

Well, you've bit the bullet and agreed to host the pre-homecoming dance party. So how do you make it a success? Now I know the panicky nature of questions that must be lingering in your mind. What do I do for food? How do I entertain my guests? And most importantly, how do I do all of this and get myself ready at the same time? The answers to your questions are simple: you need a quick and easily prepared meal which, while in the midst of cooking, leaves you time to prepare for the dance. This timesaving dinner plan can be uncomplicatedly achieved with the help of a simple Italian penne and mushroom sauce pasta dish, along with a side of scrumptious garlic bread. The items on this menu not only guarantee that your guests' stomachs will be happily content, but also that you won't be frantically panicking to throw yourself and your dinner together at the last minute.

To begin with, make sure you check your house for common ingredients and utensils before heading out to the grocery store. The spices you should check for, which should be inside your cupboard, are Italian seasoning, onion and garlic powder, oregano and whole basil leaves. Make sure you have enough plastic utensils and paper plates to use for the sole purpose of not having to wash dishes after dinner. To prepare the food, you will also need a small frying pan, a drainer and three pots; one small, one medium and one large sized. After you have searched your house, take a trip to the market and first pick up two loaves of fresh sourdough bread, and along with this, three sticks of butter and one clove of garlic. Although most people are skeptical of including garlic in a meal on such a night, I believe that there is nothing a stick of gum won't cure, so remember to pick up a pack. Next get a bottle of sun dried tomato sauce and a package of fresh chopped mushrooms. Finally pick up a couple of boxes of pasta noodles; I recommend penne. I prefer noodles that are either tubular or round in shape rather than long stringy noodles, and penne is exactly that. On the other hand, if you pick linguini or spaghetti noodles people will have a tendency to slurp their food, which could tragically cause stains on their attire. Now I know you might be thinking that this meal isn't entirely balanced, as it lacks any vegetables besides the mushrooms. Normally I would suggest throwing together a salad, but your guests will probably be so excited and anxious for the dance that they will forget the fact that they are missing a food group from their meal. Both the bread and the noodles are from the carbohydrate food group, which provides a great source of energy and you'll need it if you're going to last all night dancing. Last but certainly not least, you need to enlist the help of a couple close girlfriends who will be going with you, to help you out while getting ready at your house. Now that you have all the essential ingredients to pull off a successful night, you need to start making preparations.

Keep in mind that the most important aspect in your planning is to arrange your evening so time is on your side. First you must establish a time for the guys to arrive. Make sure to pick a time that is generally close to when the food will be ready so that nobody is sitting around bored. On the day of the dance, start getting yourself ready on the early side. Before you start cooking, paint your nails and do your hair so they won't get messed up, which would most likely happen if you were to do them later on. Remember your goal is to save as much time as possible, so even though no one will be coming over for another hour, go ahead and set up the paper plates and plastic utensils so they are ready and easily accessible to your guests. Next, put out plastic cups on the table and stick your drinks in a cooler with ice. Now that the clock is ticking away, it is time to start cooking your delicious dinner.

To begin with, melt two sticks of butter in a small saucepan over low heat on the stove, along with about a half a clove of crushed garlic. Once the butter is completely melted, remove the pan from the heat and after splitting the loaves of bread so you have two long halves, evenly distribute the butter on top of the bread. To give the bread a final zest, lightly sprinkle a bit of Italian seasoning on the bread and let it sit until you are ready to put it in the oven. Now it is time to prepare the sauce.

The first step in making this irresistible mushroom sauce is to empty the bottle of sun dried tomato sauce in a medium sized pot and drop in a few pinches each of garlic and onion powder, oregano, and finally drop in three or four whole basil leaves. Next, you'll want to melt a bit of butter with a tablespoon or two of olive oil and a couple cloves of crushed garlic in a frying pan. Drop your mushrooms into this mixture and sauté them until they are slightly brown. After adding these to the sauce, put the pot of sauce on a medium/low heat and let those delectable Italian spices simmer into the sauce.

Now you will want to boil your noodles, so take a large pot and fill it almost to the top with water and place it on the stove over a very high heat. Because you will be waiting for the water to boil, now would be an opportune time to go finish applying your makeup. After the water has reached a boil, throw the noodles in and let them cook for roughly 10 minutes, giving you a bit more time to finish touching up your hair or makeup. I'm guessing that your guy friends will arrive around this time, but don't worry. If they are anything like my guy friends, it will be entertainment enough to watch you get ready and cook at the same time. After pampering yourself for a little while, check to make sure the noodles are finished cooking by taste testing and then drain them. Ask a friend to lower the heat on the tomato sauce while you stick the bread in the oven and bake it on a high broil for about five minutes. Make sure not to burn the bread! Now that everything is ready, invite your friends to help themselves to as much pasta and bread as they can stomach, and you're ready to eat!

Congratulations! You've done it! Your friends are now happily fed, and you guys are almost ready to hit the dance floor and show off your amazing outfits. Clean up should be a breeze, as all the utensils can be tossed into a garbage can. Remember to pass around the package of gum to make your garlic breath completely kissing friendly. Don't forget to slip back into your room and put on that oh so perfect dress, which I guarantee will put even more happy feelings into the stomach of your date than your deliciously easy penne pasta dish.