Shiro Pasta

Yield: 4 servings • Prep Time: 10 minutes • Cook Time: 30 minutes • Total Time: 40 minutes

Shiro is made from ground legumes, typically chickpeas (shiro chickpea) or split peas (shiro split pea), which are roasted and ground into a fine powder. The powder is then mixed with water or broth and cooked with onions, garlic, and a blend of spices such as berbere, turmeric, and fenugreek. It's chock-full of protein and for that reason is eaten as a good substitute for animal protein. Traditionally, it is enjoyed with injera, but here I've turned it into a delicious pasta sauce.

2 tablespoons olive oil

1 cup small-diced Spanish onions

1 tablespoon minced garlic

1 cup minced tomato (about 1 medium tomato)

Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste

½ cup shiro powder

1 pound pasta, such as penne (spaghetti also holds the sauce nicely)

Freshly grated Parmigiano Reggiano, for garnish

1. Heat a large, high-sided sauté pan over medium-high heat. Add the olive oil. Once glistening, add the onions and garlic and sauté for 2 to 3 minutes, until translucent. Add the tomato and cook for about 5 minutes, until soft. Season with salt and pepper.
2. Add 4 cups of water to the pan and bring to a boil. Once boiling, whisk in the shiro until it fully dissolves. Reduce the heat to medium and let the mixture simmer for about 20 minutes, until it starts to thicken. Once it is thick enough to coat the back of a wooden spoon, transfer the mixture to a blender and blend until smooth. Check the seasoning and adjust as needed. Then pour the sauce back into the pan and keep simmering while you make your pasta.
3. Bring a large pasta pot filled with water to a boil. Once boiling, season generously with salt. Drop in the pasta and cook for 3 minutes shy of the package instructions. Using tongs or a slotted spoon, remove the pasta from the water and add it to the shiro sauce, stirring continuously to release the starches and coat the pasta. Cook for the 3 remaining minutes and then remove from the heat.
4. Transfer the pasta to a platter and garnish with Parmigiano.

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