

Chicken, Spinach and Bacon Pasta

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Adapted from The Cozy Cook

Serves 4

Blue – 10 points

Purple – 5 points (if you use whole wheat pasta)

Green – 12 points

- 3 oz parmesan cheese, shredded
- 2 1/2 Tbsp all purpose flour, divided
- 2 tsp olive oil
- 1 lb chicken breasts (4 breasts-butterfly if they are large)
- 1 tsp Italian seasoning
- salt and pepper to taste
- 4 strips center cut bacon
- 8 oz Ronzoni 150 Penne pasta (if using something different, recalculate points; if on purple, use whole wheat pasta)
- 2 tsp garlic, minced
- 1 1/3 cup fat free half and half
- 1/2 tsp red pepper flakes
- 1 cup cherry or grape tomatoes, halved
- 2 cups raw, fresh spinach

1. Set parmesan cheese aside so it comes to room temperature. Before stirring it into the sauce, toss with 1/2 Tbsp of flour, this will help with clumping when it is stirred into the sauce
2. In a large skillet (I prefer cast iron), heat olive oil on medium high
3. Season each chicken breast with Italian seasoning, salt and pepper
4. Sear the chicken in the skillet on each side until cooked through and golden brown with a nice sear, about 3-5 minutes per side. Set aside
5. Reduce heat to medium low and add the bacon to the same skillet. Cook the bacon low and slow so it does not burn! While the bacon cooks, prepare the pasta according to package directions. Drain and set aside
6. Once the bacon is cooked, remove to paper towels to drain. Keep 2 Tbsp of the drippings in the pan. Add the garlic and stir and cook for about 1 minute.
7. Increase the heat to medium and stir in 2 Tbsp flour. Whisk constantly, cooking for about 1 minute.
8. Heat the half and half for 30 seconds in the microwave. Add to skillet and increase the heat to medium high, stirring constantly. Once it starts to bubble, reduce heat to low.
9. Slowly add the parmesan cheese, stirring constantly as you add it.
10. Once the sauce is well combined and smooth, add the tomatoes, spinach and red pepper flakes. Cook for a few minutes until the tomatoes have softened slightly and the spinach begins to wilt. Add the penne and mix in until coated with sauce.

11. Slice or cube the chicken and add it to the mixture.
Crumble bacon and sprinkle on top. Serve.