

Pepperoni Pasta Bake

- One (6-ounce) package sliced pepperoni, divided
- One (28-ounce) can crushed tomatoes, preferably no-salt-added
- One (8-ounce) can tomato sauce, preferably no-salt-added
- 1 1/2 teaspoons dried oregano
- 1 teaspoon garlic powder
- 1 teaspoon granulated sugar
- 1/2 teaspoon fine salt, plus more to taste
- 1/2 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper, plus more to taste
- 1/4 teaspoon crushed red pepper flakes, plus more to taste
- 1 pound dried fusilli
- 3 cups water, heated (see Notes)
- 8 ounces (2 cups) shredded low-moisture mozzarella cheese (whole or part-skim)

Step 1

Position a rack in the middle of the oven and preheat to 400 degrees.

Step 2

Dice two-thirds of the pepperoni; reserve the rest. In a broiler-safe 9-by-13-by-2-inch or similarly sized casserole dish, add the crushed tomatoes, tomato sauce, oregano, garlic powder, sugar, salt, black pepper, red pepper flakes and the diced pepperoni, and stir to combine. Taste, and season with more salt, black pepper and red pepper flakes, as desired. Add the pasta and gently stir to combine. Add the water, patting down the pasta to ensure it's completely submerged. Cover tightly with foil and bake for about 35 minutes, or until the pasta is al dente.

Step 3

Take the dish out of the oven and remove the foil. Stir the pasta, sprinkle the mozzarella on top and scatter the reserved pepperoni. Carefully raise the rack to 5 or 6 inches from the broiling element and preheat the broiler to HIGH. Return the baking dish to the oven and broil for about 3 minutes, or until the cheese is browned in spots. (If your broiler is on the bottom, transfer the baking dish to the broiler drawer.) Let sit for 5 to 10 minutes before cutting, and serve warm.

