

# Cooking with the Club

by Chef Robert Larios



## Send Us Your Recipes!

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# Holiday Pasta Salad

## DIRECTIONS:

1



Gather all your ingredients.

So you've been asked to bring something to the holiday potluck and you don't want to bring the usual apple pie or the chips and dip from the market. A pasta salad is one route to take, even while there may be critics who say that it takes too long to prepare and it doesn't have the greatest flavor. I disagree with the critics, and I say that pasta salads are quick and easy to make and delicious, and they're great for large parties.

When a recipe calls for dicing ingredients, placing them in a large bowl, mixing them and then plating them to serve – that is culinary art at its best. The simplicity is miraculous, and the deliciousness that results is cosmic; but somehow it's all sitting in the kitchen.

This pasta salad is versatile, and the ingredients can be interchanged and substituted. If you don't like or don't have bowtie pasta, use rotini, penne or even macaroni. If you don't have red peppers, go ahead and use green peppers. If you don't have feta cheese, you can use other cheeses including cubed mozzarella or maybe Monterey Jack.

No matter which variation you use, the ingredients provide a festive presentation and the flavors are gifts to those being served. Happy Holidays!



2



Boil your pasta with a little salt and olive oil, and place in a strainer once it has cooked approximately 10 minutes. While your pasta is boiling, dice the cherry tomatoes, the peppers, chives, olives, Italian parsley and cilantro. Set aside.

3



Strain the pasta into a large bowl or pot. Place the other diced ingredients in the bowl or pot as well. Add a little more salt and pepper. Add the feta cheese, the artichoke hearts and the Italian dressing. Mix gently with a wooden spoon.

## Holiday Pasta Salad

### INGREDIENTS:

- 12 oz. feta cheese, crumbled
- 32 oz. bowtie pasta
- 1 medium red pepper
- 1 medium orange pepper
- 1 medium yellow pepper
- 16 cherry tomatoes
- 1/2 cup chives
- 1/4 cup Italian parsley
- 1 can (about 10) artichoke hearts
- 2 bottles Italian dressing
- 1/2 cup cilantro
- 2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
- Freshly cracked pepper and sea salt to taste

SERVES 8 TO 12

**Cooking TIDBIT:**

If you don't like Italian dressing, feel free to experiment with other types. Vinaigrettes usually work.



### [ A Cook's Dictionary ]

#### Feta Cheese:

This classic Greek cheese is traditionally made of sheep's or goat's milk, though today large commercial producers often make it with cow's milk. Because it's cured and stored in its own salty whey brine, feta is often referred to as pickled cheese. White, crumbly and rindless, feta is usually pressed into squared cakes.

– From the *The New Food Lover's Companion*, Sharon Tyler Herbst, 1995, Barron's Educational Series.

4



Plate and serve!



**Food Factoid:** "Happy and successful cooking doesn't rely only on know-how; it comes from the heart." – Georges Blanc