

Quick fix: Southwestern skillet vegetarian pizza

By Linda Gassenheimer
Tribune News Service

Serve this Southwestern skillet pizza right from the pan. It's a quick and easy vegetarian dish. Skillet cooking is very much a part of Southwestern cuisine. This unusual supper cooks the pasta and sauce together in one pan, so the pasta absorbs the sauce flavors.

Helpful Hints

- Any type of cheese — such as cheddar or fontina — may be used in place of Monterey jack.
- 4 garlic cloves, crushed can be used instead of minced garlic.
- If you do not have a ripe avocado, leave it out and toss the beans with oil and vinegar dressing.

Countdown

- Prepare ingredients.
- Make pasta.
- While pasta cooks, make salad.

Shopping List

To buy: 1 medium green bell pepper, ¼-pound sliced baby-bello mushrooms, 1 small can reduced-sodium crushed tomatoes, 2 medium jalapeno peppers, 1 small package frozen corn kernels, 1 package fresh or dried fettuccini, 1 small bunch fresh cilantro, 2 ounces Monterey jack cheese, 1 small ripe avocado, 1 small can reduced-sodium black beans, 1 small head Romaine lettuce, 1 bottle reduced fat oil and vinegar dressing, 1 jar ground cumin and 1 container minced garlic.

Staples: olive oil spray, onion, salt and black peppercorns.

SOUTHWESTERN SKILLET PIZZA

Recipe by Linda Gassenheimer
Yield 2 servings.

Olive oil spray

1 cup sliced onion
1 cup sliced green bell pepper

1½ cups sliced baby bello mushrooms
2 medium jalapeno peppers, seeded and chopped
2 teaspoons minced garlic
½ cup frozen corn kernels, defrosted
1 teaspoon ground cumin
4 ounces fresh or dried fettuccini
1½ cups canned reduced-sodium crushed tomatoes
½ cup water
Salt and freshly ground black pepper
½ cup Monterey jack cheese (2 ounces)
2 tablespoons chopped fresh cilantro

Place a 10-inch nonstick skillet over medium-high heat and spray with olive oil spray. Add the onion, green bell pepper and mushrooms. Saute 5 minutes. Add the jalapeno pepper and garlic and cook another 2 minutes. Add the corn and cumin. Mix well. Add the fettuccini and toss with the vegetables. Add the crushed tomatoes and water and spread over the vegetables.



Southwestern Skillet Pizza

Linda Gassenheimer/TNS

Add salt and pepper to taste. Cover with a lid and cook 5 minutes. Remove from heat and spread cheese over the top. Cover and let cheese melt 3 minutes. Sprinkle cilantro on top and serve.

AVOCADO AND BLACK BEAN SALAD

Yield 2 servings.

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½ small, ripe avocado
ripe (about ½ cup)
2 tablespoons reduced-fat oil and vinegar dressing
Salt and freshly ground black pepper
¼ small head Romaine lettuce, torn into bite-size pieces
½ cup canned reduced-sodium black beans, rinsed and drained

Peel, seed and mash

avocado in a small bowl. Add the dressing and salt and pepper to taste. Mix well. Place lettuce in a salad bowl and toss with black beans. Spoon avocado dressing over top.

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GRASS

Continued from Page 1B

Carefully apply an organic nitrogen fertilizer to your lawn twice a year while the grass is growing. Cool-season grasses (bluegrass, ryegrass, and fescue) like their fertilizer in spring and late fall. On the other hand warm-season grasses (zoysia and Bermuda) like their fertilizer in late spring and summer.

Carefully follow the package directions for your fertilizer. Resist the temptation to add more fertilizer than prescribed. Over-fertilizing will prompt excessive growth, which means you will be chopping off an unhealthy amount of the grass plant when you mow.

Your lawn will need one inch of water per week (rain-fall is part of that total). Water early in the morning so

you lose less to evaporation. If you water in the evening, the water sits too long on the grass and can cause disease.

- Keep your mower clean, hose off the underside.
- Wait until the lawn dries to mow it for a cleaner cut.
- Drain the mower's gas tank or use gas stabilizer before storing the mower for the winter.
- When mowing, wear safety glasses, closed shoes,

and long pants.

