

Tuna Pasta

CLASSIC

GROWING UP, this simple cold pasta was a meal my mom made for supper that sometimes landed in our lunch boxes the next day. The humble combination of tuna, pasta, and mayo is the ultimate comfort food. Best of all, it calls for ingredients that are likely already in your pantry.

MAKES 3 SERVINGS

One 3-ounce can water-packed tuna, drained

1 medium carrot, finely chopped

1 stalk celery, finely chopped

2 tablespoons finely chopped red onion

1½ cups leftover cooked short pasta such as penne or rotini

1 tablespoon fresh lemon juice

2 to 3 tablespoons mayonnaise

- 1 In a medium bowl, break up the tuna with a fork. Add the carrot, celery, onion, and cooked pasta, and stir until combined.
- 2 Add the lemon juice and 2 tablespoons of the mayonnaise. Stir until combined. Taste and add more mayonnaise if needed.
- 3 Divide the tuna pasta between three containers.

MAKE-AHEAD NOTES: can be made a day ahead and stored in the refrigerator.

A Tuna Tutorial

Canned tuna is convenient, low in saturated fat, and a good source of protein. The problem is, tuna can also be high in something you don't want—the environmental pollutant mercury. To keep mercury levels in check, be smart about the kind of tuna you choose and how much you feed your family. Here are a few pointers to help you shop wisely:

Buy water-packed chunk light tuna, which has the lowest level of mercury of any variety. This is not to be confused with chunk white tuna or albacore, which tend to be high in mercury and are best avoided.

Alternatively, look for albacore labeled “pole caught,” which means the fish are smaller than the conventional variety, with less mercury buildup.

Turn to the experts at the Natural Resources Defense Council for guidelines on how much canned tuna is safe for kids based on their body weight. The guidelines can be found at www.nrdc.org/health/effects/mercury/tuna.asp.

Consider using canned wild Alaskan sockeye salmon instead of tuna. It's rich in omega-3s, low in mercury, and sustainably caught. It's got a fairly strong flavor, so consider mixing in equal parts canned chicken when you introduce it to your kids. They may take to it better this way.

