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## **Tuscan Pasta Salad with Eggplant**

The pine nuts in this quick, simple recipe really stand out amid the simple blend of vegetables. Use Italian flat-leaf parsley if you can (it has a better flavor than other varieties and is not bitter). The results are *delizioso*! This dish is especially good with a loaf of crusty Italian bread and a Tuscan red wine, such as Chianti.

1 lb. penne pasta  
3 Tbs. olive oil  
2 celery stalks, sliced thin  
1 medium eggplant, cut into 1/2 inch cubes  
2 cups grape tomatoes, halved  
1/2 tsp. dried Italian seasoning blend  
1/4 cup tomato paste  
1/4 cup white wine vinegar  
2 1/2 tsp. salt  
Pepper to taste  
1 Tbs. sugar  
1/4 cup pine nuts, toasted  
1/2 cup fresh parsley, chopped

1. Cook pasta according to directions. Drain and set aside.
2. In a large saucepan, sauté the celery in olive oil for about 3 minutes.
3. Add eggplant, tomatoes, Italian seasoning, and 1/4 cup water. Cover and cook on medium heat until eggplant is tender, about 15 to 20 minutes, stirring occasionally. Add more water if necessary to prevent sticking.
4. In a separate bowl, combine tomato paste, vinegar, 1/4 cup water, salt, pepper, and sugar. Add to eggplant mixture. When eggplant is tender, remove from heat and stir in pine nuts, parsley, and pasta. Chill before serving, but keep in mind that gently heated leftovers taste great as well.