

Pasta Salad That Actually Feels Like a Meal

Use this list to build a pasta salad that's filling enough for lunch or dinner. Choose your pasta, add protein, layer in crunch and vegetables, then finish with a bold dressing.

Pasta Base

Pick one shape that holds dressing well.

- Rotini
- Fusilli
- Farfalle (bow tie)
- Penne
- Whole wheat pasta
- Chickpea or lentil pasta

Tip: Plan about **12–16 oz pasta** for 4 servings.

Protein (Choose 1–2)

Protein turns pasta salad into a real meal.

- Grilled chicken breast
- Rotisserie chicken
- Canned tuna
- Cooked shrimp
- Salami or pepperoni
- Diced ham
- Hard-oiled eggs
- Chickpeas
- White beans
- Cubed mozzarella
- Feta cheese

Crunch Add-Ins

Crunch keeps pasta salad from feeling heavy.

- Cucumbers
- Celery
- Red onion
- Bell peppers
- Radishes
- Pickles or cornichons
- Sunflower seeds
- Toasted almonds
- Pumpkin seeds

Vegetables

Use fresh or roasted vegetables depending on what's in your fridge.

- Cherry tomatoes
- Baby spinach
- Arugula
- Roasted zucchini
- Roasted broccoli
- Roasted cauliflower
- Sweet corn
- Peas
- Olives
- Artichoke hearts

Dressing Options

Pick one dressing or mix your own.

- Italian vinaigrette
- Lemon olive oil dressing
- Greek dressing
- Pesto
- Caesar dressing
- Creamy yogurt dressing
- Balsamic vinaigrette

Quick mix: **Olive oil + lemon juice + garlic + salt + pepper**

Flavor Boosters

Small ingredients that add a lot of flavor.

- Fresh basil
- Parsley
- Dill
- Grated parmesan
- Capers
- Crushed red pepper
- Lemon zest

Meal Prep Notes

- Cook pasta until just tender, then rinse with cold water.
- Toss with dressing while the pasta is slightly warm so it absorbs flavor.
- Store in airtight containers for up to 4 days in the fridge.
- If the salad dries out, add a splash of dressing before serving.

Basic Build Formula

- 1 lb pasta
- 1–2 cups protein
- 1 cup crunchy add-ins
- 1–2 cups vegetable
- ½ cup dressing

Mix, chill, and it's ready for lunch or dinner.