Orzo Salad With Peppers and Feta

By [Kay Chun](https://cooking.nytimes.com/search?q=Kay+Chun&action=click&module=byline&region=recipe%20page)

* YIELD4 to 6 servings (about 10 cups)

½ pound orzo

 Kosher salt and pepper

¼ cup extra-virgin olive oil

1 medium yellow onion, thinly sliced (about 1 1/2 cups)

3 large or 4 medium red, yellow or orange bell peppers (about 1 1/4 pounds), cored, seeded and chopped into ½-inch pieces (about 4 cups)

1 fresh thyme sprig

1 tablespoon minced garlic

1 medium tomato, diced into 1/2-inch pieces

1 tablespoon fresh lemon juice

¼ cup chopped fresh basil, plus more for garnish

4 ounces feta cheese, thinly sliced or crumbled

PREPARATION

 Cook orzo in a large pot of salted boiling water according to package directions until al dente. Reserve 1/4 cup of the pasta cooking water, then drain the pasta, pressing out excess liquid. Spread out on a baking sheet to cool.

 Meanwhile, in a large skillet, heat oil over medium. Add onion, bell peppers and thyme, and season with salt and pepper. Cook, stirring occasionally, until tender, about 10 minutes. Stir in garlic until fragrant, about 1 minute. Add tomato and cook, stirring occasionally, until broken down and juices release, about 8 minutes.

 Add the reserved pasta water and stir to scrape up any browned bits at the bottom of the skillet. Transfer vegetable mixture to a large bowl to cool slightly to lukewarm, about 5 minutes, stirring occasionally to speed up the cooling process. Discard thyme sprig.

 Add cooled orzo, lemon juice, basil and cheese. Season to taste with salt and pepper. Mix well, then transfer to a large serving bowl or platter. Garnish with more basil.