

Eggplant Caponata Orecchiette with Ricotta and Basil

Serves 4-6

- Salt and black pepper
 - 53 g raisins, preferably yellow
 - 2 T granulated sugar
 - 132 g olive oil
 - 2 small Italian eggplants (900 g total), trimmed and cut into 19-mm cubes
 - 340 g orecchiette (or other shaped pasta)
 - 53 g finely chopped shallot (about 1 small shallot)
 - 30 g pine nuts
 - 3 T drained brined capers
 - 2 garlic cloves, finely chopped
 - ¼ tsp red-pepper flakes
 - ⅓ packed cup thinly sliced fresh basil leaves, plus more torn leaves for garnish
 - 2 T red wine vinegar
 - 232 g fresh ricotta or burrata
1. Bring a large pot of salted water to a boil over **high heat**. Add the **raisins, sugar, 1 T salt** and **240 ml water** to a small saucepan. Bring to a boil over **high heat** and let cook **about 2 minutes**, then cover and set aside.
 2. In a large nonstick skillet, heat **59 ml olive** oil over **medium-high**. Stir in half the **eggplant** to coat evenly in the oil, season generously with **salt** and **pepper**, and cook, stirring occasionally, until tender and browned in spots, **7 to 8 minutes**. Transfer to a large bowl. (Eggplant should brown and tenderize but still maintain its shape.) Heat another **59 ml oil**, then add remaining eggplant; season and repeat.
 3. While the eggplant cooks, add the **pasta** to the boiling water and cook until al dente. Reserve **240 ml pasta water**, then drain pasta. (You might not use all the pasta water.)
 4. Add another **2 T oil** to the skillet and reduce the heat to **medium**. Cook the **shallot, pine nuts, capers, garlic** and **red-pepper flakes**, stirring frequently, until the shallot is tender, **2 to 3 minutes**. Transfer to the bowl with the **eggplant**, along with the sliced **basil** and **vinegar**.
 5. Strain the soaked **raisins**, discarding the soaking liquid, then add the raisins to the eggplant mixture and toss to coat. Season generously with **salt** and **pepper**. The mixture should taste quite aggressively salty and tangy, but it will mellow when tossed with pasta and ricotta. (Eggplant mixture can be made in advance and refrigerated for up to 2 days.)
 6. Add eggplant mixture, pasta and **120 ml reserved pasta water** to the pot. Toss to coat over medium heat until eggplant is warmed, adding extra pasta water if necessary. Divide among shallow bowls, top with **ricotta** and additional torn **basil** and serve immediately. Pass with additional **olive oil** for drizzling, if desired.



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