

# Chicken Mozzarella Pasta with Sun-Dried Tomatoes

Total Time: 1 hour

Yield: 4 servings

## Ingredients

- 3 large garlic cloves, minced
- 1 small jar (3-4 oz) sun-dried tomatoes in oil, or use 3-4 oz fat-free sun dried tomatoes
- 1 lb chicken breast tenders
- salt
- paprika (just a little bit)
- 1 cup half and half
- 1 cup mozzarella cheese, shredded
- 8 oz penne pasta (for gluten free, use Tinkyada gluten free brown rice pasta)
- 1 tablespoon basil (if using dry basil), if using fresh basil you can add more
- 1/4 teaspoon crushed red pepper flakes (at least, add more to taste)
- 1/2 cup reserved cooked pasta water (or more)
- salt, to taste

## Instructions

1. **Note:** if using sun-dried tomatoes in oil (in a jar), make sure to drain sun-dried tomatoes from oil, before using them. Reserve 2 tablespoons of this drained oil for sauteing as described below:
2. In a large pan, on high heat, sautee garlic and sun-dried tomatoes (drained from oil) in 2 tablespoons of oil (reserved from the sun-dried tomatoes jar - see note above) for 1 minute until garlic is fragrant. Remove sun-dried tomatoes from the pan, leaving the oil, and add chicken tenders, salted and lightly covered in paprika (for color) and cook on high heat for 1 minute on each side. Remove from heat.
3. Cook pasta according to package instructions. Reserve some cooked pasta water. Drain and rinse the pasta with cold water (to stop cooking).
4. Slice sun-dried tomatoes into smaller bits and add them back to the skillet with chicken. Add half and half and cheese to the skillet, too, and bring to a gentle boil. Immediately reduce to simmer and cook, constantly stirring, until all cheese melts and creamy sauce forms. If the sauce is too thick - don't worry - you'll be adding some cooked pasta water soon. Add cooked pasta to the skillet with the creamy sauce, and stir to combine. Add 1 tablespoon of basil, and at least 1/4 teaspoon of red pepper flakes. Stir to combine.
5. Add about 1/2 cup reserved cooked pasta water because the creamy sauce will be too thick (do not add all water at once - you might need less or more of it). This will water down the thickness of the cheese sauce and make it creamier. Immediately, **season the pasta with salt and more red pepper flakes, to taste, if needed.** Let it simmer for a couple of minutes for flavors to combine.
6. **Note:** Make sure to salt the dish just enough to bring out of the flavors of basil and sun-dried tomatoes.

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