

**The Chef**

Johanne Killeen

Her Restaurant

Al Forno in Providence, R.I.

What She's Known For

Cooking that applies an Italian sensibility to Rhode Island's bounty.

Baked Pasta With Tomato, Cream and Five Cheeses

FINDING QUALITY ITALIAN ingredients on this side of the Atlantic was a challenge in the late 1970s, according to chef Johanne Killeen. Back then, before she opened her restaurant, Al Forno, in Providence, R.I., she was a fine-art graduate with a hankering for authentic Italian cooking. "I lived in Florence after art school and there was a cheese spaghetti that everyone loved," she said. "I tried to replicate it when I came back, but the cheese got all gloppy because it wasn't real cheese." After many experiments with what she was able to find in markets at the time, she zeroed in on this cheesy baked pasta, now a signature at her restaurant. "I increased the number of cheeses to five, because sometimes more is better," she said.

In her final Slow Food Fast recipe, Ms. Killeen calls for gorgonzola, pecorino, fon-

tina, ricotta and mozzarella, as well as good glug of heavy cream. The combination is lightened—just a bit—by the addition of canned tomatoes and some fresh basil too, if you like. As soon as the penne is just shy of al dente, stop cooking and strain. Tossed with the cheese mixture and packed into a casserole dish—or individual gratin dishes—the pasta will continue cooking in the oven until it bubbles and browns on top.

"Once good ingredients were available here I'd already zeroed in on this technique, and there was no point in changing this dish. We tried to take it off the menu at one point, and there was an uproar," said Ms. Killeen. "Even now when I have a bite, I always think: Yeah, that's really good." —*Kitty Greenwald*

Time: 25 minutes
Serves: 4-6

Kosher salt

1 pound penne pasta
1 cup heavy cream
1 cup chopped canned tomatoes
1 ounce freshly grated Pecorino Romano
1 ounce coarsely shredded fontina
1 ounce crumbled gorgonzola
2 tablespoons ricotta cheese

4 ounces fresh mozzarella cheese, shredded
4 basil leaves, finely chopped (optional)
4 tablespoons unsalted butter

1. Preheat oven to 500 degrees.
2. Bring a medium pot of salted water to a boil over high heat. Add pasta and boil until just shy of al dente, about 6 minutes. Strain pasta, tossing to dry, and set aside.
3. Meanwhile, in a large bowl,

mix heavy cream together with tomatoes, pecorino, fontina, gorgonzola, ricotta and mozzarella until well combined. Add hot pasta and toss until cheese is evenly distributed. Season with salt to taste, and stir in basil, if using.

4. Divide pasta among 4-6 individual gratin dishes. (Alternatively, use 1 medium baking dish that holds all the pasta snugly.) Dot with butter and transfer to oven. Bake until bubbly and top browns, 7-10 minutes. Serve immediately.



FEEL-GOOD FOOD Tomatoes bring depth of flavor and a welcome hit of acidity to the five-cheese sauce on this comforting baked pasta.