

SKILLET MACARONI WITH ZESTY MEAT SAUCE Serves 4

WHY THIS RECIPE WORKS: Who says you need to cook pasta and meat sauce in separate pots? Our single-skillet meaty mac streamlines cooking time—and cleanup.

- 1 **tablespoon vegetable oil**
- 1 **pound 85 percent lean ground beef**
- Salt and pepper**
- 4 **garlic cloves, minced**
- 1 **(28-ounce) can crushed tomatoes**
- 2 **cups water**
- 12 **ounces elbow macaroni**
- ½ **cup drained jarred banana peppers (see note below), chopped**
- 1½ **cups shredded Italian cheese blend**
- ⅓ **cup chopped fresh basil**

1. Heat oil in large nonstick skillet over medium-high heat until shimmering. Add beef, ½ teaspoon salt, and ¼ teaspoon pepper and cook until beef is no longer pink, about 5 minutes. Add garlic and cook until fragrant, about 30 seconds.

2. Stir in tomatoes, water, macaroni, and banana peppers. Cover and cook, stirring often, until macaroni begins to soften, about 7 minutes. Reduce heat to medium-low and simmer, covered, until macaroni is al dente, about 7 minutes.

3. Stir in ½ cup cheese and basil. Season with salt and pepper. Sprinkle with remaining cheese, cover, and cook until cheese is melted, about 1 minute. Serve.

TEST KITCHEN NOTE: Banana peppers brighten this hearty meat sauce. Use mild or hot versions, whichever you prefer.