active 40 min | Cook 55 min | Total 90 min

Ingredients

- 24 jumbo pasta shells (about 8 1/2 oz/240 g dry)
- 1 tablespoon olive oil (15 ml/14 g)
- 1 medium onion (150 g), finely diced
- 3 garlic cloves (9 g), minced
- 1 1/2 lb lean ground turkey, 93% lean (680 g)
- 1 teaspoon dried oregano (1 g)
- 3/4 teaspoon fine salt (4.5 g), divided
- 1/2 teaspoon ground black pepper (1 g)
- 1 container part-skim ricotta (15 oz/425 g)
- 5 oz frozen chopped spinach (140 g frozen starting weight), fully cooked according to its packet, cooled and squeezed very dry (about 90 g squeezed)
- 1 large egg (50 g without shell), beaten
- 1 jar plain marinara sauce (24 oz/680 g)
- 1 cup shredded part-skim mozzarella (112 g)

Set out

Deep 9 x 13-inch/23 x 33 cm baking dish, at least 4 liters capacity and about 2 1/2 inches/6 cm deep, with at least 1/2 inch/1.3 cm headroom above assembled food, Large pasta pot, 12-inch/30 cm skillet, Mixing bowl, Foil, Instant-read thermometer, Colander/sieve and a small saucepan or vented microwave-safe bowl as required by the spinach packet, Clean tray for drained shells

Allergens

Wheat, Milk, Egg, Check pasta and sauce labels for additional allergens. Check labels and substitutions.

Make it

1. Heat oven to 375°F/190°C. Bring a large pot of water to a boil; cook the 24 shells 2 minutes less than the package al dente time. Drain and separate on a tray so they do not stick.

2. Meanwhile, heat oil in the skillet over medium heat. Cook onion for 5 minutes. Add garlic and stir 30 seconds. Add turkey, oregano, 1/2 teaspoon salt and pepper. Break the meat into fine crumbles and cook 7–9 minutes, until it reaches 165°F/74°C. Transfer to a wide bowl and cool 10 minutes.

3. Fully cook the measured frozen spinach according to its packet, cool enough to handle, squeeze very dry and chop finely. Mix it with ricotta, egg and remaining 1/4 teaspoon salt into the cooled turkey. Spread 1 cup/240 g marinara across the base of the deep baking dish.

4. Divide filling evenly among 24 shells without packing them hard. Spoon a generous mound into each opening and arrange open-side-up in one layer in the deep dish. If your particular shells cannot hold all the filling, share that remainder in small spoonfuls around the shells, keeping the whole batch in the dish rather than discarding it or overpacking one shell. Leave at least 1/2 inch/1.3 cm below the rim. Spoon remaining sauce around and lightly over them and scatter mozzarella evenly.

5. Cover with foil and bake 25 minutes. Uncover and bake 10–15 minutes more, until sauce bubbles, tops are lightly golden and the center of the filling reaches 165°F/74°C. Rest 5 minutes before serving four shells per person. For each portion, take four shells and one sixth of all surrounding filling and sauce.

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Estimated nutrition per serving

Calories: 580 kcal | Protein: 42.6 g | Carbohydrate: 46.8 g | Fat: 24.5 g | Fiber: 4.4 g. One of 6 servings. Batch yield: 24 stuffed jumbo pasta shells; 4 shells per serving; divide all surrounding filling and sauce equally as well. Base ingredients and full measured oil included; optional variations excluded. Estimates vary with brands, cooking and actual portions.

Package sauce with the shells

Spoon a share of the sauce into every storage container before adding four shells. The portions from the middle and edges of the baking dish should receive the same treatment. That extra attention prevents a final lunch of dry pasta while the first few portions take all the sauce.

A useful detail

The total includes cooling the turkey and resting the baked shells. Use plain savory marinara; a very thick paste-like sauce may need 2–3 tablespoons water to coat the dish. Shell capacities vary; the whole filling is retained, including any shared around the shells. A shallow dish without the stated headroom is unsuitable.

Another way

Replace spinach with the same 90 g weight of cooked, well-drained and finely chopped kale.

Use 680 g lean ground chicken instead of turkey and keep the same 165°F/74°C doneness check.

Keep it well

Refrigerate in shallow containers at 40°F/4°C or below within 2 hours, or 1 hour above 90°F/32°C. Keep up to 3 days or freeze cooked four-shell portions up to 2 months. Reheat covered with a spoonful of water until the center reaches 165°F/74°C. Pack cold in an insulated bag with two cold sources.