

Orecchiette with Boar Sausage, Fava, and Mint

Serves 6

This is a twist on the orecchiette with sausage and broccoli rabe that I grew up on. Though we didn't have boar sausage in our family version, it's quite common in Tuscany and is becoming more available here. You can substitute high-quality sweet Italian sausage, however, if you like.

- 1 pound wild boar sausage, removed from casings
- 3 ounces pancetta, chopped very finely
- 1 tablespoon fennel seeds, toasted and ground
- 1 ½ teaspoons crushed red pepper
- Kosher salt
- 2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
- 1 cup sliced shallots
- 1 clove garlic, sliced
- 1 pound orecchiette
- 1 cup fava beans, blanched
- 1 cup peas, blanched
- 2 tablespoons unsalted butter, cut into pieces
- 1 cup pea shoots
- ½ cup freshly grated Parmigiano-Reggiano cheese
- 2 tablespoons coarsely chopped fresh mint

In a stand mixer fitted with the dough hook, mix the sausage, pancetta, fennel, and crushed red pepper until combined. Cover and refrigerate for at least 4 hours and up to 24 hours to let the flavors meld.

Bring a large pot of well-salted water to a boil. Heat the olive oil in a large sauté pan over medium heat. Spread half of the sausage mixture over half of the pan in a thin patty. (Reserve the other half of the sausage for future good eating; it freezes well.) Cook the sausage undisturbed to brown on side.

At the same time, on the other side of the pan, add the shallots and cook, stirring occasionally until tender, about 3 minutes. Add the garlic and continue to cook until the shallots are a deep brown, another 5 minutes. Use a spoon or spatula to mix the sausage well with the shallots and garlic, and continue to cook until the sausage no longer looks raw.

Cook the orecchiette until not quite al dente. Add ¾ cup of the pasta cooking water to the sauté pan, increase the heat, and use a spatula to scrape up any brown bits in the pan. Add the fava beans and peas and toss to combine.

Reserve some of the pasta cooking water and drain the pasta. Add the pasta, the butter, and ½ cup of the pasta cooking water to the pan. Take the pan off the heat. Reserve about ¼ cup of the pea shoots and add the rest to the pan. Add the Parmigiano-Reggiano and mint and toss well. If the pasta looks dry, add a little more of the pasta water. Divide among serving bowls and top with the reserved pea shoots.