**Pesto Chicken Stuffed Shells**

12-16 jumbo pasta shells
water for boiling pasta
4oz cream cheese, softened
1 cup freshly grated Parmesan or Asiago cheese + 1/4 cup for topping
3 tablespoons prepared pesto (homemade or store bought)
2 cups shredded cooked chicken
2 cloves garlic, minced
salt and pepper to taste

In a large pot over high heat, boil water and prepare pasta shells as directed on package. Cook pasta shells only until al dente. The pasta will finish cooking when the dish is baked. Drain the pasta shells and set aside.

In a large bowl, combine the rest of the ingredients, except the 1/4 cup of cheese for the topping. Fill the pasta shells with the filling and place in a baking dish. Sprinkle the remaining 1/4 cup of cheese over filled shells.

Preheat oven to 350 degrees and bake shells uncovered for 30 minutes or until shells are bubbling hot and cheese melts.

**\* To make ahead/freezer meals** - Prepare as directed but place filled shells in an oven- and freezer-proof baking dish. Top with remaining 1/4 cup of cheese over filled shells, cover and freeze. When ready to prepare, defrost. Preheat oven to 350 degrees and bake shells uncovered for 35-40 minutes or until shells are bubbling hot and cheese melts

Trish Bengtson

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