

Pasta with Homemade Ricotta & Oven Roasted Tomatoes

Serves 4-6

Roasted Tomatoes

10 to 15 ripe plum tomatoes
2 cloves garlic, finely minced
1 teaspoon sugar
Salt & Pepper
1 Tablespoon finely chopped fresh thyme (or herb of choice)
1/4 cup olive oil



Ricotta Cheese

2 quarts whole milk
1 cup heavy cream
1/2 teaspoon salt
3 Tablespoons fresh lemon juice
1/4 cup Kalamata olives, chopped
2 Tablespoons capers, drained

Chunky Pesto Sauce

2 cups fresh basil leaves, packed
1/4 cup pine nuts, lightly toasted
2 large garlic cloves
1/2 cup grated Parmesan or Romano cheese
1/2 cup extra virgin olive oil
1 pound pasta of choice

To roast the tomatoes, preheat the oven to 275 degrees F. Halve the tomatoes, and place skin side down on a baking sheet. Sprinkle with the garlic, thyme, salt, pepper, and sugar. Drizzle with olive oil. Bake for about three hours or until they are shriveled but still moist. Cool, and coarsely chop.

To make the ricotta, line a large sieve with a layer of cheesecloth and place over a large bowl. Slowly bring milk, cream, and salt to 195 degrees F. in a 6-quart heavy pot over moderate heat, stirring often to prevent scorching. Add the lemon juice; reduce heat to low and simmer, stirring constantly, until it curdles, about 2 minutes. Remove from heat, and let sit for 5 minutes. Pour into the sieve and let drain for 1 hour. Discard the liquid, chill the ricotta, covered in the refrigerator.

To make the pesto sauce, place all the ingredients in a food processor except the oil, and pulse. Add the oil slowly, pulsing continuously until you have a chunky paste. Reserve 1/4 cup of the pesto sauce; refrigerate the rest for another use. Store in a container with an additional layer of olive oil on top to prevent discoloration.

Cook the pasta in a large pot of lightly salted boiling water until it is al dente. Drain, reserving a small cup of pasta water, and return to the pot. Add the roasted tomatoes, olives, and capers and toss with the pasta. Return the pot to the stovetop and cook for a minute or two tossing the tomatoes and pasta along with a little of the reserved pasta water until everything is piping hot. Serve the pasta in a large pasta bowl, or smaller individual ones topped with a couple of scoops of the ricotta cheese and a drizzle of the pesto sauce. Garnish with basil leaves and lightly toasted pine nuts and serve immediately.

