Kale Caesar Pasta Salad

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Published July 22, 2025

Total Time	45 minutes, plus at least 4 hours' chilling
Prep Time	10 minutes
Cook Time	35 minutes
Rating	★★★★★ (972)

Caesar salad meets pasta salad in this comfort food mash-up. Crisp and sturdy kale leaves hold their own alongside al dente pasta when tossed in a thick and creamy Caesar-inspired, mayonnaise-based dressing. Crunchy, lemony breadcrumbs and salty Parmesan shavings are added just before serving, for extra texture and flavor. Served cold, this recipe is perfect for make-ahead entertaining or meal prep. For those looking for extra protein, cooked chicken or crispy chickpeas are welcome additions. Of course, feel free to swap in romaine lettuce and croutons, if preferred.

INGREDIENTS

Yield: 6 to 8 servings, about 12 cups

FOR THE SALAD

Salt and black pepper

1 pound mezze rigatoni or other short pasta

1 cup panko or homemade bread crumbs

Zest of 2 lemons (reserve the lemons for the dressing)

2 garlic cloves, grated

3 tablespoons olive oil, divided

PREPARATION

Step 1

Prepare the salad: Bring a large pot of salted water to a boil. Add pasta and cook until al dente (according to package instructions). Drain the pasta and spread it out on a tray or sheet pan in a single layer, allowing steam to escape and the pasta to cool faster. Set aside.

Step 2

4 cups packed baby kale leaves (5 ounces) or 1-inch Tuscan kale ribbons, stems removed (from 1 large bunch)

1½ ounces Parmesan shavings (about ⅓ cup)

FOR THE DRESSING (MAKES 2 CUPS)

1 cup mayonnaise

1 cup freshly grated Parmesan (about 2½ ounces)

1 (2-ounce) can anchovy fillets, drained (about 12 anchovies)

4 large garlic cloves

Juice of 2 lemons (⅓ cup)

4 teaspoons Dijon mustard

Salt and pepper

Place a medium skillet on your stovetop over medium heat. Add bread crumbs, lemon zest, garlic, 2 tablespoons oil and a big pinch each of salt and pepper. Stir to mix, then continue to stir until the garlic is fragrant and the bread crumbs are evenly browned, 4 to 5 minutes. Remove from the pan and set aside to cool. To store, transfer cooled breadcrumbs to an airtight container and keep at room temperature for up to 2 days.

Step 3

Meanwhile, make the dressing: In the bowl of a blender or food processor, combine mayonnaise, grated Parmesan, anchovies, garlic, lemon juice, mustard and a pinch each of salt and pepper. Blend on low speed until smooth, about 1 minute. Taste for seasoning and add salt and pepper as needed. If not using immediately, transfer to an airtight container and refrigerate for up to 5 days.

Step 4

Finish the salad: In a large bowl, use your hands to massage kale with remaining 1 tablespoon olive oil until just tender. Add cooled pasta and 1½ cups of the dressing and toss until well mixed. Cover and refrigerate for at least 4 hours or up to overnight.

Step 5

Before serving, add Parmesan shavings, half of the breadcrumbs and extra dressing as needed, and stir until just combined. Garnish with the rest of the breadcrumbs and serve immediately. Leftovers will last for 5 days in the refrigerator.

Private Notes

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