

SPICY SPAGHETTI WITH FENNEL AND HERBS

(Bon Appetit, January 2010)

3 ounces pancetta (or regular bacon)

1 Tbsp. olive oil

3 garlic cloves, chopped or pressed

2 large red jalapeno chiles, seeded, finely chopped (about 1/4 cup) — I omitted these for our family

2 large fennel bulbs, stalks trimmed, cut into thin wedges with some core attached (I used one)

1 1/2 c. low-salt chicken broth

4 Tbsp. finely chopped fresh Italian parsley, divided

2 Tbsp. fresh lemon juice

1 1/2 tsp. crushed fennel seeds

1 pound spaghetti

2 Tbsp. extra-virgin olive oil

1 1/2 c. finely grated Pecorino Romano or Pecorino Toscano cheese, divided

Saute pancetta in large skillet over medium heat until pancetta is golden. Using slotted spoon, transfer pancetta to paper towels. Add 1 Tbsp. oil to drippings in skillet. Add garlic and chiles; saute over medium heat 1 minute. Add fennel; cook until beginning to soften, 5 minutes. Mix in broth, 2 Tbsp. parsley, lemon juice, and fennel seeds. Bring to a boil. Reduce heat to low, cover, and cook until fennel is very tender, 20 minutes. Remove from heat. Season with salt and pepper.

Cook pasta until tender; drain. Reserve 1 cup cooking liquid. Return pasta to pot.

Uncover skillet with fennel mixture and return to high heat. Cook until almost all liquid is absorbed, about 4 minutes. Add fennel to pasta. Stir in 2 Tbsp. oil, 1/2 c. cheese, and pancetta. Add cooking liquid by 1/4 cupfuls if dry. Toss pasta; transfer to serving bowl. Sprinkle 2 Tbsp. parsley over. Serve with cheese.

NOTE: Since most of my family does not like very spicy, I omitted the jalapeno chiles and substituted most of the grated Pecorino Romano with 1 c. grated pepper jack cheese. I then just garnished the top of the spaghetti with freshly grated Parmesan. The dish was delicious!