

For a big-flavor twist on pasta salad, I let my imagination run wild through an Italian deli case and all the salty, meaty, cheesy flavors one might find there. Initially, I had planned to use a basic pasta shape, such as penne or rotini, but I stepped it up and used cheese-stuffed tortellini instead. The result is this hearty, satisfying salad that could be a side dish (if you have the discipline to only scoop out a little bit of it), but we found it perfectly filling as a cool dinner salad, served up on a bed of fresh baby spinach and topped with halved grape tomatoes.

### INGREDIENTS

10 oz. fresh cheese-filled tortellini\* (see notes)  
2 Tbsp. mayonnaise (optional, see notes)  
4 Tbsp. prepared Italian vinegar-and-oil dressing (I used Good Seasons)  
Several slices provolone cheese, cut into bite-sized pieces  
Several slices uncured Italian salami, cut into bite-sized pieces  
Several slices uncured pepperoni, cut into bite-sized pieces  
About 1 cup giardiniera vegetables\*, drained well and chopped  
1/2 can garbanzo (ceci) beans, drained  
Handful of fresh grape tomatoes, halved, for serving  
Fresh baby spinach, for plating

### \*NOTES

I used Buitoni fresh pasta, the kind you find in the refrigerated case near the ricotta cheese. Frozen tortellini would probably work well, too. If you want a lighter salad, substitute about half a box of penne or rotini pasta.

If you prefer a dressing that is not creamy, skip the mayonnaise and increase the Italian dressing by a tablespoon or two.

Store-bought giardiniera in a jar is what I used for this salad, but if you are fortunate to have a real Italian deli nearby, a scratch version would be even better! Use mild or hot giardiniera, whichever suits you.

### INSTRUCTIONS

1. Cook the fresh tortellini according to package instructions, stopping just shy of tender. Drain it, and then immediately transfer the cooked pillows to a bowl filled with ice water to halt the cooking. Drain completely, and chill the pasta by itself for an hour or two before adding the other salad ingredients.
2. Prep all the other ingredients, along with anything else you think belongs in an Italian deli pasta salad. Be sure to drain any ingredients that are packed in water.
3. Combine mayonnaise and Italian dressing until smooth.
4. Toss the add-ins into the bowl with the cooked, chilled tortellini. Pour the dressing over the mix and gently fold with a spatula to combine and coat all the ingredients.
5. Chill for at least one hour before serving. I found that this salad was better the second day, because the cooked tortellini tightened up a bit.
6. Serve on a bed of baby spinach leaves, topped with halved grape tomatoes.