

THE CULINARY Playground

Roasted Vegetables with Orzo Pasta Salad

Serves 4

- 1/2 small eggplant, peeled and 3/4-inch diced
- 1/2 red bell pepper, 1-inch diced
- 1/2 yellow bell pepper, 1-inch diced
- 1/2 red onion, peeled and 1-inch diced
- 1 garlic clove
- 2 T cup good olive oil
- 1/2 teaspoon kosher salt
- 1 t dry Italian Seasoning
- 1/4 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
- 1 1/2 cups orzo or rice-shaped pasta

For the dressing:

- 2 1/2 T freshly squeezed lemon juice
- 3 T good olive oil
- 1/4 teaspoon kosher salt
- 1/4 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper

To assemble:

- 2 scallions, minced (white and green parts)
- 1 T pignolis (pine nuts), toasted
- 4-6 oz good feta, 1/2-inch diced (not crumbled)
- 6 fresh basil leaves, snipped into julienne

Preheat the oven to 425 degrees F.

Toss the eggplant, bell peppers, onion, and garlic clove with the olive oil, salt, and pepper on a large sheet pan. Roast for 40 minutes, until browned, turning once with a spatula. When done cooking, remove garlic from sheet pan and set aside.

Meanwhile, cook the orzo in boiling salted water for 7 to 9 minutes, until tender. Drain and transfer to a large serving bowl. Add the roasted vegetables to the pasta, scraping all the liquid and seasonings from the roasting pan into the pasta bowl.

Press the garlic through a garlic press. For the dressing, combine the lemon juice, olive oil, pressed garlic, salt, and pepper and pour on the pasta and vegetables. Let cool to room temperature, then add the scallions, pignolis, feta, and basil.

Check the seasonings, and serve at room temperature.