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Pappardelle with Spring Vegetables (PASTA PRIMAVERA)

Serves 4

Ingredients:

1 pound green asparagus (cut off bottom inch), sliced in half crosswise
2 cups fresh peas, shelled
2 tablespoons minced shallots
1/4 cup extra-virgin olive oil
12 ounces (4 cups) pappardelle
1/4 cup toasted pine nuts
1/2 cup freshly grated Parmesan
1/4 cup roughly chopped parsley
1-cup Cherry Tomatoes, cut in half lengthwise
Coarse sea salt and freshly ground pepper

Preparation:

Blanch the asparagus in salted water until just tender, about 5 minutes.
Blanch the peas separately for about 1 minute.
Sauté the tomatoes with olive oil and seasoning for about 45 seconds.
In a heavy saucepan, gently sauté the shallots in the oil over medium-low heat until they begin to turn golden.
Add the peas and asparagus and cook for a few minutes.
Cook the pappardelle according to package directions, drain, and toss in the saucepan with the vegetables.
Add the pine nuts, Parmesan and parsley.
Season with salt and pepper to taste.
Serve immediately.

PASTA PRIMAVERA

The genesis (at least for the name) can be traced to Sirio and Egi Maccioni, owners of the legendary *Le Cirque* restaurant in New York. The story goes like this: In the late 1970s, Sirio and Egi and some friends found themselves in Canada in a house with not much to eat.

Luckily, as true culinary magicians, they were wonders at concocting meals from practically nothing. They found pasta and a can of peas and some fresh vegetables and, well, the rest is history.

It's actually not such an unusual story.

As with so many now standard dishes, necessity was the mother of invention.

The only difference is that Sirio running what was then one of the most famous restaurants in the world had a bit more influence than the proprietor of the average mom-and-pop eatery.

Though Tuscan by birth, he was famed for his impeccable temple of French haute cuisine,

So, it was nothing less than scandal when he decided to add his impromptu farmhouse pasta to its menu.

His French chef refused to make it.

Some believe he may have humored Sirio by producing various versions that turned out to be completely *dégueulasses* (disgusting)—ridiculously horrible.

But Sirio eventually got what he wanted, and being a great showman, he came up with the idea of preparing the dish tableside. So, take *zat*, you French chef. The pasta primavera was never on the menu, though it was occasionally announced as a special and always available on demand.

Eventually pasta primavera reached not only the West Coast but the Old World as well, remaining a standard in both hemispheres, though there is no classic recipe, except pasta and spring vegetables. Sirio's original was made with spaghetti, a cream sauce and chopped tomatoes; this variation is but an homage.

