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SERVES 6-8 | LEVEL: BEGINNER

Penne Alla Vodka

¼ cup good olive oil

2½ cups chopped yellow onions (2 onions)

1 tablespoon minced garlic (3 cloves)

1½ teaspoons dried oregano

½ teaspoon red pepper flakes

1 cup vodka

2 (28-ounce) cans whole peeled plum tomatoes, drained

Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper

¾ pound penne, such as DeCecco

2 tablespoons chopped fresh oregano leaves, plus extra for serving

1 cup heavy cream

½ cup freshly grated Parmesan cheese, plus extra for serving

Preheat the oven to 375 degrees.

Heat the oil in a medium (11-inch) Dutch oven, such as Le Creuset, over medium-low heat. Add the onions and cook for about 5 minutes, until the onions are translucent. Add the garlic, oregano, and red pepper flakes and cook for just one minute. Add the vodka and simmer for 5 to 7 minutes, until the mixture is reduced by half. With clean hands, crush each tomato into the pot. Add 2 teaspoons of salt and ½ teaspoon of black pepper. Cover the pot with a tight-fitting lid and bake for 1½ hours.

Meanwhile, bring a large pot of water to a boil. Add 2 tablespoons of salt and the pasta and cook according the directions on the package. Drain and set aside.

Pour the tomato mixture into a food processor fitted with the steel blade and puree until smooth. (You can also use a blender.) Return the tomato mixture to the pot. Add the fresh oregano, cream, 1 teaspoon of salt, and ½ teaspoon pepper and simmer partially covered for 10 minutes. Add the pasta to the sauce and cook for 2 more minutes. Off the heat, stir in ½ cup of the Parmesan cheese and serve hot sprinkled with extra Parmesan and fresh oregano.

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