



Cajun Christmas Pasta

Prep Time: 20 minutes
Cook Time: 30 minutes
Yield: 8 Servings

INGREDIENTS

Pasta & Protein:

1 lb penne pasta

1 lb boneless, skinless chicken breast, cut into bite-sized pieces

2 tbsp olive oil, divided

1 ½ tsp Cajun seasoning (mild or medium heat)

Vegetables & Aromatics:

1 red bell pepper, sliced

1 green bell pepper, sliced

½ red onion, sliced

3 cloves garlic, minced

1 poblano pepper, seeded and sliced (or 1 small jalapeño for more heat)

1 cup baby spinach (optional for extra green color)

Sauce:

4 tbsp unsalted butter

¼ cup all-purpose flour

1 ½ cups whole milk

½ cup heavy cream

2 tbsp cream cheese, softened

1 cup grated Parmesan cheese

½ tsp salt

¼ tsp black pepper

¼ tsp smoked paprika

Finishing Touches:

¼ cup chopped sun-dried tomatoes or roasted red peppers

2 tbsp dried cranberries or pomegranate arils (optional garnish)

¼ cup chopped fresh parsley or a few rosemary sprigs for garnish

DIRECTIONS

- 1. Cook the Pasta:** Bring a large pot of salted water to a boil. Cook the penne pasta until al dente according to package directions. Drain and set aside.
- 2. Cook the Chicken:** Season chicken pieces with Cajun seasoning. Heat 1 tablespoon of olive oil in a large skillet over medium-high heat. Add chicken and cook until browned and cooked through, about 6–7 minutes. Remove and set aside.
- 3. Sauté the Vegetables:** In the same skillet, add the remaining olive oil. Add bell peppers, onion, garlic, and poblano pepper. Sauté until tender-crisp, about 4–5 minutes. Stir in spinach just until wilted. Remove from the pan.
- 4. Make the Sauce:** In the same skillet, melt butter over medium heat. Whisk in flour and cook for 1–2 minutes until lightly golden. Gradually whisk in milk and cream until smooth. Add cream cheese and stir until melted and the sauce begins to thicken, about 3–4 minutes.
- 5. Season and Combine:** Stir in Parmesan cheese, salt, black pepper, and smoked paprika. Add the cooked pasta, chicken, and vegetables back into the skillet. Toss gently until everything is well coated and heated through.
- 6. Finish and Garnish:** Stir in sun-dried tomatoes or roasted red peppers. Top with a sprinkle of Cajun seasoning, chopped parsley or rosemary, and a few dried cranberries or pomegranate arils for a festive pop of color.
- 7. Serving Suggestion:** Serve hot in tasting cups or small bowls. Garnish with a Parmesan curl and a sprig of rosemary for an elegant presentation.



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Recipe adapted from:
Chef Floyd J