

Margherita's Orecchiette with Rapini & Hot Sausage

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This is a classic dish from the Puglia region of Italy, Frank's Mom's birth place. His wife, Margherita has perfected this recipe over the years. Orrecchetti pasta translated means "little ears." Rapini is also called "Broccoli Rabe or Rape." Ask at your produce department for it. You could substitute broccoli, however, you will miss the unique flavor of the Rapini.

Ingredients

- 2 Bunches of Rapini - Option: *1 lb. Broccoli florets
- 1 lb. Orecchiette Pasta
- 1 lb. Isernio's Hot Italian Sausage (4 links or 1 lb. Roll)
- 1/4 Cup Olive Oil
- 7 - 8 cloves Garlic, finely sliced
- 6 Anchovy fillets, jarred imported variety is best
- 1 tsp. crushed hot Red Pepper Flakes
- 1/2 Cup low salt Chicken Broth, heated
- 1 Cup fresh grated Pecorino Romano Cheese
- 1 1/2 Cups reserved Pasta Water
- 6 - 8 tsp. Salt
- 2 tsp. freshly ground black pepper

Instructions

- 1. Cut off the tough ends of the Rapini stalks, which is usually just below the wire wrapper. Clean under running water in a colander. Pick out any yellowish or brown looking leaves. Bring a large pot (with lid) of water to a boil, add 1 tsp. of salt and blanch Rapini, stems down, covered, for 5 minutes, until the stems are soft, then shock in ice water. Squeeze out excess water, place on a separate plate and cut up into 1/2 inch pieces. Set aside. Note: if you don't get all the excess water out, the Rapini will not absorb as much olive oil.
- 2. If using Broccoli, cut florets into 1" pieces and wash well. Blanch in boiling, salted water for 5 minutes, until tender. Shock in ice water and drain into a colander. Place on paper towels and pat dry, set aside.
- 3. Heat a non stick 12" skillet over medium heat. Remove casings from link sausage and place in skillet, break up and crumble sausage with a flat wooden spoon. Cook sausage until it just loses its pinkness. Don't over cook sausage! Set aside.
- 4. Bring a very large pot (enough to hold 1 lb. of pasta so they don't stick together) to a boil. Add 3 tsp. of salt. Add Orecchiette and boil for 15 minutes, stirring OFTEN, because this type of pasta will stick together.

- 5. Meanwhile, in a tall cast iron pot on Med. heat, add the Olive Oil and Anchovies, breaking them up with a wooden spoon to dissolve. Add the finely sliced Garlic, 1 tsp. of Salt, Hot Pepper flakes and saute on Med. heat until garlic turns soft, but not golden (don't burn the Garlic!). Add the cut up Rapini or Broccoli and stir well. Add the sausage and drippings, mix well. Add the 1/2 Cup of hot Chicken Broth to the Sausage Rapini mixture, stir and keep warm on low heat until pasta is ready. When pasta is ready turn up the heat to medium.
- 6. Before draining pasta, have a 2 Cup measuring cup in the sink, to catch some of the pasta water. Pour about 1-1/2 cups of the pasta water, into the measuring cup. Drain pasta and add to Rapini mixture. Stir well, adding 1/2 cup increments of pasta water at a time. You'll know how much pasta water to add, by how much it absorbs. If you start to see liquid at the bottom of the pot, stop, you've added enough pasta water. Turn heat off and sprinkle in 1/4 Cup of the Pecorino Romano cheese evenly. Add the freshly ground black pepper and stir well. Taste and adjust for Salt if needed. Serve into bowls immediately, drizzle with olive oil. Top with freshly grated Pecorino Romano cheese.
- 7. *Note: This pasta dish should not be dry, it should have a creamy consistency from the pasta water.
- Servings : 4
- Recipe Type : [Pasta](#), [Rice & Polenta](#)

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