Lemon Ricotta Pasta-Shell Canapés

24 chilled filled jumbo pasta shells; 2 shells per buffet portion | Active 35 min | Cook 15 min | Total 125 min (cold service and transport) | Cold-travel planning: 125 min; follow the stated cooling endpoint and finishing route.

Ingredients

- 24 dried jumbo pasta shells, about 6 1/3 oz/180 g total
- 2 tbsp (30 ml/28 g) olive oil, divided: 1 tbsp for pasta and 1 tbsp for tomato relish
- 1 lb (450 g) pasteurized-milk ricotta, prepared drained weight if visibly watery
- 1/3 cup plus 2 tsp (90 g) thick plain yogurt made with pasteurized milk
- 2 tbsp (30 ml) lemon juice
- 1/4 cup plus 2 tbsp (15 g) finely chopped parsley
- 1/2 tsp (3 g) fine salt for ricotta
- 1/4 tsp (0.5 g) black pepper
- 2 large firm tomatoes, seeded and finely diced, 300 g prepared weight
- 1 tbsp (15 ml) red-wine vinegar
- 1/4 tsp (1.5 g) fine salt for tomato relish
- 3 L potable water for boiling pasta, drained off

Set out

Large 4 L or larger pasta pot, Colander, Two shallow trays, Mixing bowl with lid, Small colander for tomatoes, Knife, Two separate filling spoons, Food thermometer for cold transport, Cooler with ice packs, Small plates and forks

Allergens

Wheat, Milk. Check labels and substitutions.

Make it

1. Bring the 3 L water to a boil in the pot. Add shells and cook for their full package time, usually 10-14 minutes, until tender but intact. Drain gently and rinse briefly under cold potable water for this cold dish. Toss with 1 tbsp oil and spread in a single layer on shallow trays. Refrigerate promptly until at 40°F (4°C) or below, allowing about 1 hour.

2. Mix drained ricotta, yogurt, lemon juice, parsley, ricotta salt and pepper until thick and spoonable. Cover and refrigerate. Toss the tomato with the tomato salt, leave 10 minutes and drain well, then add the remaining 1 tbsp oil and vinegar. Keep this relish separately refrigerated.

3. At the table, put about 1 rounded tbsp/24 g ricotta mixture into each cold shell, dividing all filling across the 24. Top with one twenty-fourth of the drained tomato relish, about 2 tsp. Assemble the first twelve only, keeping the other shells and fillings at 40°F (4°C) or below until needed.

4. Serve 2 filled shells per small plate with a fork. The shells are intended to be tender, chilled and filled immediately before service; no oven finishing or additional garnish is needed.

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Bring it

Carry cooked shells flat and the two fillings in separate cold containers in a cooler at 40°F (4°C) or below. Include two spoons, small plates and forks. During packing, travel and display, keep cold food at 40°F (4°C) or below and hot food at 140°F (60°C) or above. Allow no more than 2 hours combined outside those controls, or 1 hour above 90°F (32°C). Discard food beyond that limit.

Finish at the gathering

No host appliances are needed. Allow 8-10 minutes to fill the first twelve shells; nest filling containers in ice and keep reserve shells in the cooler. A piping bag is optional equipment, not a required ingredient or an excuse to leave dairy warm while decorating.

Make it yours

The shell canapés suit a spring lunch or anniversary buffet. Keep their savory identity clear with a small ingredient label and a sample two-shell plate; do not add sweet sauces or decorative ingredients outside the recipe.

Ingredient labels

Some pasta shells also contain egg; check the actual package. Check yogurt, ricotta and vinegar labels for additional ingredients.

A useful detail

The 125-minute total includes bringing the pasta water to a boil, cooking, shallow chilling, filling preparation and table assembly. Pasta size varies; count 24 intact jumbo shells and use the approximate dry weight as a purchasing guide, not a reason to undercook an oversized brand.

Another way

Replace parsley with 10 g finely chopped basil for a different herb note, reducing only the herb weight as stated.

Use 300 g seeded and diced cucumber in place of tomato for the relish; salt, drain and dress it using the same method.

Keep it well

Keep cooked shells, ricotta filling and drained relish separately at 40°F (4°C) or below. Use within 2 days, respecting any earlier ricotta deadline; best pasta texture is within 24 hours. Do not save assembled buffet shells for a second event. This is a refrigerated dish, not a shelf-stable pasta snack. Respect the combined travel-and-display limit in “Bring it.”