

Orzo, Tomato, Bacon and Artichokes with a Brown Butter Parmesan Cream Sauce

March 2015, by Camine Pappas

Serves 2-3

The nuttiness of the browned butter roux gives this creamy pasta dish a deeper flavor profile, offsetting the saltiness of the bacon and artichokes.

INGREDIENTS:

1/3 lb thick cut bacon or about 4 slices (I cook all of the bacon and then keep the unused strips in the fridge for future recipes!)

1 C dry orzo pasta

1 ½ C drained quartered artichoke hearts

10-12 cherry tomatoes, halved

1 C heavy cream

Milk as needed

3 T butter

1 T flour

1 C grated parmesan cheese

Dash dried oregano

Salt and pepper



DIRECTIONS:

Put a large saucepan of water on to boil. Now, cook bacon in a large, nonstick sauté pan, until crisp but not overdone. Remove and drain. Discard all but 1 T fat.

In a large saucepan, melt 3 T butter on medium heat and watch closely until it begins to brown. It takes a non-second to go from perfect to yuck, so watch carefully. My method is to keep the heat at medium high, and then pull the pan off the heat as you watch it, so you can see the color of the butter at stop of the foaming that begins when it heats, which obscures your view. When it's brown, take off heat. Add the flour and whisk until incorporated, return to heat and let it bubble for a minute, remove again and continue to whisk. Do this for about 30 seconds. Now add the C of cream and whisk until thick. As it gets thick, add milk to thin. When the right consistency, which is creamy but not too custardy, remove from heat, add a bit of salt and pepper, stir in all but a few pinches of cheese (which you will use to garnish), stir until melted, and set aside.

Returning to the sauté pan with the bacon drippings, reheat and add the tomatoes and artichoke hearts. Sauté until tomatoes start to soften. Add the cheese sauce to the tomato and artichoke mixture. (I didn't add all of it, only about 1 C or so. You will have to eye-ball on this because the amount of sauce is dependent upon how much milk you used to thin it.) While the artichokes and tomatoes were sautéing, you should be cooking the orzo, which only takes about 4-5 minutes to soften. When the pasta is cooked, drain it, and add it as well to the saucepan. Heat all, serve in bowls with a sprig of fresh parsley.

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