

Nick and Toni's Penne Alla Vecchia Bettola

2009, Joseph Realmuto

4 to 5 servings

¼ cup good olive oil
1 medium Spanish onion, chopped
3 cloves of garlic, diced
½ teaspoon crushed red pepper flakes
1 ½ teaspoons dried oregano
1 cup vodka
2 (28-ounce) cans peeled plum tomatoes
Kosher salt
Freshly ground black pepper
¾ pound penne pasta
4 Tablespoons fresh oregano
¾ to 1 cup heavy cream
Grated Parmesan cheese



Preheat oven to 375 degrees F.

Heat the olive oil in a large oven proof saute pan over medium heat, add the onions and garlic and cook for about 5 minutes until translucent. Add the red pepper flakes and dried oregano and cook for 1 minute more. Add the vodka and continue cooking until the mixture is reduced by half.

Drain the tomatoes through a sieve and crush them into the pan with your hands. Add 2 teaspoons salt and a pinch of black pepper. Cover the pan with a tight fitting lid and place it in the oven for 1 ½ hours. Remove the pan from the oven and let cool for 15 minutes.

Meanwhile, bring a large pot of salted water to a boil and cook the pasta al dente. Drain and set aside.

Place the tomato mixture in a blender and puree in batches until the sauce is a smooth consistency. Return to the pan.

Reheat the sauce, add 2 Tablespoons fresh oregano and enough heavy cream to make the sauce a creamy consistency. Add salt and pepper, to taste, and simmer for 10 minutes. Toss the pasta into the sauce and cook for 2 minutes more. Stir in ½ cup Parmesan. Serve with an additional sprinkle of Parmesan and a sprinkle of fresh oregano on each plate.