

ORECCHIETTE CON BROCCOLI E SALSICCE

(Orecchiette with Broccoli & Sausage)

1 bunch fresh broccoli (about 3 or 4 stalks)

2 tablespoons olive oil

3 garlic cloves, minced or pressed

½ pound sweet Italian sausage (turkey sausage is fine)

½ cup water

Salt & fresh pepper to taste

1 pound orecchiette or other cup-shaped pasta, such as small shells

½ cup grated Romano cheese (or parmesan)

Cut stems off broccoli; peel and slice into rounds. Cut stalks into serving-sized pieces. Place broccoli in steamer, or bring a pot of water to a boil.

Steam or boil broccoli until it's tender but still crisp. Remove broccoli and chop into medium-fine pieces. You should have about 3 cups, but the amount isn't critical -- 2 to 4 cups would be OK. Set aside.

Remove casings from sausages and coarsely chop the meat. Set aside.

Warm oil in a medium skillet or large saucepan over medium heat; add garlic and stir until it becomes fragrant, about 30 to 60 seconds.

Add the chopped sausage to the pan and sauteed over medium heat until it loses its pink color.

Add to the pan the chopped broccoli, the water, and salt and pepper to taste. Bring to boil, reduce heat to a simmer, cover, and cook until the broccoli breaks down and forms a thick paste; use a cooking spoon to help break it up from time to time as it cooks. Add a bit more water if it begins to dry out. This will take 10 to 20 minutes, and the end product will be a thick green sauce with pieces of sausage floating in it.

In the meantime, bring a large pot of water (about 8 quarts) to a boil; add 2 tablespoons of salt. Then add pasta and cook according to package instructions. Pasta should be al dente, still a little firm when you bite it.

Drain pasta, add broccoli/sausage mixture and grated cheese. Toss until the cheese melts, and serve.