

Italian Pasta Salad with Red Wine Vinaigrette

Ingredients

For the Vinaigrette:

- ½ cup red wine vinegar
- ½ cup + 2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
- 3 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 tablespoon honey
- 1 tablespoon dried Italian seasoning
- ½ teaspoon salt

For the Pasta Salad:

- 12 oz pasta (fusilli, rotini, farfalle, or cavatappi work well)
- 1 pint cherry tomatoes, halved or whole
- 1 medium cucumber, quartered lengthwise and sliced
- 1 cup chopped hard salami slices (or see Note for protein alternatives)
- ¾ cup roasted red peppers (jarred or homemade) or fresh sweet bell peppers, finely diced
- ½ cup chopped red onion
- 12 oz mini mozzarella balls (about 22-24), halved
- 1 can (3.8 oz) sliced black olives, drained
- ¼ cup chopped Italian parsley or fresh basil leaves



Instructions

1. Bring a large pot of salted water to a boil. Cook the pasta until al dente, then drain and rinse under cold water. Set aside to cool.
2. In a small jar or bowl, whisk together the red wine vinegar, olive oil, garlic, honey, Italian seasoning, and salt until smooth and well combined.
3. If using fresh bell peppers, dice them small for better texture. For extra depth, sauté them briefly in olive oil or roast them under a broiler until slightly charred, then peel away the skins.
4. In a large mixing bowl, toss together the cooled pasta, cherry tomatoes, cucumber, salami, peppers, red onion, mozzarella, olives, and herbs.
5. Pour the vinaigrette over the salad and toss gently to coat. Cover and refrigerate for at least 30 minutes to let the flavors meld.

Note & Storage

- Use a good-quality Italian dressing if not making homemade; avoid creamy or overly sweet varieties.
- Chickpeas, grilled zucchini, marinated tofu, grilled chicken, tuna, or rotisserie chicken are good protein alternatives.
- Fresh bell peppers add crunch when raw or a smoky softness when roasted.
- Fusilli, rotini, farfalle, or cavatappi pasta shapes hold the dressing well and stay tender.
- Add fresh basil just before serving to keep its flavor bright and delicate.
- Store in an airtight container in the refrigerator for up to 4 days.
- Before serving, toss gently and adjust seasoning with olive oil or a pinch of salt.