

Treasure Barrel

# Easy Pasta Salad Recipe with Colorful Veggies and Zesty Dressing

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| **20 min**<br>Prep time | **15 min**<br>Cook time | **35 min**<br>Total time |
| **8**<br>Servings | **Easy**<br>Difficulty | **American**<br>Cuisine |

## Ingredients

### For the Pasta Salad

- [ ] 1 lb (16 oz) rotini or fusilli pasta
- [ ] 1 pint cherry tomatoes, halved
- [ ] 1 large English cucumber, chopped
- [ ] 1 orange or yellow bell pepper, chopped
- [ ] 1/2 red onion, thinly sliced
- [ ] 1 can (6 oz) black olives, drained and halved
- [ ] 6 oz block of feta cheese, crumbled

### For the Zesty Dressing

- [ ] 1/2 cup extra virgin olive oil
- [ ] 1/4 cup red wine vinegar
- [ ] 1 lemon, juiced (about 2 tbsp)
- [ ] 1 tbsp Dijon mustard
- [ ] 2 tsp dried oregano
- [ ] 1 clove garlic, minced
- [ ] 1 tsp salt, or to taste
- [ ] 1/2 tsp black pepper, or to taste

## Instructions

1. First, let's get the pasta going. Bring a large pot of generously salted water to a rolling boil. There's something so comforting about the sound of that bubbling water, isn't there? Add your pasta and cook according to the package directions until it's al dente – you want it to have a little bite. Once it's ready, drain it in a colander and immediately rinse it under cold running water. This is a crucial step! It stops the cooking and cools the pasta down, which is exactly what we want for a cold salad. Set it aside to drain completely.

2. While the pasta is cooking, you can prepare the vegetables. This is my favorite part; it feels so meditative. On a large cutting board, chop your cucumber and bell pepper, halve the cherry tomatoes and olives, and thinly slice the red onion. Place all these colorful gems into your largest mixing bowl. Look at that beautiful array of colors! Crumble the feta cheese over the top of the vegetables. I like to use a block of feta and crumble it myself; it just tastes so much fresher and creamier.

3. Now, let's make that beautiful, zesty dressing that brings everything together. In a small bowl or a glass jar with a lid, combine the olive oil, red wine vinegar, fresh lemon juice, Dijon mustard, minced garlic, and dried oregano. Add the salt and pepper, and then whisk it all together vigorously until it's well combined and emulsified. You'll see it turn slightly creamy. I always give it a little taste here to see if it needs anything else – maybe a pinch more salt or another squeeze of lemon.

4 It's time for the grand finale! Add the completely drained and cooled pasta to the large bowl with all the vegetables and feta. Pour about three-quarters of the dressing over everything and give it a gentle, thorough toss until every single piece of pasta and veggie is lightly coated and glistening. Cover the bowl and let it chill in the refrigerator for at least 30 minutes, but longer is even better. This gives all those wonderful flavors a chance to mingle and get to know each other. Before serving, give it one last toss and add the remaining dressing if it seems a little dry.

### Nutrition per serving

| 410 kcal | 11 g | 45 g | 22 g |
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| Calories | Protein | Carbs | Fat |

### Tips & notes

- Feel free to customize the vegetables based on what's in season or what you have in your fridge. Zucchini, artichoke hearts, or even blanched asparagus would be lovely additions.
- For a little extra protein, you can add a can of chickpeas (rinsed and drained) or some grilled, chopped chicken. It makes the salad a full, satisfying meal on its own, kind of like my warm chicken fettuccine but for a summer day.
- The dressing can be made up to a week in advance and stored in an airtight container in the refrigerator. Just give it a good shake before using it, as the oil and vinegar will separate.