

Nigel Slater's baked aubergine pasta recipe

You could measure my life in pasta suppers, but increasingly I lean towards those without cheese and cream. This one is a current weekday favourite



Nigel Slater

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Nigel Slater: 'There is no sauce here, just the sweet, garlicky juices from the roast vegetables.' Photograph: Jonathan Lovekin for the Observer

The recipe

Set the oven at 200C/gas mark 6. Wipe a large aubergine and slice it into thin rounds. Place the slices in a single layer in a large roasting tin or on a baking sheet. Peel and crush three cloves of garlic and scatter over the aubergines. Add 250g of cherry tomatoes, whole, to the aubergines and spoon over eight tablespoons of olive oil.

Season, then bake for 25-30 minutes.

Put a deep pan of water on to boil. Salt it very generously, then add 250g of mini penne pasta and boil for about nine minutes until al dente. Drain in a colander.

Transfer the aubergines and tomatoes to the empty saucepan with a draining spoon, leaving the oil behind. Add the drained pasta to the oil and toss it gently to coat the pasta with the flavoured oil. Tip into the aubergines and tomatoes. Tear up 10g of basil leaves and toss with the aubergines and tomatoes before serving. Enough for 2.

The trick

There is no sauce here, just the sweet, garlicky juices from the roast vegetables – hence the large quantity of olive oil. When you have drained the pasta, tip it into the roasting tin to soak up the juices. I sometimes crush the tomatoes a little with a fork as they roast, so they ooze their sweet, sharp juice into the oil.

The twist

Use any ribbon pasta, such as pappardelle, instead of the penne. If there are good courgettes around, then use them instead of aubergines. Season the vegetables with thyme or herbes de Provence instead of, or as well as, the basil. Add capers for a piquant bite, or a little torn salami or prosciutto at the end.

Email Nigel at nigel.slater@observer.co.uk. Follow Nigel on Twitter [@NigelSlater](https://twitter.com/NigelSlater)



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