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Penne Pasta with Fresh Tomatoes, Basil and Goat Cheese

When I was single, this was my summer standby for a quick “date plate”. I would go to the local Farmer’s Markets and look for interesting tomatoes to try. Now, we grow several varieties of tomatoes in our garden each year. Usually the first tomatoes of the season to ripen are the smaller ones and they seem to come along just when the basil is beginning to flourish. So I celebrate the classic combination of tomatoes and basil with this simple dish.

3 pints of mixed “small tomatoes” (such as yellow pear cherry, red cherry, sun gold cherry, and grape)
1 cup of fresh basil
1 pound of hot penne pasta, cooked al dente
1 tablespoon best quality olive oil
6 ounces of fresh goat cheese, crumbled
4 sprigs of fresh basil (reserved for garnish)
Sea salt
Freshly ground black pepper
Bottle of best quality olive oil

Rinse the tomatoes and pat them dry.

Cut each of the tomatoes in half and put them in a medium sized mixing bowl.

Cut the basil into thin ribbons and sprinkle on the tomatoes, gently stir to combine.

Put the hot pasta into a large serving bowl, toss with the tablespoon of olive oil.

Top the pasta with the tomatoes and their collected juices.

Sprinkle the goat cheese over the tomatoes.

Garnish with the reserved basil sprigs and serve immediately.

Pass the salt and pepper along with the bottle of olive oil around the table.

Serves 4.

Victoria Wessler