

Chocolate Sourdough Pasta with Roasted Peppers and Zucchini

Chocolate Sourdough Pasta

- 1/2 cup durum semolina sourdough starter*
- 1 tbsp 22/24 cocoa or 1 1/2 tbsp 10/12 cocoa (this is the standard cocoa found in grocery stores but it's not as flavourful and more is required)
- 1 cup durum semolina flour (plus extra for kneading and rolling)
- 1 tbsp water or more if needed
- 2 tbsp maple syrup
- 1/8 tsp mild cayenne pepper (optional)
- Sea salt for the water when cooking

Roasted Peppers and Zucchini

- 1/4 cup finely chopped onions
- 1 red or yellow pepper, seeded and cut into small thin strips about 3 inches long
- 1 small green or yellow zucchini, sliced (about 2 cups)
- 1 clove garlic, crushed or chopped fine
- 2 tbsp olive oil (plus extra if needed when serving the pasta)
- 2 cups fresh, chopped baby spinach
- 3 tbsp fresh basil or oregano or 2 tsp dried
- 1-2 tsp aged balsamic vinegar (optional)

Mix the starter, cocoa, flour, water and cayenne (if using) together to form a dough. You may start by mixing with a spoon but eventually, you'll need to transfer it to a clean, flat surface (like the counter) and finish working in the flour by kneading it. Try to knead in as much flour as possible. Once it forms a stiff ball, keep kneading for 5-10 minutes until it's soft and pliable. It becomes more pliable once the gluten is stretched by the kneading process. Let rest for 30 minutes.

To roll out the pasta: Sprinkle flour on a clean flat surface. Divide the dough into six pieces. Roll out one of the pieces to the desired thickness. Cut the ends and sides to form a rectangle. The length should be about 8-10 inches. Cut in strips by laying a ruler lengthways on the dough to allow you to cut straight strips and run a knife or pastry cutter along the edge of the ruler to create a strip. Move the ruler over a 1/2 inch and cut another strip. Repeat until the piece has been completely cut into strips. Put the strips aside, spread out. This can be done on a piece of parchment or wax paper. Repeat this process until all dough pieces are rolled and cut. Let sit for about two hours. Pasta should be cooked just before serving.

Put a large pot on the stove and fill 2/3 or 3/4 full with water. Bring the water to a boil. Add sea salt to the water. Salt amount varies depending on the amount of water but generally, approximately 1 1/2 tbsp salt per 4 quarts or 4 litres of water. Add the pasta to the boiling water. When the pasta floats to the top, it's cooked. It's cooks very quickly when fresh. Removed from the water and rinse to prevent it from being sticky. It's now ready for the vegetables to be added.

To roast the vegetables: Preheat the oven to 375 degrees. Put the peppers, garlic, olive oil and 2 tbsp fresh basil or oregano or all of the dried, if using into a baking dish or pan. Toss and spread out. Roast in the oven for 10 minutes. Add the zucchini and roast for another 10 to 15 minutes or until the vegetables achieve the desired degrees of softness. Remove from the oven. Add the balsamic vinegar, the rest of the fresh herb, if using and season with sea salt and pepper to taste. Add the vegetables to the cooked pasta. Add more olive oil if needed. Toss and serve.

Tip: Fresh parmesan or romano or asiago, which are all gut-friendly fermented cheeses, can be sprinkle on topped, if desired.