



### **Creamy Penne Pasta**

*A healthy recipe with sesame styled squash direct from Tuscany*

- 6 cups cubed (2.3 lbs.) butternut squash, peeled, seeded, cut into chunks
- 4 tablespoons avocado or olive oil, divided
- 1/2 teaspoon salt or to taste
- 1/4 cup white sesame seeds
- 1 cup chopped onions
- 1/4 cup extra dry vermouth or white wine
- 1/3 cup cashew butter
- Freshly ground black pepper to taste
- 1/2 cup water or as needed
- 8 ounces whole grain penne pasta, cooked
- Optional vegetable to serve with: 1 small head broccoli florets, trimmed
- Garnish: Olive oil; minced chives as desired

### **Baking the Squash:**

- Preheat your oven to 400°F. Either turn one large pan into two portions by forming 2 smaller foil pans inside it or use two foil lined baking pans with rims.

- Place 3 cups squash pieces evenly on each foil pan. Toss each with 1-1/2 tablespoons oil and 1/4 teaspoon of salt.
- Bake both pans of squash until the squash starts to soften, about 15 minutes.
- Remove pans from the oven. Turn squash over in both pans. Then sprinkle one pan with sesame seeds. Toss to cover squash with sesame seeds.
- Return both pans of squash to the oven; bake all squash cubes for another 15 minutes. Remove from oven; toss squash cubes; then set both pans aside; keep warm.

**Prepare the Creamy Sauce:**

- Meanwhile, heat one tablespoon of oil in a skillet over medium high heat.
- Add the onions and cook, stirring often, until soft, about 5 minutes.
- Add the vermouth and bring to a boil, scraping any bits of browned onions from the bottom of the skillet, and cook for another 2 to 3 minutes. Transfer onion mixture to a food processor or blender; set aside.
- Add the plain roasted squash, onions, cashews butter, pepper, and ½ cup water into food processor. process until very creamy and smooth, about 2 minutes, using additional water if needed to give it the consistency of heavy butter.

**Boil Pasta and Prepare Serving Plate:**

- Add your pasta to boiling water and cook until al dente. Drain, reserving one cup of the pasta cooking water.
- Place the pasta in a large pot; add the sauce, and gently stir until the pasta is evenly coated. Add the pasta cooking water by tablespoonfuls, if needed, to loosen the creamy sauce. Cook until warm.
- Just before serving, add the sesame roasted squash with the pasta.
- Place pasta warm in serving bowl; add broccoli on the side; drizzle with olive oil if desired, and sprinkle with chives. Serves: about 4 to 6

**Cook's Note:** I was able to find cashew butter at our local supermarket, but it can be prepared from whole cashews. Our procedure was a little different from the original recipe as we roasted all of the squash in the oven. Also, make sure that you add enough liquid to make the creamy sauce. Pasta loves liquids.

**Recipe Inspired by:** Chef Giancarlo Bodoni The Culinary Academy at Monteverdi  
<https://www.brainhealthkitchen.com/recipe/whole-grain-penne-creamy-squash-sesame/>

**About the Recipe:** This creamy butternut squash pasta dish is proof that healthy eating doesn't mean sacrificing flavor. The combination of tender squash chunks, a velvety sauce, and the delightful crunch of sesame seeds creates a blend of textures and tastes. With cashew butter providing richness and healthy fats, this recipe is a guilt-free way to enjoy pasta. Serve it as a first course or a dinner entrée, and let every bite remind you that indulgence can indeed be wholesome.