



Petite Greek "Pastitsio" Pasta Bites with Creamy Dreamy Béchamel Sauce

By Dylan Sabuco

Prep Time 25 / Cook Time 25 / Serves 4 - 6

Shopping List

FRESH OR FROZEN

1 C frozen peas

2 garlic cloves

DAIRY

1 C heavy cream ****(see allergy subs below)****

1 T butter ****(see allergy subs below)****

PANTRY

2 C rigatoni pasta ****(see allergy subs below)****

1/4 tsp salt

1 tsp all-purpose flour ****(see allergy subs below)****

1 tsp onion powder

1/2 tsp ground black pepper

HAVE ON HAND

2 C water

"WATER YOU COOKING UP?" FLAVORED WATER (OPTIONAL)

4 C water

2 C ice

Choose 1 or more of the following fresh ingredients to flavor your water:

1 cucumber

1 lime

1 lemon

1 orange

1 mint sprig

Fun-Da-Mentals Kitchen Skills

bake: to cook food with dry heat, as in an oven.

stir: to mix together two or more ingredients with a spoon or spatula, usually in a circle pattern, or figure eight, or in whatever direction you like!

measure: to calculate the specific amount of an ingredient required using a measuring tool (like measuring cups or spoons).

boil: to cook a food in liquid heated to the point of gas bubbles and steam forming (boiling point is 212 F at sea level).

simmer: to cook a food gently, usually in a liquid, until softened.

slice: to cut into thin pieces using a sawing motion with your knife.

stir: to mix together two or more ingredients with a spoon or spatula, usually in a circle pattern, or figure eight, or in whatever direction you like!

measure: to calculate the specific amount of an ingredient required using a measuring tool (like measuring cups or spoons).

Equipment

Oven

Muffin pan

Paper cupcake liners

Small saucepan

Measuring cups

Measuring spoons

Wooden spoon

- Colander or strainer
- Pitcher
- Cutting board
- Kid-safe knife

Ingredients

Petite Greek "Pastitsio" Pasta Bites with Creamy Dreamy Béchamel Sauce

- 2 C rigatoni pasta **** (for GLUTEN ALLERGY sub 2 C gluten-free/nut-free rigatoni or similar tube-style pasta)****
- 2 C water
- 1 big pinch salt
- 1 C frozen peas
- 2 garlic cloves
- Béchamel Sauce:
 - 1 C heavy cream **** (for DAIRY ALLERGY sub 1 C unsweetened coconut cream)****
 - 1 tsp all-purpose flour **** (for GLUTEN ALLERGY sub 1 tsp cornstarch)****
 - 1 tsp onion powder
 - 1 pinch salt
 - 1/2 tsp ground black pepper
 - 1 T butter **** (for DAIRY ALLERGY sub 1 T dairy-free/nut-free butter)****

"Water You Cooking Up?" Flavored Water

- 4 C water
- 2 C ice
- Choose 1 or more of the following fresh ingredients to flavor your water:
 - 1 cucumber
 - 1 lime
 - 1 lemon
 - 1 orange

□ 1 mint sprig

Food Allergen Substitutions

Petite Greek "Pastitsio" Pasta Bites with Creamy Dreamy Béchamel Sauce

Gluten/Wheat: For 2 C rigatoni pasta, substitute 2 C gluten-free/nut-free rigatoni or similar style pasta.

For 1 tsp all-purpose flour in sauce, substitute 1 tsp cornstarch.

Dairy: For 1 C heavy cream, substitute 1 C unsweetened coconut cream. For 1 T butter, substitute 1 T dairy-free/nut-free butter.

"Water You Cooking Up?" Flavored Water

Instructions

Petite Greek "Pastitsio" Pasta Bites with Creamy Dreamy Béchamel Sauce

intro

Pastitsio (pah-STEET-see-yoh) is a Greek dish with roots dating back to 330 ACE in the Roman Empire. It is a tasty pasta dish that reminds me of lasagna but with a slightly different personality. Pastitsio typically combines long tube noodles, creamy béchamel sauce, and ground beef or lamb. Our Sticky Fingers Cooking version will focus on making a bite-sized pastitsio with peas instead of meat that is extra creamy from classic béchamel sauce.

measure + boil

Measure **2 cups of water** and **1 big pinch of salt**, pour them into a small saucepan, and bring to a boil. Once boiling, turn the heat off and carefully pour the hot water into a large bowl. Add **2 cups of dry rigatoni** to the water and stir. Let the pasta sit for at least 5 minutes while you prepare the sauce.

superstar food spotlight

Frozen peas have many great qualities that make them perfect for many dishes. To freeze peas, manufacturers steam freshly harvested peas and slide them into a huge flash freezer. Flash freezing is a quick freezing process used to preserve the texture, color, and flavor of foods. The best part about peas is that while they have a delicate, sweet flavor, they are also packed with nutrients. Peas contain carbohydrates, protein, fiber, vitamin A, and vitamin K, to name a few. They are also absorbent, so they become full of flavors and sauces when cooked properly.

chop + fold

Roughly chop **2 garlic cloves** and measure **1 cup of frozen peas**. You will be gently folding them into the Creamy Dreamy Béchamel Sauce.

intro

Béchamel sauce is one of the five mother sauces. That means béchamel sauce is the original creamy sauce from which all other cream-based sauces derive. If you have eaten Alfredo sauce, pasta carbonara, mornay sauce, or even a cheese sauce, you have had a derivative of béchamel sauce. Think of them as a family of sauces with one trait in common: cream!

