



## Meatless Melty Mostaccioli

By Dylan Sabuco

**Prep Time** 10 / **Cook Time** 20 / **Serves** 4 - 6

### Fun-Da-Mentals Kitchen Skills

**measure:** to calculate the specific amount of an ingredient required using a measuring tool (like measuring cups or spoons).

**boil:** to cook a food in liquid heated to the point of gas bubbles and steam forming (boiling point is 212 F at sea level).

**chop:** to cut something into small, rough pieces using a blade.

**mix:** to thoroughly combine two or more ingredients until uniform in texture.

### Equipment

- Oven
- Baking dish (8x8 or 9x13)
- Large pot + lid
- Large frying pan or skillet
- Colander or strainer
- Large mixing bowl
- Liquid measuring cup
- Measuring spoons
- Dry measuring cups
- Cutting board
- Kid-safe knife

Wooden spoon

Spatula

## Ingredients

### Meatless Melty Mostaccioli

4 C water

1 tsp salt

2 C penne pasta **\*\***(for CELIAC/GLUTEN ALLERGY sub 2 C gluten-free/nut-free penne pasta)**\*\***

1 C mushrooms (your choice of type)

2 T tomato paste

1 tsp dried oregano

1/2 tsp ground black pepper

1 C mozzarella cheese **\*\***(for DAIRY ALLERGY sub 1 C dairy-free/nut-free cheese)**\*\***

## Food Allergen Substitutions

### Meatless Melty Mostaccioli

**Celiac/Gluten/Wheat:** For 2 C penne pasta, substitute 2 C gluten-free/nut-free penne pasta.

**Dairy:** For 1 C mozzarella cheese, substitute 1 C dairy-free/nut-free cheese.

## Instructions

### Meatless Melty Mostaccioli

#### intro

"Benvenuto" (Ben-veh-NOO-toe) or "Welcome" in Italian! Mostaccioli (moh-stah-CHOH-lee) is an Italian baked pasta dish traditionally consisting of tomato, meat, and cheese baked to perfection with long tubular pasta.

#### boil + cover

Pour **4 cups water** and **1 teaspoon salt** into a large pot and bring to a boil. Once boiling, add **2 cups of penne pasta** and stir a few times. Cover with a lid and boil for 8 minutes.

#### chop + add

Meanwhile, have your kids roughly chop **1 cup of mushrooms**. Add them to a large mixing bowl. Adults return to the pasta, reserve **1/2 cup of the pasta water**, and drain the rest of the water using a colander or strainer.

#### measure + mix

Have your kids measure **2 tablespoons tomato paste**, **1 teaspoon oregano**, and **1/2 teaspoon black pepper**. Add them all to the bowl of **mushrooms** and mix. Let's practice counting to 10 in Italian while we measure: 1 uno (OO-noh), 2 due (DOO-eh), 3 tre (treh), 4 quattro (KWAHT-troh), 5 cinque (CHEEN-kweh), 6 sei (SEH-ee), 7 sette (SET-teh), 8 otto (OHT-toh), 9 nove (NOH-veh), 10 dieci (dee-EH-chee).

#### sauté + mix

Drizzle **1 tablespoon of olive oil** in a large frying pan over medium-low heat. Pour the **mushroom mixture** into the pan and stir for a few minutes while the mushrooms soften a bit. Add the **reserved pasta water** to the pan. Simmer for 5 minutes, stirring occasionally.

#### sprinkle + bake

Preheat your oven to 350 F. Pour the pasta into a 8x9 or 9x13 baking dish. Pour the mushroom mixture over the pasta and stir until combined. Then, sprinkle with **1 cup of mozzarella cheese**. Bake in the oven for 10 minutes or until the cheese is lightly browned on top. Remove from the oven and allow it to cool for a few minutes. Dig in! "Buon appetito" (Bwohn ap-peh-TEE-toe) or "Enjoy your meal" in Italian!

## Featured Ingredient: Tomato!

Hi! I'm Tomato!

