

Gourmet made easy! This scrumptious salad, with its fresh, flavorful ingredients, is a staple in my kitchen. No matter how many times we eat this, we never get bored with the soft mozzarella, juicy tomatoes, and aromatic basil.

# Caprese Penne Salad

dairy | gluten-free option | do not freeze | yields 6-8 servings

## Ingredients

- 1 kg (16 oz/454 g) penne pasta (gluten-free or regular)
- 1 pint cherry tomatoes, halved
- 3 oz/250 g mozzarella cheese, cut into bite-sized chunks (about 2 cups)
- ½ cup chopped fresh basil  
additional basil, for garnish

## Dressing

- ½ cup extra virgin olive oil
- ½ cup balsamic vinegar
- 2 cloves garlic, minced (about 1 tsp)
- 1 tsp kosher salt
- ¼ tsp black pepper
- ¼ tsp chili flakes (or to taste)

## Method

1. Cook pasta al dente in salted water according to package directions. Drain well.
2. Transfer pasta to a serving bowl; let cool. Add tomatoes, mozzarella, and basil.
3. **Dressing:** Combine ingredients for salad dressing in a glass jar; seal tightly and shake well.
4. Toss salad with dressing. Adjust seasonings to taste. Garnish with additional basil leaves. Serve chilled.

## Norene's Notes

- Quick Tip: Instead of cutting a block of mozzarella into chunks, use individual cheese sticks and slice crosswise into bite-sized pieces.
- Variation: Make Bocconcini Kabobs by marinating cut-up mozzarella cheese and whole cherry tomatoes in dressing for 20 minutes. Alternate them on small wooden skewers, adding small whole basil leaves in between. Serve chilled as an appetizer. Easy cheesy!