

In-Your-Face Crispy Skillet Spaghetti with Broccolini, Crème Fraîche, Lots of Lemon, and Borderline Burnt Pecans

Serves 4

This is a great recipe for leftover noodles, because the drier the noodles the easier they'll crisp. Or make the pasta in advance and keep uncovered, oiled, until you're ready to cook.

Remember: to get great browning on the spaghetti strands, only stir the noodles every 90 seconds! Set that timer! Just like a steak, or a piece of fish, or a halved crimini mushroom, if food doesn't have quality contact with its cooking surface, no browning or in-your-face-crisping will take place.

Lastly! Instead of using a microplane to procure lemon zest, *peel* the lemon rind with a vegetable peeler and *dice* with a knife. When an extra dose of citrus is warranted, this is a super simple way to change things up and take lemon to the next level

Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper

4 ounces pecan halves (about 1 cup)

8 ounces (1/2 pound) spaghetti

5 tablespoons olive oil, divided

1-2 lemons

2/3 cup crème fraîche

8 ounces (6-8 medium) shallots, peeled and thinly sliced (about 1 1/2 heaping cups)

8 ounces (1 large bunch) broccolini, stems peeled if tough, cut into 1- to 2-inch pieces (florets left hole, halved vertically into bite-sized pieces if large)

Leaves from 6 large sprigs thyme (if stems are tender, you can just finely chop the whole sprigs)

1 ounce (1/3 cup lightly packed) freshly grated Parmigiano-Reggiano, plus more for serving

1. Preheat the oven to 375 degrees. Bring a large pot of water to a boil and season with 2 tablespoons of salt.
2. Place pecans on a rimmed baking sheet and transfer to the oven. Toast, shaking pan once or twice, until *very deeply* golden brown, 12-16 minutes. That's right, toast the pecans several minutes longer than you'd think. This is the whole "borderline burnt" element. Trust! When cool, roughly chop, keeping most pieces quite large. (You can also just crush with your hands.)
3. As the pecans toast, get the pasta cooking: Add spaghetti to the boiling water, adjust heat to maintain a steady boil, and cook, stirring occasionally, until just shy of al dente, about 1-2 minutes less than package instructions. Drain the noodles, reserving about 1/2 cup pasta water. Return pasta to the pot over medium heat, tossing with tongs for 30-60 seconds, until dry and any lingering moisture on the strands has evaporated. (The drier the noodles the easier they'll crisp.) Remove from the heat and drizzle with 1 tablespoon olive oil.

4. Peel the zest off of one lemon in long strips. If a lot of the bitter white pith comes off with the peel, use a small spoon to scrape and remove as much of the pith as you can from the underside. Thinly slice the strips lengthwise into matchsticks, gather the bundle, and slice crosswise, into a fine dice. Set aside for serving. (Can you just zest the lemon with a microplane? Of course! But in my opinion, this dish really sings if you take an extra minute to dice the zest.)
5. Squeeze 3 tablespoons lemon juice and add to a small bowl, along with the crème fraîche and 2 tablespoons of reserved pasta water. Whisk to combine and season generously with salt and pepper. Set aside.
6. Warm the largest skillet you have— preferably nonstick— over high heat. (If not using nonstick, preheat the skillet for a full 90 seconds over high heat before proceeding, to prevent sticking.) Add 2 tablespoons olive oil and the noodles and toss to coat. (If your nonstick isn't at least 12-inches, you may have to do this in 2 batches, so as not to overcrowd the pan. Replenish olive oil between batches.) Spread the noodles in an even layer and let crisp, tossing with tongs *only every 1 ½ to 2 minutes*, until a portion of the noodles are deeply golden, about 10-12 minutes total. You're looking for crispiness in a solid 50% of the noodles; variation here is what you want! (If you're finding that the noodles aren't crisping, you're likely moving them too much in the pan.) Taste and season generously with salt and pepper.
7. Transfer the noodles to the largest bowl you've got, or even back to your pasta pot. Choose what will give you the most amount of room to toss the noodles with the sauce you're about to make.
8. Add 1 tablespoon of olive oil to the skillet and reduce heat to medium-high. Add shallots, season with salt and pepper, and cook, stirring, until shallots are softened and golden in spots, 2-3 minutes. Add broccolini and thyme, season, and drizzle with the remaining 1 tablespoon of olive oil. Cook until just crisp-tender, about 3 minutes. Scrape crème fraîche mixture into the skillet, reduce heat to low, and toss to coat. Cook 30 seconds, until sauce is simmering vigorously, and immediately remove from the heat. Add the Parmigiano-Reggiano and fold to combine.
9. Transfer contents of the skillet to the bowl with the noodles along with the reserved lemon zest, and gently toss to coat, being mindful to keep the noodles as intact as possible. If sauce needs to be loosened in order to coat the spaghetti sufficiently, add 1 to 2 more tablespoons of pasta water. Season to taste with salt, pepper, and/or additional lemon juice. Divide among serving bowls and top with pecans and additional parm. Eat immediately.

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