

BACKYARD PASTA SALAD

So you've been invited to your neighbor's house for a backyard barbecue and they've asked you to bring a side. You're tired of making salads that no one eats, and want something that won't spoil quickly in the heat. Ah ha! How about a pasta salad? You've got tons of tomatoes and cucumbers in your garden and you have that nice bottle of zesty lemon balsamic vinegar you picked up on vacation from that cute little olive oil shop that you've never opened. Why not?

INGREDIENTS (serves 6-8)

SALAD

1 pound dry pasta (something twisty like Barilla Fusilli, Rotini or Gemelli)

1 cucumber, sliced

1 pint cherry tomatoes, halved

1/2 cup pitted olives, sliced

half of a large red onion, thinly sliced

6 ounces crumbled feta cheese (or goat cheese)

DRESSING

1/4 cup extra light virgin olive oil

3 tablespoons zesty balsamic vinegar (or any vinegar of your choice)

zest of one lemon

1 tablespoon freshly-squeezed lemon juice

1 teaspoons dried oregano crushed

1 small garlic clove, minced

1 teaspoon honey

$\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon crushed red pepper flakes

salt and pepper to taste

PREPARATION

In a large pot, bring 4 quarts of salted water to a boil. Cook the pasta as per box instructions to al dente. Drain the pasta in a colander and rinse with cold water. Allow to cool and set aside.

Add the remainder of the salad ingredients (except for the feta cheese) into a large bowl. Add the pasta and gently toss. Add in half the feta cheese and lightly toss.

Pour the dressing on top and lightly toss. Cover bowl with clear wrap for at least one hour before serving.

When ready to serve, toss again and sprinkle the remaining feta cheese on top.