

PENNE WITH PISTACHIOS, ASPARAGUS, AND CREAM

MAKES 10 CUPS; TOTAL TIME: 40 MINUTES

TOAST:

$\frac{1}{3}$ cup pistachio nuts

COOK:

1 lb. thin asparagus, cut into thirds

SAUTE IN $\frac{1}{4}$ CUP UNSALTED BUTTER;

REMOVE AND DISCARD:

1 large clove garlic, peeled and halved lengthwise

ADD:

Cooked asparagus

$\frac{1}{4}$ t. ground white pepper

$\frac{1}{3}$ cup dry white wine

POUR IN, SIMMER, AND SEASON:

1 cup half and half

$\frac{1}{4}$ cup heavy cream

$1\frac{1}{2}$ t. sea or kosher salt

PREPARE; COMBINE AND ADD:

1 lb. dry penne pasta

Asparagus sauce

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup freshly grated Parmigiano-Reggiano cheese

GARNISH WITH:

Toasted chopped pistachio nuts

Preheat oven to 350°.

Toast the nuts on a baking sheet for 5–7 min.; cool, chop, and set aside.

Cook the asparagus in a stock pot in boiling salted water, uncovered, over medium-high heat until tender, about 3 minutes. Remove asparagus, saving the water so the pasta can be prepared in the same pot.

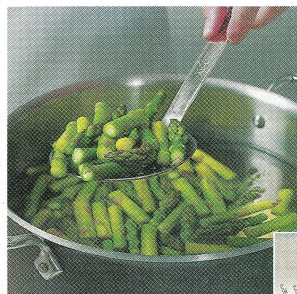
Saute garlic in butter in a saute pan over medium heat, pressing the garlic with a wooden spoon to release its flavor. When the edges start to brown, remove and discard garlic.

Add the asparagus and pepper. Increase heat to high and pour in the wine, stirring for about 1 minute. Reduce heat to medium.

Pour the half and half and cream over asparagus mixture and simmer about 2 minutes. Season with salt; keep warm while boiling the pasta.

Prepare penne (in asparagus water) according to package directions; drain and return to the pot. Combine asparagus sauce with pasta, stirring over low heat. Add cheese, stirring until it melts; transfer to a platter.

Garnish with pistachio nuts and serve immediately.



◀ Remove the cooked asparagus, then use the same water and pot for the pasta.



Stir in the cream, cooking until thick and velvety. ▶



◀ Combine the creamy asparagus with the drained pasta in the pot.

Underscoring the diversity of pasta, Mary Ann gives us contrasting recipes from two regions of Italy. Using different noodles, one dish is meatless while the other highlights meat. But the Italian pasta cooking rules apply to both: Use plenty of boiling salted water, don't overcook, never rinse cooked pasta, and serve it as soon as it's finished cooking.