

Orecchiette Pasta with Shiitake Mushrooms and Sugar Snap Peas

Who doesn't love this whimsical concave shape of orecchiette (little ears) pasta that comes from Puglia, Italy? The pasta holds the natural sauce created by the concentrated juices mushrooms express as they cook down. If there is any leftover pasta, it is delicious served room temperature the next day. Try adding some toasted pine nuts for a garnish—they add a pleasing crunch.

- 4 quarts water
 - 2 teaspoons salt
 - 12 ounces orecchiette pasta
 - 1 tablespoon extra virgin olive oil
 - 1 cup red onion, minced
 - 1 cup shiitake mushrooms, stems removed and discarded, sliced 1/4-inch thick
 - 1 large portobello cap, diced (about 1 1/2 cups)
 - 1 cup sugar snap or snow peas, strings removed
 - 1 cup scallions, trimmed and minced
 - 1/2 cup grated Parmesan cheese
 - salt and pepper to taste
1. Bring the 4 quarts of water to boil in a large pot. Add the 2 teaspoons of salt and the pasta. Cook for 8-9 minutes or until al dente. Drain the pasta, reserving about 1/2 cup of the cooking liquid. Place the cooked pasta in a bowl large enough for easy mixing.
 2. While the pasta is cooking, wipe the mushroom caps with a damp paper towel.
 3. Heat the olive oil in a 10- or 12-inch nonstick sauté pan over medium heat. Add the onion and sauté for 1 minute to wilt the onion, add the shiitake and portobello mushrooms, sauté for 4-5 minutes then add the sugar snap peas and sauté 1 additional minute.
 4. Add the sautéed vegetables to the bowl with the cooked pasta. Toss well, adding a tablespoon or so of the reserved pasta water if needed for moisture. Add the scallions, Parmesan cheese, salt and pepper and toss lightly to blend.