

## Eric Guido's Penne alla Vodka

Serves 4 - 5 guests

A note on the ingredients: Try to find San Marzano tomatoes imported from Italy. Believe it or not there are domestic brands that try to trick you with tomatoes of inferior quality and a completely different taste. Also, using penne "rigate" (instead of regular penne) is important because the texture holds the sauce to the penne. Lastly, an entire bottle of vodka is not included in the cost of the recipe and since it is only a ¼ cup, use the good stuff if you've got it. Remember, your food is primarily the sum of your ingredients.

28 oz can San Marzano tomatoes  
5 cloves minced garlic  
½ cup yellow onion cut into fine dice  
½ cup pancetta small dice  
¼ cup vodka  
¾ cup grated Parmigiano Reggiano  
1 cup heavy cream  
1 - 2 tbs olive oil  
½ - 1/3 teaspoon crushed red pepper flakes (depending on your preference for spice)  
1 pound penne rigate  
8 fresh basil leaves cut chiffonade (This should not be done until the end of the cooking process.)  
salt and pepper

While bringing a pot of salted water to a boil, measure out and prepare your ingredients.

Pour the tomatoes into a bowl and, with your hands, break up the tomatoes into small pieces. Remove any skins if they were left on the tomatoes.

In a large saucepan, pour in olive oil and set to medium flame. When the oil begins to shimmer, add the pancetta and cook until slightly browned (about 4 minutes).

Add the onion and garlic to the pan and season well with salt. It is also at this time that you should add the pasta to the boiling water and set the timer for 1 minute short of the recommended cooking time. Cook the onion and garlic until translucent (about 2 minutes).

Raise heat to medium high, add the red pepper flakes to the pan and stir. Pull the pan from the stove (away from the flame) and add the vodka. Place back on the stove and add the tomatoes. Stir well to combine.

You should stir regularly as the sauce cooks over the medium high flame. Make sure that it does not begin to burn on the pan bottom. If the sauce appears to be reducing too quickly, lower the flame to medium.

About the same time that the pasta is done, add the cream to the sauce and stir to combine. Season the vodka sauce with salt and pepper to taste. Drain your pasta completely and quickly rinse out the pot and dry.

Pour the pasta back into the pot and add ½ cup of the grated Parmigiano Reggiano cheese. Stir the cheese into the pasta and then pour the sauce into the pot. Move the pot onto a medium flame and continue cooking for one minutes. Remove from the heat and stir well.

Allow the pasta and sauce to sit in the pot for two more minutes, stirring from time to time. This allows the pasta to absorb and integrate with the sauce. While the pasta is resting, cut your basil.

Stir one last time and ladle the pasta onto warmed plates. Dress with basil chiffonade and a sprinkle of grated Parmigiano Reggiano. Clean the rims of your plates with a warm, moist towel and serve.