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Penne alla Vodka

Whether or not this dish of tube-shaped penne pasta lavished with a peppery, vodka-laced cream and tomato sauce was created in Italy is a matter of heated debate in some quarters; some say it was the result of aggressive marketing on the part of vodka importers. Whatever the case, it has become firmly entrenched as an Italian American classic.



Credit: Landon Nordeman

SERVES 4-6

INGREDIENTS

Kosher salt, plus more to taste
1 lb. penne

1/4 cup olive oil
1 tsp. crushed red chile flakes
12 cloves garlic, thinly sliced lengthwise
1 32-oz. can whole, peeled tomatoes in juice, crushed by hand
1/4 cup vodka
3/4 cup heavy cream
1 cup parmesan
Freshly ground black pepper, to taste
Finely chopped parsley, to garnish

INSTRUCTIONS

Bring a large pot of salted water to a boil over high heat; add penne, and cook, stirring, until al dente, about 11 minutes. Meanwhile, heat oil in a 6-qt. saucepan over medium heat; add chile flakes and garlic, and cook, stirring, until soft and lightly browned, about 3 minutes. Add tomatoes and vodka, and cook, stirring, until slightly reduced, about 5 minutes. Stir in cream and cheese, season with salt and pepper, and stir until smooth. Drain pasta, and transfer to pan with sauce; toss pasta with sauce until evenly coated. Transfer to a serving platter and sprinkle with parsley.

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