



Arugula with Gorgonzola

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Rucola con Gorgonzola

Woo hoo!!! We have our first "harvest" from our orto (vegetable garden). Well, OK, it might be an exaggeration to call it a harvest, but it was a colander full of rucola (or arugula or rocket, people call it different things depending on where you live). I think the garden lettuces are doing well enough that we don't have to buy lettuce anymore! Now that is good news!

The weather has not been kind to us this year, very cool, very rainy, so things are much further behind than they were last year. Nevertheless, it looks like we are getting back on track.

To celebrate our first growth, we made a "rucola con Gorgonzola" sauce for pasta. It's a classic pairing of the spicy green with Gorgonzola blue cheese. Quick Gorgonzola lesson: it's a cow's milk cheese and it comes in two varieties, sweet/dolce/montagna or piccante. The sweet Gorgonzola is very creamy and mild and works beautifully as a pasta sauce. The piccante version is harder and sharper and works beautifully with a slice of pear and a hearty red wine.

This is a great, quick sauce that you can have ready in less time than it takes to cook the pasta.

1 hunk of Gorgonzola (say 4-5 oz, or a chunk the size of a deck of cards)
1 finely minced shallot
Pancetta or bacon (optional)
Splash of wine (optional)
Minced pear (optional)
Olive oil (not optional)
1 colander full of fresh rucola

Put your pasta water on to boil "first thing!"

Very gently sauté the minced shallot, you don't want any browning. If you are using pancetta or bacon, sauté that first, remove from the pan and cook the shallot in the fat from the meat, otherwise use olive oil for the shallot.

If you have a pear on hand, mince that into small pieces and sauté. Remove the bits of pear from the pan. Might sound a bit unusual in a pasta sauce, but pear and Gorgonzola is a match made in heaven. And if you leave it in the pan while you melt the cheese, the pear gets really mushy and sort of disappears into the sauce. Which could be a good thing if you want to sneak that pear into the dish.

Break the Gorgonzola up into small bits and add to the saucepan, stirring frequently.

By now your pasta is nearly done, and all the Gorgonzola is melted. You'll need to add a bit of liquid now, so you can add a splash of white wine (colored wine will make for a really unhealthy looking grey sauce) it

will taste good, but will look very funky. I'm just sayin'?) or you can add a ladle full of the pasta water, or you can add a bit of both. The liquid will make the melted cheese into more of an emulsion, so it will be a sauce and not just a glop of melted cheese.

Strain and drain the pasta, add to the cheese sauce, add the clean and dry rucola and toss well. If you'd like your rucola to be soft and wilted, and this is a much more traditional Italian way to serve the dish, add the rucola to the warm cheese sauce while it is still on the stove, stir for a minute or so until the rucola wilts, then add to the pasta. I like the rucola to still be crunchy because I like the contrast with the soft pasta, but to each his own.

Add your crunchy bacon on top, scatter the sautéed pears and feast away.

Try a rose wine with this pasta. No. Rose is not a girly man wine. Get over that already! We didn't have a pear in the house, but we did have some prosciutto, so Jeff carved off a few slivers and that went on top of our pasta. It's good to have some cured pig leg around!

Image (optional):

