Mushroom, Spinach and Parmesan Orzo

2 creamy orzo portions, each with half the mushrooms, spinach and Parmesan | Active 21 min | Cook 27 min | Total 45 min

Ingredients

- 100 g (3 1/2 oz) dry orzo pasta, with a package boiling time around 8-10 minutes
- 120 g (4 1/4 oz) fresh cultivated white button mushrooms (Agaricus bisporus), cleaned and sliced 5 mm/3⁄16 in thick
- 40 g (1 1/2 oz) peeled onion, finely chopped
- 80 g (2 3/4 oz) fresh spinach leaves, washed, drained and roughly chopped, divided into two 40 g portions
- 10 ml olive oil (2 tsp)
- 360 ml (about 1 1/2 US cups) ready-to-use lower-sodium vegetable stock, divided
- Up to 90 ml water (6 tbsp), only if needed before the pasta softens
- 30 g Parmesan (1 oz; about 1/3 cup finely grated)
- 0.3 g ground black pepper (about 1/8 tsp)

Set out

1000 W microwave with turntable, Kitchen scale and measuring jug, Knife and board, Spoon, Oven mitts, Two serving bowls, Microwave-safe bowl, at least 3 L/about 3 1/4 US qt measured capacity, about 22 cm/8 3/4 in inside diameter and 11 cm/4 1/4 in deep, Microwave-safe vented cover, Cheese grater, Food thermometer for leftover reheating checks

Allergens

Wheat, Milk. Check labels and substitutions.

Make it

1. Put the mushrooms, onion, oil and 30 ml/2 tbsp of the measured stock in the 3 L bowl. Cover with a vent and microwave at 1000 W full power for 4 minutes, stirring halfway. Keep all the mushroom liquid.

2. Add the remaining 330 ml stock. Cover with a vent and heat at full power for 4-5 minutes, stirring after 3 minutes, until visibly bubbling. Stir in all the dry orzo and cover with the vent open.

3. Cook at 70% power for 10-14 minutes, stopping every 2-3 minutes to stir the bottom, edge and center. Keep a gentle bubbling cook and the pasta well moistened. If it becomes thick while the pasta still has a firm center, add 30 ml/2 tbsp reserve water at a time, up to 90 ml total. Cook for at least the full package boiling interval after bubbling resumes, and continue in 1-minute bursts if needed until the pieces are fully swollen and tender with no hard, chalky line when cut across. Do not drain.

4. Fold in one 40 g spinach portion. Cover with a vent and heat at full power for 1-2 minutes. Fold the wilted leaves through, add the remaining 40 g and cook 1-2 minutes more until all leaves are tender and the dish is hot throughout. Stir in all the grated Parmesan and pepper. Stand covered for 3 minutes, stir again and divide the complete batch equally between two bowls.

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Stirring is scheduled work

Have the spoon and mitts ready before starting. Each stop reaches the bottom of the wide bowl, not just the top pasta layer.

No risotto authenticity claim

This is an original small pasta dish made with stock absorption, not rice risotto or a claim about a traditional regional method.

Ingredient labels

Orzo contains wheat/gluten; Parmesan contains milk and may use animal rennet. Check stock and cheese labels for suitability and any additional allergens. Use only the specified cultivated white button mushrooms; wild or specialty mushroom substitutions are outside this method.

A useful detail

The 45-minute plan allows 10 minutes of preparation, up to 27 minutes of sequential microwave heating, a 3-minute stand and 5 minutes for stirring, folding and portioning. The baseline is 1000 W. A slower pasta product or extra reserve water can extend cooking; tenderness after a full bubbling interval controls the finish.

Another way

Use 30 g/1 oz finely grated mature cheddar instead of Parmesan. Its flavor is different but the same off-heat final stir applies.

Replace 80 g/2 3/4 oz spinach with 80 g/2 3/4 oz fresh finely chopped chard leaves without stems. Extend the two leaf stages until tender; tougher leaves can add 2-4 minutes.

Keep it well

Refrigerate shallow portions within 2 hours, or within 1 hour above 90°F/32°C, at 40°F/4°C or below. Use within 3 days or an earlier stock deadline. Stir 15-30 ml/1-2 tbsp water into a chilled portion before reheating under a vented cover in short stirred bursts. Stand 2 minutes and verify 165°F/74°C throughout. Do not leave the warm pasta in its large cooking bowl to cool slowly.