

Cheesy Tuna & Tomato Orzo

Serves 2

Ingredients

Quick Marinara Sauce

- 200 g canned crushed tomatoes
- 1 tsp olive oil / 5 g
- 1 small garlic clove, grated
- 1 tsp tomato paste / 6 g (optional but improves flavor)
- 1 tsp dried oregano
- 1/4 tsp salt
- pinch black pepper
- pinch sugar (optional, balances acidity)

Orzo

- 1 T olive oil / 14 g
- 100 g dry orzo pasta
- 1 garlic clove, minced
- 1/2 tsp ground cumin
- 1/2 tsp smoked paprika (or sweet paprika)
- 1/4 tsp salt
- 350 ml vegetable stock (or water + 1/2 tsp bouillon)
- 200 g prepared marinara sauce (from above)
- 1 can tuna in oil, drained (70 g drained weight)
- 50 g grated cheddar cheese
- 10 g parsley, chopped (optional)

Instructions

1. Make marinara

- Heat **1 tsp olive oil** in small pan. Add **garlic** and cook **20 seconds**.
- Add **tomatoes, tomato paste, oregano, salt, pepper** and **sugar**.
- Simmer gently **8–10 minutes** until slightly thickened.
- You need about 200 g for the recipe.

2. Toast orzo

- Heat **olive oil** in a medium saucepan over **medium heat**.
- Add **orzo, garlic, cumin, paprika** and **salt**.
- Cook stirring **2 minutes** until lightly golden and aromatic.

3. Simmer

- Add **stock** and **marinara**. Bring to a gentle boil.
- **Reduce heat to low**, cover and cook **10–12 minutes**, stirring occasionally.
- Add a splash of **water** if mixture becomes too dry.

4. Finish

- Stir in **tuna** and **cheddar cheese** until melted.
- Adjust seasoning if necessary.



5. Serve

- Garnish with **parsley** and a drizzle of **olive oil** if desired.

Notes

- Cheddar works well here and is cheaper than mozzarella in Japan.
- If using tuna packed in oil, you may reduce olive oil slightly.
- Frozen spinach (50 g) can be added with the tuna for extra vegetables.
- A squeeze of lemon brightens the dish nicely.

Technique: Risotto-Style Orzo Cooking

Instead of adding all the liquid at once, add it in **two stages**.

This improves:

- texture
- starch release
- sauce consistency

Step-by-Step

1 Toast the orzo

Cook the orzo in olive oil with garlic and spices **2 minutes** until lightly golden.

This step:

- adds flavor
- helps the pasta hold its shape

2 First liquid addition

Add **about 70% of the liquid**.

For this recipe:

Total liquid = **350 ml stock + 200 g marinara**

Add initially:

250 ml stock + all marinara

Simmer uncovered **6–7 minutes**, stirring occasionally.

3 Final liquid adjustment

Add remaining **100 ml stock gradually** as needed.

Stir every minute or so.

Cook until:

- orzo is tender
- sauce thick and glossy
- no excess liquid

Total cook time: **10–12 minutes**

Why This Works

Orzo releases starch while cooking.

Gradual liquid addition allows:

- starch to emulsify with oil and cheese
- sauce to thicken naturally
- pasta to cook evenly

Result: **silky, risotto-like texture instead of soupy pasta.**

How to Use Anchovies in a Pasta Tuna Dish

Add during the oil stage.

After heating the olive oil:

Add

- **1 anchovy fillet**

or

- **½ tsp anchovy paste**

Cook **20–30 seconds**, stirring.

It will melt into the oil.

Then continue with:

- garlic
- orzo
- spices

- Two other Mediterranean pantry tricks:
 - **1 Capers (½ tsp chopped)**
Adds salty brightness.
 - **2 Lemon zest at the end**
Very common with tuna pasta.

Nutrition

Per Serving: Kcal 515 | Protein 33 g | Fat 21 g | Sat Fat 7 g | Carbs 48 g |
Sugars 6 g | Fiber 3 g | Sodium 760 mg | Omega-3 0.35 g

Total Dish: Kcal 1030 | Protein 66 g | Fat 42 g | Sat Fat 14 g | Carbs 96 g |
Sugars 12 g | Fiber 6 g | Sodium 1520 mg | Omega-3 0.7 g