

CARLA'S COOKING SHOW

From the Archives!

Fregola with Fresh Corn, Pancetta, and Basil

4-6 Servings



Summer in a bowl. There are so many beautiful couples in this recipe: basil and corn; corn and pancetta; pasta and basil; olive oil and Parmigiano; pasta and butter; corn and butter ... I could go on! When you bring them all together, it's an epic outdoor concert on a balmy night. Perfection! You can find fregola at Italian specialty stores and online; my favorite brand is Rusticella d'Abruzzo because it's extra toasty & chewy. Please don't sub with Israeli

Ingredients

Kosher salt

2 tablespoons unsalted butter

3 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil, divided

3 garlic cloves

2 small shallots

4 ounces pancetta, in one piece (not pre-sliced in rounds)

1 small head fennel

Ingredients (cont.)

1 teaspoon piment d'Espelette or Aleppo pepper

Freshly ground black pepper

1 pound fregola, ditalini, anelli, or small ridged shells

3 cups corn kernels, from 3 to 4 large ears

½ cup grated Parmigiano, plus more for serving

Large handful basil

Calabrian chile paste and sour cream (or crème fraîche), for serving

Bring a tall pot of water to a boil for the fregola and season it generously with salt. Thinly slice the garlic and shallots and cut the pancetta into 1 x ½-inch pieces.

In a medium Dutch oven or large cast-iron skillet, melt butter and 2 tablespoons oil over medium. When bubbling, add the pancetta and cook, stirring frequently, until about half the fat has rendered, the edges and surfaces are golden brown, and pieces are just starting to crisp, 6 to 8 minutes. Use a slotted spoon to transfer pancetta to a small plate and set aside for finishing the sauce.

While the pancetta is cooking, trim the fennel, then cut it into small dice; reserve the tender fronds from the stalks and/or inside of the bulb (prep the fennel while the pasta water is heating up if you don't want to divide your attention). Add the fennel to the renderings, along with the garlic and shallot. Increase heat to medium-high. Season with piment d'espelette and a few cranks of black pepper and cook, stirring often, until the aromatics are tender and very light golden, 6 to 8 minutes (don't let the garlic burn). Taste the vegetable mixture and add salt if needed (the pancetta renderings are salty). Roughly chop the basil and set aside (you should have a generous ½ cup). This is a good time to remove the kernels from the corn.

Cook fregola until very al dente, 2 or 3 minutes shy of package instructions. Scoop out 2 cups pasta water, then drain the pasta. Pour half the pasta water into the sauce, then add the pasta and the corn and return to a simmer over medium. Add remaining 1 tablespoon oil and cook, stirring and gradually adding the Parm, until sauce coats the ingredients and the corn is tender, about 2 minutes. Taste and adjust seasonings. Stir in the chopped basil and the reserved pancetta.

Serve pasta topped with extra Parm, a scooch of chile paste, dollop of sour cream and some fennel fronds.

<p>From the Market</p>	<p>At Home</p>
<p>Shallots Pancetta Fennel Piment d'Espelette Fregola Fresh corn Basil Calabrian chile paste Sour cream</p>	<p>Salt and pepper Butter Olive oil Garlic Parmigiano</p>
<p>Spin It</p>	<p>Spin It</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● A small onion or leek can be substituted for shallots ● Guanciale or slab bacon can replace the pancetta ● To make this vegetarian, omit the pancetta and increase the butter and the olive oil by 1 tablespoon each ● Use celery or Swiss chard stems instead of the fennel ● Ditalini, small shells, orecchiette, or anelli can replace the fregola ● Use halved cherry tomatoes instead of the corn, or try this with fresh shelled peas or sugar snap peas ● Used crushed red pepper flakes to add spiciness if you don't have Calabrian chile paste ● Creme fraiche or Greek yogurt can replace the sour cream 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Use all olive oil or all butter if you're missing one or the other ● Grana padano or pecorino can replace the parm