

# Sicilian Fava Bean Stew with Fusilli

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In the rural Sicilian kitchen of an American expatriate who insisted she wasn't a good cook, my husband and I ate this delicious pasta dish for lunch, followed by a green salad with paper-thin slices of lemon and fennel. Maccu, a fava bean puree made with fresh beans in spring and dried beans the rest of the year, is as common on the Sicilian table as mashed potatoes are in America and equally beloved as comfort food. Sicilians would use wild fennel, which you can substitute if you have access to it. It is more pungent and haunting in flavor than cultivated fennel. Alternatively, purchase bulb fennel with the feathery leaves attached; use the leaves in this recipe and save the bulb for a salad.

Because fava beans are starchy, the sauce will thicken a lot as it cools. Be sure to leave the sauce on the brothy side so the finished dish isn't too stiff. A heads up: the favas in this sauce are well cooked and no longer bright green, but the flavor compensates for that. From *Four Seasons Pasta* by Janet Fletcher (Chronicle Books).

## Ingredients

- 3 pounds fresh fava beans
- 1/4 cup extra virgin olive oil
- 2 large cloves garlic, minced
- Pinch hot red pepper flakes
- 4 green onions, sliced
- 1/4 cup chopped fresh fennel leaves
- Sea salt and freshly ground black pepper
- 3/4 pound fusilli or other short pasta
- Freshly grated pecorino cheese



*Photo: Victoria Pearson Photography*

## Directions

Shell the fava beans. Bring a large pot of water to a boil over high heat. Add the shelled beans and blanch for 30 seconds to 1 minute, depending on their size, then drain and transfer them to ice water. When cool, drain again. Peel the beans; the skin should slip off easily. You should have a generous 1-1/2 cups.

Put the olive oil, garlic, and hot pepper flakes in a skillet and cook over moderate heat until the garlic is fragrant. Add the fava beans, the green onions, and the fennel leaves. Stir well, then add 2 cups water and a generous pinch of salt.

Adjust the heat to maintain a steady simmer and cook the beans uncovered, stirring often and adding more water as needed to keep them covered. In about 1 hour (less if the favas are small), the beans should be completely tender and mostly whole, although some will have collapsed and thickened the broth. Season with salt and pepper.

Bring a large pot of salted water to a boil over high heat. Add the pasta and cook until al dente. Set aside 1 cup of the pasta water, then drain and return the pasta to the warm pot. Add the fava bean sauce and stir well, moistening if necessary with some of the reserved pasta water.

Divide the pasta among warm bowls and top each portion with some pecorino.

**Serves 4**