"I'm a beautiful, juicy red Tomato. Do you pronounce my name: "tuh-may-tow" or "tuh-mah-tow?" Either way you slice it (or say it), we tomatoes are wonderfully adaptable. You'll find us fresh or cooked on sandwiches, in salads, tacos, soups, stews, sauces, and much more."

### History & Etymology

The tomatoes we have now descended from the pea-size fruit of wild plants that grew in western South America. Mesoamericans were the first to domesticate the tomato plant sometime before 500 BCE.

Hernán Cortés, a Spanish conquistador, may have brought tomatoes back to Europe in the 16th century after conquering the Aztec city, Tenochtitlan (now Mexico City).

Tomatoes cultivated in North American colonies in the early 1700s may have been introduced from the Caribbean. Thomas Jefferson also brought tomato seeds back from France. Before tomatoes were used in cooking, the plants were used ornamentally due to some people's beliefs that they were poisonous. One reason for this error was that tomatoes come from the nightshade family, including the belladonna plant (or deadly nightshade), which has highly toxic leaves and berries. Another reason may be that the pewter plates they used back then adversely reacted to the acid in tomato juice.

China is by far the largest producer of tomatoes in the world. In the United States, California and Florida produce the most tomatoes.

The American and British pronunciations of "tomato" were made famous by an Ira and George Gershwin song from 1937 called "Let's Call the Whole Thing Off." Americans pronounce the word "tuh-may-tow," and the British say "tuh-mah-tow."

The word "tomato" comes from the Spanish, French, or Portuguese "tomate," from the Nahuatl "tomatl."

## Anatomy

The tomato is a berry from the tomato plant (*Solanum Lycopersicum*), a perennial vine. It is part of the Solanaceae family, like the potato, pepper, eggplant, and petunia. Since it is a berry, it is a fruit, although mainly used as a vegetable.

A tomato's color is usually red but can also be yellow, orange, green, or purple. Tomatoes can be spherical, oval, or pear-shaped. Their flesh is pulpy with cavities, called locules, that hold the seeds.

There are more than 10,000 tomato varieties. Some are hybrids, and some are heirlooms. An heirloom tomato is a variety that has been grown for generations on a family farm rather than commercially.

Unfortunately, in the past 40 years, many heirloom varieties have been lost, along with the smaller family farms that grew them. However, hundreds of heirloom tomato varieties are still available.

## How to Pick, Buy, & Eat

If you are growing your own tomatoes, pick them from the vine while still firm, with a slight give, and before their ripe color (usually red) deepens too much. While holding the fruit, twist it off the stem until it snaps off. The leaf on top of the tomato (the calyx) and part of the stem will come with it. You can also snip it off using garden scissors.

When you choose tomatoes at the store, pick fruit that has smooth, brightly colored skin with no cracks or bruises, is firm but gives with slight pressure, is heavy for its size, and has a pleasant, aromatic smell.

Avoid tomatoes with pale or dark spots.

Store tomatoes at room temperature, as their flavor will decrease in a refrigerator's cold temperature. Wait to wash them until you are ready to use them.

If you plan to make a tomato sauce or soup using fresh, raw tomatoes, you will want to peel them first.

This can be difficult without some preparation: First, put a pot of water on the stove to boil and fill a large bowl with cold or icy water. Next, after washing the tomatoes, use your knife to cut a shallow 'X' through the skin at the top or bottom of each one. Then use a slotted spoon to place the tomatoes into the boiling water until the skin begins to loosen and peel back at the incision, about 30 to 60 seconds. Finally, immediately dunk them into the ice water. The skin should peel easily now. You can also remove the seeds by cutting the peeled tomatoes in half and scooping the seeds out with a spoon.

Tomatoes are versatile vegetables for cooking. Ripe tomatoes can be prepared fresh, stuffed, baked, boiled, or stewed, and they are the base for many sauces. You can also pickle green, unripe tomatoes, add

them to salsa or bread and fry them.

## Nutrition

Tomatoes are a moderate source of vitamin C, and cooked tomatoes are high in lycopene, an antioxidant, which may help protect your body's cells from damage, strengthen your immune system, and prevent some diseases.