

Gemelli with Cabbage & Italian Sausage

From the blog For Love of the Table

3/8 t. fennel seed
1 T. olive oil
4 oz. Italian Sausage, casings removed
2 T. butter, divided
1 small onion (5 to 6 oz.), finely diced
salt, to taste
A pinch of hot pepper flakes
1 large or 2 small cloves garlic, finely minced
1 lb. green cabbage, cut into 1- to 2-inch wide wedges, cored and sliced thinly crosswise
1 1/2 to 2 T. minced flat-leaf parsley
1/2 lb. Gemelli, or other short sturdy pasta
1/4 c. freshly grated Pecorino (3/4 oz.), plus more for passing

Place the fennel seed in a wide sauté pan (large enough to hold the cabbage) and set over moderate heat. Watch carefully and shake occasionally until the fennel is fragrant and tinged golden brown in spots. Transfer to a plate to cool. Crush in a mortar and pestle and set aside.

Return the pan to the heat and add a tablespoon of olive oil. When the oil is hot, crumble the sausage into the pan. Cook until browned and cooked through—about 6 to 8 minutes. Remove the sausage to a plate and add a tablespoon of butter to the pan. When the butter is melted, add the onion along with a pinch of salt. Cook, stirring occasionally, until the onion is soft and beginning to take on some color. Add the remaining tablespoon of butter to the pan along with the garlic and pepper flakes. Cook until fragrant—less than a minute. Add the cabbage and fennel seed along with a good pinch of salt. Stir to coat in the butter and onions. Cover the pan and cook, stirring occasionally, until the cabbage is tender—about 15 to 20 minutes. Return the sausage to the pan and stir in along with the parsley. Taste and correct the seasoning. Keep warm while the pasta cooks.

Bring a large pot of water to the boil. Salt well (taste it...it should taste salty). Add the gemelli and cook until al dente. Set aside a half cup or so of pasta water. Drain. Place the pan of cabbage over very low heat. Add the pasta to the cabbage mixture and toss to combine. Add the cheese and continue to toss, adding pasta water as necessary to moisten the pasta—you will probably need almost all of the reserved half cup. If it seems dry, add a bit of reserved pasta water. Divide among serving plates and serve immediately, topped with more cheese if you like. Serves 2 to 3.

Notes:

- This recipe is easily doubled. Make sure you choose a sauté pan large enough to accommodate 2 lbs. of cabbage. For the double (or full) recipe, it is easiest to toss the cabbage and pasta together in the pot the pasta was cooked in. To do this, drain the pasta

and return the pasta to the warm pot. Use a rubber spatula to scrape the cabbage and sausage mixture into the pot with the pasta. Proceed as directed in the recipe.

- To make this without sausage, omit the olive oil and sausage. Increase the butter to 3 T. Cook the onion in two tablespoons of the butter. Add the last tablespoon of butter to the pan when you combine the cooked pasta with the cabbage, stirring until the butter melts into the sauce. (There is a picture of the sans-sausage version [here](#).)
- The original recipe calls for Parmesan. I prefer the sharper, saltier edge of Pecorino.

(Recipe adapted from [Four Seasons Pasta](#), by Janet Fletcher)

<http://www.forloveofthetable.com/2014/04/gemelli-with-cabbage-italian-sausage.html>

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