



PASTA CON PEPERONI CRUSCHI E MOLLICA FRITTA

(Pasta with Fried Peppers and Bread Crumbs)

SERVES 4

The secret to making this hearty Basilican specialty is to fry the dried peppers to a delicate crisp.

- 1/4 lb. country bread, cut into 1" cubes**
- 1/2 cup extra-virgin olive oil, plus more for drizzling**
- 8 dried mild chiles, such as peperoni cruschi di Senise (see page 100), guajillos, or pasillas, stemmed and seeded**
- 4 anchovies, chopped**
- 6 cloves garlic, chopped**
- 2 pints cherry tomatoes**
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste**
- 1 lb. pasta, such as fusilli or strascinati (see page 100)**

1 Heat oven to 325°. Bake bread cubes until hard, about 15 minutes. Transfer to a food processor; process into coarse crumbs. Heat 1/4 cup oil in a 12" skillet over medium heat. Add crumbs; cook, stirring occasionally, until golden, 8-10 minutes. Transfer crumbs to a bowl. Wipe out skillet; heat remaining oil over medium-high heat. Add chiles and toast, turning once, about 45 seconds. Transfer to a plate; let cool. Tear chiles into 1" pieces. Reserve oil in skillet.

2 Set reserved skillet over medium heat and add anchovies; cook, breaking them apart with a wooden spoon, for 1 minute. Add garlic and tomatoes; cover; cook, stirring occasionally, until tomatoes soften and burst, about 10 minutes. Mash tomatoes and season with salt and pepper. Remove from heat and set aside.