

Chopped Fall Pasta Salad – Easy Autumn 2025 Recipe

Celebrate the best flavors of the season with this incredible **Chopped Fall Pasta Salad**. This recipe is your definitive answer to a quick, satisfying, and easy autumn meal. It beautifully combines tender orzo pasta with the sweet crunch of Honeycrisp apples, crunchy toasted pecans, savory bacon, and sharp cheddar cheese. All of this is tossed in a simple yet flavorful apple cider vinaigrette. This dish is a true symphony of textures and tastes in every bite. It is perfect for a hearty lunch, a simple yet elegant weeknight dinner, or your new favorite meal-prep solution for busy weeks.

Embracing the Flavors of Fall

Why This Combination Works So Well

This **Chopped Fall Pasta Salad** is all about seasonal synergy. The autumn harvest gives us crisp apples, and this recipe uses them as the star. The sweet, juicy crunch of the Honeycrisp apple pairs brilliantly with the smoky, savory, and salty bacon. Then, you add the nutty depth of toasted pecans, which provides a buttery richness. The tangy bite of sharp cheddar cheese cuts through it all. Finally, the peppery arugula base adds a fresh, earthy note that prevents the salad from feeling heavy. It is a complete, balanced meal in a bowl that truly tastes like autumn.

More Than Just a Side Dish

While many pasta salads are automatically relegated to side-dish status, this **Chopped Fall Pasta Salad** is a certified main-course contender. The orzo pasta provides a satisfying, hearty base. Meanwhile, the bacon, cheese, and pecans deliver a substantial amount of protein and healthy fats. This powerful combination ensures the salad is filling, nourishing, and keeps you satisfied for hours. It's a fantastic light dinner on its own. Alternatively, you can serve it alongside a simple roasted chicken breast or a bowl of creamy butternut squash soup for a perfect, cozy fall pairing.

Chopped Fall Pasta Salad

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No reviews

- Author: [Aaron recipes](#)
- Total Time: 30
- Yield: 6 1x

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Description

Loaded with fall flavors, this Chopped Fall Pasta Salad is an absolute must try! After all, who says you can't enjoy pasta salad in the fall?

Ingredients

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- ☐ 8 ounces orzo pasta, about 2 cups cooked al dente
 - ☐ 1.5 cups baby arugula, roughly chopped
 - ☐ ? cup red onion, diced small
 - ☐ 6 tablespoons center cut bacon, roughly 6 slices chopped small
 - ☐ ? cup pecans, toasted and chopped small
 - ☐ ¾ cup honey crisp apple, about 1 apple diced small
 - ☐ ?-½ cup cheddar cheese, crumbled, mild or sharp
 - ☐ pinch kosher salt, to season
 - ☐ few turns cracked black pepper, to season
 - ☐ ¼ cup extra virgin olive oil
 - ☐ 2 tablespoons apple cider vinegar
 - ☐ 1 teaspoon Dijon mustard
 - ☐ 1 tablespoon honey
 - ☐ pinch kosher salt, to taste (for dressing)
 - ☐ Cook Mode Prevent your screen from going dark
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Instructions

1. **MAKE THE DRESSING:** Combine the extra virgin olive oil with the Dijon mustard, honey, apple cider vinegar and a pinch of kosher salt. Whisk until well combined. Set aside.
2. **BOIL THE ORZO:** Boil the orzo pasta and cook it according to the package. Al dente is best. Drain the water and drizzle with extra virgin olive oil. Set aside to cool.
3. **FRY THE BACON:** Pan fry the bacon and chop it into small pieces. Set aside.
4. **TOAST THE PECANS:** Toast the pecans and chop them into small pieces. Set aside.
5. **ASSEMBLE THE PASTA SALAD:** Add the washed and dried baby arugula to the bottom of a serving dish. Top with the cooled orzo pasta, diced red onion, diced apple, crumbled bacon, toasted pecan pieces, and crumbled cheddar cheese.
6. Season with a pinch of kosher salt and cracked black pepper to taste. Toss with as much or little dressing as you desire. Serve immediately and enjoy.

Notes

Storage: Best enjoyed immediately once dressed. Leftovers can be stored in an airtight container in the refrigerator for three to four days. Leftover dressing can be stored in a separate airtight container in the refrigerator.

- Prep Time: 20
- Cook Time: 10
- Category: Salad
- Cuisine: American

Nutrition

- **Serving Size:** 1 serving
- **Calories:** 434
- **Sugar:** 6
- **Sodium:** 76
- **Fat:** 30
- **Saturated Fat:** 8
- **Carbohydrates:** 35
- **Fiber:** 2
- **Protein:** 7
- **Cholesterol:** 20

Did you make this recipe?

Share a photo and tag us-we can't wait to see what you've made!

A Step-by-Step Guide to the Perfect Chopped Fall Pasta Salad

Cooking the Orzo and Prepping Key Ingredients

The first step is to cook your orzo pasta perfectly. Bring a large pot of generously salted water to a rolling boil. Cook the orzo according to the package directions, but make sure to aim for *al dente*. You want it to have a firm bite. Once cooked, drain it in a colander and immediately rinse it with cold water. This action stops the cooking process and washes away excess starch, which prevents it from clumping together. While the pasta cooks, you can efficiently multitask. Fry your chopped bacon in one skillet until crisp. In a second, dry skillet, toast your chopped pecans over medium-low heat for 3-5 minutes until they are fragrant.

