

PASTA WITH SAUSAGE & PEPPERS

Adapted from the recipe in *The Silver Palate Cookbook*, P. 71...courtesy of Sharon Swenson

"Everyone should have a hearty pasta sauce like this one in his/repertoire. A printed recipe for a dish this casual may seem superfluous to those who throw such simmered sauce improvisations together on the spur of the moment. We think that harmony and balance are as important here as anywhere else; however, you must feel free to change the herbs, omit the hot peppers, or increase the garlic as you see fit, in order to make the dish your own.

We like to serve this over short tubular pasta such as rigatoni or zita. While it's perfectly delicious with the traditional sprinkling of grated Parmesan cheese, we suggest you try it with a dollop of fresh ricotta and a grinding of black pepper for a change of pace."

- 2 lbs sweet Italian sausage (Sharon used a mix of sweet and hot Italian turkey sausage.)
- 3 TBSP best-quality olive oil
- 1 cup finely chopped onions
- 3 sweet red bell peppers, stems, ribs and seeds removed cut into medium-size julienne strips
 - (I first roasted them with olive oil and s&p at 400 degrees, then peeled and chopped them)
- 1 cup dry red wine
- 1 can (2 lbs, 3 ounces) Italian plum tomatoes, including the liquid
 - (one of my 12-oz cans was roasted tomatoes)
- 1-cup water
- 1 TBSP dried oregano
- 1 tsp dried thyme
- Salt and freshly ground pepper (s&p) to taste
- Dried red pepper flakes
- 1 tsp fennel seeds
- ½ cup chopped Italian parsley
- 6 (or more) garlic cloves, peeled and finely chopped (I used 8)

1. Prick the sausage links all over with the tines of a fork and put them in a pot with ½ inch water. Set the pan over medium heat and simmer the sausages, uncovered, in the water for about 20 minutes. Eventually the pot will boil dry and the sausages will begin to fry in their own fat. Turn them occasionally and cook for another 10 minutes, or until well browned. Remove the sausages from the pot and drain on paper towels.
2. Pour sausage fat out of the pot (I had none because it was turkey sausage) but do not wash the pot. Set the pan over low heat, add the olive oil (way too much) and onions and cook them covered, until tender, about 25 minutes.
3. Add the peppers, raise the heat and sauté, uncovered, for about 5 minutes, stirring often. (Instead, I roasted the whole bell peppers with olive oil & s&p for about 35 minutes at 400 degrees for added flavor, then peeled and chopped and added to the pan, no sautéing.)
4. Add the wine, tomatoes, water, oregano and thyme. Season to taste with s&p and red pepper flakes. Bring to a boil, reduce heat and simmer, partially covered for 30 minutes.
5. Meanwhile, slice the sausages into ½-inch rounds. When the sauce has simmered for 30 minutes, add sausages and fennel seeds. Simmer uncovered for another 20 minutes.
6. Add parsley and chopped garlic for another 5 minutes (I think adding some basil would be nice, too, what with all the tomatoes in this recipe.)

This makes quarts sauce, enough for 2 pounds pasta. (I think it would be fun to mix the rigatoni with the zita. Safeway did not carry zita so I used just the rigatoni. I made the recipe the day before so the flavors could meld.) Warning: this makes a huge amount. Good for a party, however! Enjoy!