



From the Kitchen of Executive Chef Jessica VanRoo

Zucchini Pasta with Spinach Pesto Meatballs

Serves 6

631 calories per serving

Description from Live Well UCI Health Blog: www.ucihealth.org/blog

Spiralized zucchini is an excellent way to reduce calories and increase both fiber and veggie consumption while enjoying their chewy noodle-like consistency.

Adding tomatoes and garlic helps to reduce inflammation, while the spinach pesto is rich in vitamins A, C and K, not to mention magnesium, iron and manganese, all of which can help reduce blood pressure and fatigue linked to anemia.

Serve with meatballs made of lean chicken breast and you have a scrumptious meal that is low in saturated fats and carbohydrates and doesn't stint on taste.

Total cost: \$10.50 / \$1.75 per serving

Ingredients - Pesto

- 16 ounces fresh spinach leaves
- 2 cups firmly packed fresh basil leaves
- 2 cups firmly packed fresh parsley
- 1/2 cup pine nuts or toasted walnuts
- 1 cup shredded or grated good quality parmesan
- 8 cloves garlic, smashed
- 8 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
- Water or more olive oil as needed
- Salt and pepper to taste



From the Kitchen of Executive Chef Jessica VanRoo

Zucchini Pasta with Spinach Pesto Meatballs

Ingredients - Pesto Chicken Meatballs

- 1 pound lean ground chicken
- 1/2 onion, grated (about 1/4 cup)
- 1/2 cup oatmeal (regular or quick)
- 1/4 cup grated parmesan
- 1/4 cup pesto
- 1 egg

Ingredients - Zucchini Pasta & Veggies

- 4 medium zucchini
- 2-3 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
- 1 tablespoon minced garlic (3-4 cloves)
- 1/2 teaspoon crushed red pepper flakes
- 2 fresh Roma tomatoes, chopped
- 1/2 cup shredded parmesan cheese, plus more for garnish
- 1/2 cup basil leaves torn into pieces
- 1/2 cup baby spinach leaves
- 2 teaspoons cornstarch
- 2 tablespoons cold water
- Salt to taste



From the Kitchen of Executive Chef Jessica VanRoo

Zucchini Pasta with Spinach Pesto Meatballs

Instructions

Pesto (make ahead up to 1 week)

1. Combine all ingredients in a food processor or blender, mix until the desired consistency, adding more oil or water as needed.
2. Freeze mixture flat in a freezer bag or in an ice cube tray, then pop out once frozen and store in a freezer bag.
3. Stores refrigerated 1 week at most.

Chicken meatballs

1. Preheat oven to 400 degrees and line a baking sheet with parchment paper, foil or coat well with oil.
2. In a mixing bowl, combine chicken with onion, oatmeal, parmesan, pesto, egg, salt and pepper. Mix just until combined.
3. Form mixture into 18-20 meatballs and place on baking sheet.
4. Bake 20-25 minutes, rotating pan halfway through the cooking process.

Zucchini Pasta

1. Trim and spiralize zucchini, cutting strands into spaghetti length.
2. Heat large pan over medium-high heat, add oil and heat. Add garlic and red pepper and cook until the garlic begins to brown.
3. Quickly add zucchini and cook for 2-3 minutes, tossing constantly with tongs, until "al dente." Remove zucchini from pan.
4. Add a bit more oil to the pan if needed, then cook tomatoes, basil, spinach and cheese together for 30-45 seconds.
5. Return zucchini and any accumulated liquid to the pan, adding the cornstarch and water mixed. Add pesto if desired.
6. Cook 30 seconds more.
7. Season with salt and pepper to taste and serve with meatballs.