The 60-Second Apple Cider Vinaigrette

This homemade dressing could not be easier or more delicious. It uses pantry staples to create a vinaigrette that is both tangy and slightly sweet, perfectly complementing the fall ingredients. In a small bowl or a mason jar with a lid, whisk or shake together the extra virgin olive oil, apple cider vinegar, Dijon mustard, and honey. The mustard is the secret ingredient, as it acts as an emulsifier to help the oil and vinegar bind together. Add a pinch of kosher salt, whisk or shake again, and you are done.

Assembling Your Autumn Masterpiece

The Art of the “Chop”

The name **Chopped Fall Pasta Salad** tells you exactly how to find success with this recipe: it is all about the “chop.” The true magic of this salad is getting a little bit of everything in each bite. Therefore, you want to dice your red onion, apple, and cheddar cheese (if you are not using pre-crumbled) to a small, uniform size. This size should be similar to the chopped pecans and bacon bits. This uniformity is what makes the salad so cohesive and pleasant to eat. The baby arugula should also be roughly chopped so it integrates fully rather than sitting in large, leafy clumps.

Tossing and Serving for Best Results

Assembly is the fun and easy part. In a large serving bowl, add your bed of chopped baby arugula. Top it with the completely cooled orzo, the diced red onion, diced apple, crumbled bacon, toasted pecan pieces, and crumbled cheddar cheese. Season generously with a pinch of kosher salt and a few turns of freshly cracked black pepper. Drizzle about half of the vinaigrette over the top and toss gently but thoroughly. Add more dressing as desired. For the absolute best flavor, let the salad sit for 15 minutes before serving to allow the orzo to absorb the dressing.

Meal Prep and Customization

How to Meal Prep This Salad for Lunches

This **Chopped Fall Pasta Salad** is a meal-prep dream. To keep it fresh and crisp for days, you must layer it strategically in mason jars or airtight containers. Start with the vinaigrette on the very

bottom. This prevents it from making anything soggy. Then, layer the hardest ingredients: orzo, red onions, apples, and bacon. Follow those with the pecans and cheddar cheese. Finally, pack the chopped arugula on the very top. This method keeps the greens perfectly dry and crisp. When you're ready to eat, just shake the container vigorously to toss everything together.

Quick and Easy Ingredient Variations

This recipe is incredibly flexible. You can swap the Honeycrisp apple for a tart Granny Smith or a sweet Gala. Walnuts or even pistachios can be used instead of pecans. If you're not a fan of cheddar, crumbled feta or goat cheese adds a wonderful, creamy tang. For a vegetarian option, simply omit the bacon. You can add a can of drained and rinsed chickpeas or some white beans for a protein boost. This recipe is a fantastic way to use up fall produce, so feel free to experiment.

Timing Component	Estimated Time	Notes
Dressing Prep	2 minutes	Whisk all ingredients in a small bowl or jar.
Pasta Cooking	8-10 minutes	Cook orzo according to package directions.
Bacon & Pecans	10 minutes	Can be done simultaneously while pasta cooks.
Chopping	5-7 minutes	Dice apple, onion, and chop arugula.
Assembly & Tossing	3 minutes	Combine all components in a large bowl.
Total Time	~25-30 Minutes	An incredibly fast and efficient meal.

Your New Favorite Autumn Recipe

From Summer Salads to Fall Feasts

We often think of pasta salads as strictly summer food. We love our [Pesto Tortellini Pasta Salad for a Summer Potluck](#) when it's warm. But this **Chopped Fall Pasta Salad** proves that this versatile dish absolutely belongs in the autumn rotation. It takes the same easy-to-make, crowd-pleasing concept but swaps bright, summery flavors for warm, cozy, and robust fall ingredients. It's the perfect transitional meal as the weather gets cooler and you start craving more comforting foods.

Why It's a Hit with the Whole Family

This salad is incredibly kid-friendly and highly adjustable. The winning combination of sweet apples, salty bacon, and cheesy pasta is a guaranteed hit. If you have picky eaters in the house, you can easily serve this salad "deconstructed." Place the cooked orzo in a bowl and let everyone add their own toppings from small bowls of bacon, cheese, pecans, and apples. It's a fun, interactive way to get everyone at the table to enjoy a healthy and satisfying meal.

Frequently Asked Questions

What is the best apple to use for this salad?

Answer: A firm, crisp, and sweet-tart apple is definitely best. Honeycrisp is our ideal choice. Pink Lady, Gala, or Fuji are also excellent options. We would recommend avoiding softer apples like

Red Delicious, which can become mealy, or overly tart apples like Granny Smith, unless you truly prefer that sharp flavor.

How long does the apple cider vinaigrette last?

Answer: The vinaigrette can be made well in advance. Store it in an airtight container or jar in the refrigerator, where it will last for up to one week. The oil and vinegar will likely separate while chilled, so just be sure to let it sit at room temperature for a few minutes and shake or whisk it vigorously before using.

Can I serve this salad warm?

Answer: While this salad is designed to be served cold or at room temperature, it is also delicious warm. To serve it warm, toss the freshly cooked (and drained, but not rinsed) orzo with the dressing, bacon, pecans, apple, and cheese. The cheddar cheese will melt slightly, and the arugula will wilt, creating a cozy and comforting pasta dish.

Conclusion

This **Chopped Fall Pasta Salad** is the easy autumn recipe you will find yourself making again and again. It perfectly captures the season's best and most comforting flavors in one simple, satisfying bowl. Whether you need a quick weeknight dinner, a healthy and exciting lunch for the week, or a standout dish for a potluck, this salad delivers on all fronts. It's a delicious, balanced, and foolproof recipe that brings the cozy, crisp flavors of fall directly to your table.

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