scrumptious science

Time to make a "roux" (pronounced "roo")! What is a roux? Roux, or chef's paste, is a cooked combination of butter and flour in equal parts. This mixture is then used to thicken stocks and cream into various sauces and soups. For this recipe, we will make a simple roux, which is made by combining your butter and flour over a low heat until all the flour and butter are fully combined into a blonde paste. From there, stock, cream, or water can be added to create soups and sauces with vegetables or meat incorporated into the mix.

measure + simmer

In a small saucepan, measure **1 tablespoon butter, 1 pinch of salt, 1/2 teaspoon black pepper, 1 teaspoon onion powder,** and **1 teaspoon flour**. Stir the ingredients over low heat until a paste forms. This is a simple roux. Slowly pour in **1 cup of heavy cream** and continue to stir and simmer.

stir + simmer

Stir and simmer until the sauce thickens enough to coat the back of your spoon. This consistency is a French term: "nappe" (nap-pay).

drain + arrange

Drain the pasta. Place **12 cupcake liners** in the wells of a muffin pan. Then, arrange the pasta so that each noodle is standing upright and tightly packed together. Each cupcake liner should be full with approximately 10 noodles each.

scoop + bake

Scoop the sauce over the rigatoni and bake for 10 to 12 minutes or until the pastitsio is slightly browned on top. Remove from the muffin pan and cool for a few minutes before digging in. "Kalí órexi" (kah-LEE OAR-ex-ee) or "Enjoy your meal" in Greek! This sauce can be used for many different pasta dishes. Have fun mixing and matching new types of pasta with different variations of béchamel to explore as many mother sauce derivatives as you can.

"Water You Cooking Up?" Flavored Water

chop + measure + stir

Choose the flavor of water you will be making. Simply slice whatever **fresh ingredients** you chose and place them into a pitcher. Measure and add **4 cups of water** and **2 cups of ice**. Stir a few times and then serve.

Featured Ingredient: Peas!

Hi! I'm Peas!

"Hi, there! Let's see if you can guess what we are. We grow in shells; you might see us frozen in winter, fresh in spring, and canned all year round; and sometimes we're "split" and cooked in soup! You guessed it! We're Peas! We're good in salads, soups, casseroles, mixed with corn and other vegetables, and all by ourselves! We can be tricky to eat, but if we slide off your fork, you can spear us or use your knife to push us back on. Or, you might even try eating us with chopsticks!"

History

Peas in the wild are found in the Mediterranean Basin, the Middle East, and Central Asia. Archaeological evidence dates peas in Iraq and Turkey to 7,500 BCE. Domesticated peas were developed from wild peas starting in the late Neolithic Era (around 5,000 BCE). Peas are one of the oldest crops to be cultivated. The oldest pea ever found was 3,000 years old and was discovered on the border of Burma and Thailand. During the Middle Ages, peas were a large part of people's diets in the Middle East, North Africa, and Europe.

In the 17th and 18th centuries, peas started being picked when they were green and immature. In England, new cultivars or varieties of peas were developed that they called "garden" or "English" peas. Thomas Jefferson grew more than 30 pea cultivars at his Monticello estate in Virginia.

Clarence Birdseye, known by many as the founder of the modern frozen food industry, was the first individual to freeze peas.

The world record for the most peas eaten in an hour is 7,175 peas, held by Janet Harris of Sussex, England, in 1984. She ate one pea at a time with chopsticks!!

Anatomy & Etymology

Peas are members of the Fabaceae or Leguminosae family, commonly known as legumes, including peanuts, chickpeas, licorice, alfalfa, beans, carob, and soybeans.

Peas are edible, usually green, round seeds that grow in a pod. The pea pods are technically a fruit because they have seeds and grow from a flower, but peas are eaten as a vegetable.

Pea plants are annual plants, living for about one year. At the end of their life cycle, they can be cut back to the root, which decomposes, releasing nitrogen into the soil for the next crop of plants.

The singular term "pea" was back-formed in the mid 17th century by removing the "se" from the word "pease," which was mistakenly construed as a plural form. "Pease" came from the Old English "pise," from the Latin "pisum," from the Greek "pison."

How to Pick, Buy, & Eat

You can pick garden peas about three weeks after flowering. The pods of shelling peas or garden peas are inedible and will swell with the growth of the peas, becoming cylindrical before harvesting.

Snow peas and sugar snap peas are edible pods ready to harvest about a week after flowering. The pods can be picked when they're about two to three inches long before they begin to swell and just as the seeds or peas begin to develop.

For the best taste, you'll want to eat the peas as soon after harvesting as possible. Fresh peas will last in your refrigerator for up to one week. The more peas you pick, the more the plant will produce.

Frozen peas are almost as tasty as fresh ones because the growers freeze them within two and a half hours of being picked. Plus, they quickly thaw when added to hot foods.

You can cook and serve peas alone as a vegetable, with added butter and salt. You can also add them to various dishes, such as salads, soups, casseroles, and savory pies. Snow peas and snap peas are often used in stir-fries and Chinese cuisine. Peas can even be mashed and made into a sauce, a spread, or guacamole!

Nutrition

Peas are loaded with nutrients, including fiber, protein, vitamin C, thiamine, vitamin K, niacin, folate, potassium, and beta carotene. These nutrients improve the body's digestive and immune systems, convert the carbohydrates we eat into energy, metabolize fats and protein, protect skin and eyes, and help prevent bleeding.