

SEA URCHIN AND QUAIL EGG BOWTIE PASTA

Admittedly, this dish may not be for everyone. But for those of us that love sea urchin, otherwise known as *uni* at your local sushi bar, this dish is a rich treat—rich in flavor, but unfortunately rich in expense. I had purchased a tray at my local fish store with hopes of making my favorite sushi at home—uni with quail egg. But as you may have read earlier this week, things didn't work out as planned. So, I found myself left with a half tray of uni and a half-dozen quail eggs that I was determined not to waste. So, I put it to good use in this dish.

INGREDIENTS (serves 2)

5 ounces fresh sea urchin (uni)

1/2 cup crème fraîche

½ pound bowtie pasta

2 tablespoons olive oil

3 cloves garlic, finely minced

1 small shallot, finely minced

1 teaspoon red pepper flakes

1/2 cup dry sake

6 quail eggs, beaten

Freshly ground black pepper

Salt to taste

Parmesan cheese, grated (optional)

PREPARATION

Reserve 2-4 pieces of sea urchin for the garnish. Put the remaining sea urchin, and crème fraîche into a blender and blend until smooth. Set aside.

Cook pasta as per box or bag instructions, remembering to season the water with salt. Cook until al dente.

In a large skillet, heat the olive oil. Add the shallots and garlic and cook until translucent, about 2-4 minutes. Add salt and pepper to taste. Add in red pepper flakes. Do not allow to burn.

Strain the pasta, reserving a cup of the pasta water if needed later. Add a $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of the pasta water into the blender and pulse the uni mixture.

On a medium flame, add the pasta to the skillet and using tongs, toss lightly to combine. Add the uni mixture and gently toss to combine. Bring pan up to high heat and pour the eggs over the pasta and toss. If sauce seems too dry, add some more of the pasta water, a $\frac{1}{4}$ cup at a time, until the consistency is creamy. (Go slowly so that you don't add too much water to the sauce.)

Re-season to taste with salt and black pepper.

Serve pasta in bowls and garnish with the reserved sea urchin.

OPTIONAL: Garnish with grated parmesan. There's a huge debate about whether to mix seafood with cheese. Classically it's a no-no, but I leave it up to your tastebuds.