

Brussels Sprouts Pasta Santa Cruz

Surfing spots in Santa Cruz County in the northern Monterey Bay area are frequently right in front of fields of the biggest best brussels sprouts you have ever seen. It's like walking past a field of green gold. There's nothing like fresh brussels sprouts from a local farmer's market picked earlier that morning. Not only are they great in soup (or just steamed and drenched in butter for a snack or part of dinner) but they also go great in pasta! This recipe is a twist on another simpler dish with fried sage leaves, lemon, and cheese. It is a bit more rich thanks to the veloute-style sauce. A fusilli pasta is recommended because the corkscrew shape holds sauce very well and provides some nice texture to go with the brussels sprouts leaves. You can use any pasta you like but noodle-style probably wouldn't work as well for texture.

Enjoy!

Ingredients:

- fusilli pasta, fresh or dried (or penne/other non-noodle pasta - chef's choice)
- 4 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
- 2-4 tablespoons unsalted butter
- 4 garlic knuckles
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 1/2 teaspoon white pepper
- 6 leaves fresh tarragon
- 1/4 cup lemon juice
- 1/2 cup full cream or "Half and Half"
- 2-4 ounces grated Parmigiano-Reggiano cheese
- Dried dill

Take the brussels sprouts (depending on number of servings) and thoroughly rinse first with vinegar then with cold water. Slice off the stem then cut the heart out of the sprouts by cutting a cone up into the sprouts around the base. This will free up the leaves for flaking off into a large bowl. Discard any damaged outer leaves so you have only the fresh green leaves. The hearts are then chopped and added to the bowl of leaves. If the stems are clean and tender, add those as well or else reserve with other vegetable trimmings for use to build a later stock (waste not want not). Another good idea is to toss your trimmings into a compost pit for next year's vegetable garden (keep any animal products out except egg shells and there will be no odor).

Set 4 quarts water to boil. Do not oil or salt the water.

Take a large cast iron pan on medium heat and pour in the olive oil. Add 2 tablespoons butter for a little extra richness. Chop or slice the garlic. When the oil is shimmering (or butter beginning to foam), lower the garlic into the pan and give it a stir to coat, and let cook about 3-5 minutes stirring occasionally. Once the garlic is just barely beginning to brown and your kitchen smells like a vampire's nightmare, lower the leaves into the pan

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and stir to coat and mix the garlic in. Sprinkle with salt and cover to wilt down. Cook for about 8-10 minutes, stirring occasionally so no leaves burn.

Drop pasta into boiling water to cook.

Once the leaves are cooked, ladle in 1-2 ladles of starchy pasta water and mix thoroughly. Pour the lemon juice (or better yet, squeeze two fresh lemons) over them and toss. Then remove the leaves and any garlic tag-alongs and reserve in the large bowl used for the flaking. Lower 2 tablespoons butter into the pan to melt with the remaining liquid. Chiffonade the tarragon leaves (stack and roll all together into a cigar shape then very finely slice) and add to the sauce. Let the tarragon sautee for about a minute then stir the cream. Sprinkle in the white pepper and stir gently. Cut the fire off and sprinkle in 2 to 3 ounces of the cheese, stirring constantly, until the sauce thickens nicely.

Drain the pasta and toss with brussels sprouts leaves, then dump the bowl of pasta and leaves into the pan and toss to thoroughly coat. Sprinkle remaining cheese and toss again. Plate and dust each serving with dill.

Serve with a nice sharp Pinot Grigio, a side dish of giardiniera (Italian pickled vegetables) and sourdough bruschetta topped with dried roma tomatoes and pancetta.

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