- Do not mow while impaired. Accidents happen while mowing.
- Use caution when mowing slopes.

Chores

- Sow cover crops such as winter rye after crops are harvested.
- Dig sweet potatoes before a hard freeze.
- Broadleaf herbicides can

be applied now to control cool season weeds such as chickweed and dandelion.

If you have garden questions or comments, please write: greengardencolumn@yahoo.com Thanks for reading!

DORY

Continued from Page 1B

The driver of the red-and-white mini-monster was digging a cut in the street and dumping the dirt in a dump truck while four men wearing working clothes with colored helmets and fluorescent jackets or vests and one with baseball cap were standing at the opening peering down into the growing hole that would become a ditch across the width of our main artery into town. I couldn't help but smile over the simile.

For the next hours of the day I watched the scene unfold from my easy chair, taking a couple trips outside to talk with foreman Chris about the intricacies of pipe burying. Never having observed the operation before, I became interested in what they found fascinating 4 feet underground where, with the help of big machines, they laid a 6-inch water pipe. Chris told me that they used to use a 4-inch pipe earlier but they were using the larger pipe because up at the end of the block they would put a fire hydrant for service to that newly-developing neighborhood and the fire department needed the extra flow of water if a fire should occur.

A surprise greeted me when I, too, looked down

into the ditch dug with exact measurements, for I found that the old gas line of a different color from the water pipe also runs the length of 12th Street and out into the valley as far as Elgin and has for many years. It wasn't buried as deeply as the water line because of earlier requirements.

The men worked their individual jobs in sync with each other as the day progressed and my interest waned but not in knowledge gained or after lunch when the crew of Chris, Jake, Troy, and Zack, minus Elmo, was back again with their big machinery in action. The job carries its dangers for watchful eyes but also requires abilities to use mechanical beings as one would his/her fingers adeptly and in close quarters. I grew a deeper respect for workers who are so skilled.

The job of digging a hole and burying a pipe for whatever use seems simple enough for men with shovels and strong backs, but the machine and electronic age has its own demands for a job done well, especially for what lies underground of our streets where runs our daily traffic over the 4- to 6-inch pipes that currently transport our fuel and water to our door and may grow in size upon the

demands of the future.

Foreman Chris was a pleasant source of information from questions asked by the old lady accosting him on the street outside her home, explaining patiently that "No, the helmets of orange, yellow, and blue do not denote position level or type of job but simply a choice of the men when new hats came to the city crew." He had chosen blue because it suggested water to him. He also spoke gratefully of the good equipment supplied the workers by the City for their working conditions, including without speaking what I termed the "flat-footed" one, the mini-monster, the dump truck, and other utility vehicles. I was glad for that. I did spot a shovel, a broom, and a rake in use at occasional times, so I guess the old tools are still valuable items and respected.

Yes, five men with strong backs and armed with shovels could do the work by hand, given enough time and energy, but these men also used their quick brains to handle the job of the machines in quick reaction. In watching, I gained a respect for their work as I never had before. Yes, I saw them gathered around a hole in the ground, looking in, but what they saw led to the finished project and I, in aping

them, have seen the quality of their work and what they face each day on the job.

At 3:15 the men were finished for the day on this job with everything swept up and tucked neatly away, the street opened again for use over the graveled section of the pipeline. The smell of dirt in the air had drifted away and quiet returned to our neighborhood. Their day's work is apt to be noted as commonplace and maybe even a necessary nuisance for drivers, but, if you have never watched a ditch-digging before, it is surprisingly interesting and informative. When the pipes are safely buried and the section of paving replaced for safe street traffic travel the work will not yet be completed, for testing and retesting the water for safety flow must be done before it reaches the inhabitant.

Now I qualify as a Sidewalk Superintendent. AND, what did I do after my day of observing the ditch-digging project? I'll surprise you — I walked over to my kitchen sink and washed my dishes, not to be outdone by those gentlemen who undoubtedly were headed home to wash themselves before greeting family. No mud-pies allowed, huh?

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