

Asparagus Pasta Salad (from [101 Cookbooks](#))

Ingredients

Saffron Vinaigrette:

- ¼ cup red wine vinegar
- ½ tsp. saffron threads
- 1 medium garlic clove, minced
- ½ tsp. salt
- 2 tbsp. lemon juice
- 2 tsp. Dijon mustard
- ½ cup extra virgin olive oil
- Sugar or honey (to taste)
- Splash of heavy cream (to taste)

Salad

- 12 ounces dried pasta, such as orechiette or orzo
- 1 pound asparagus, woody ends removed and cut into ½-inch segments
- 2 ounces goat cheese, crumbled
- Fresh chopped chives (optional)
- Toasted pine nuts (optional)

Directions

1. To make the vinaigrette combine the vinegar and saffron to a small saucepan. Over gentle heat bring just to a simmer. Remove from heat (immediately) and let cool.
2. Combine garlic, salt, cooled vinegar and saffron, lemon juice, and mustard in a bowl. Whisk together, then gradually whisk in the olive oil. Taste, and if it is too harsh for your liking you can soften some of the acidity with a bit of sweetener or a splash of cream. Set aside.
3. Bring a large pasta pot of water to a boil, salt well and add the pasta. Cook until al dente. Just 30 seconds before the pasta is finished cooking add the asparagus. You just barely want to cook the asparagus. Drain, rinse with cold water, and shake off as much extra water as possible.
4. Place the pasta in a large bowl, toss with the saffron vinaigrette, and set aside or refrigerate for at least 30 minutes (or up to a day). Toss again, taste, and add a bit more salt if needed.
5. You can serve this slightly chilled, at room temperature, or even reheated in a skillet, topped with dollops of goat cheese. Optionally, add some chopped chives and toasted pine nuts.