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## Fusilli with Ricotta and Spinach

From *America's Test Kitchen* Season 15: The Italian Vegetarian

### WHY THIS RECIPE WORKS:

This dish takes the traditional components of a stuffed pasta—ricotta and spinach—and turns them into a simple and quick weeknight pasta dish. In order to keep the ricotta texture and flavor distinct (and to prevent the graininess that comes from heating ricotta), we opted to add most of it in dollops over the finished dish rather than fold it into the sauce. And to keep the spinach bright and green (and eliminate the tedious task of blanching and squeezing it dry), we cook it very briefly in the pot along with the pasta. To provide the sauce with complexity, we added lots of minced garlic, cayenne, nutmeg, lemon juice and zest, and Parmesan cheese.

### Serves 4 to 6

We like fusilli for this recipe since its corkscrew shape does a nice job of trapping the sauce, but penne and campanelle also work well.

### INGREDIENTS

- 11** ounces (1 1/3 cups) whole-milk ricotta cheese
- 3** tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
- Salt and pepper
- 1** pound fusilli
- 1** pound (16 cups) baby spinach, chopped coarse
- 4** garlic cloves, minced
- 1/4** teaspoon ground nutmeg
- 1/8** teaspoon cayenne pepper
- 1/4** cup heavy cream
- 1** teaspoon grated lemon zest plus 2 teaspoons juice
- 1** ounce Parmesan cheese, grated (1/2 cup), plus extra for serving

### INSTRUCTIONS

- 1.** Whisk 1 cup ricotta, 1 tablespoon oil, 1/4 teaspoon pepper, and 1/8 teaspoon salt in medium bowl until smooth; set aside.
- 2.** Bring 4 quarts water to boil in large pot. Add pasta and 1 tablespoon salt and cook, stirring often, until al dente. Reserve 1 cup cooking water. Stir spinach into pot with pasta and cook until wilted, about 30 seconds. Drain pasta and spinach and return them to pot.
- 3.** While pasta cooks, heat remaining 2 tablespoons oil, garlic, nutmeg, and cayenne in saucepan over medium heat until fragrant, about 1 minute. Remove pan from heat and whisk in remaining 1/3 cup ricotta, cream, lemon zest and juice, and 3/4 teaspoon salt until smooth.

**4.** Add ricotta-cream mixture and Parmesan to pasta and toss to combine. Let pasta rest, tossing frequently, until sauce has thickened slightly and coats pasta, 2 to 4 minutes, adjusting consistency with reserved cooking water as needed. Transfer pasta to serving platter, dot evenly with reserved ricotta mixture, and serve, passing extra Parmesan separately.

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