Spaghetti with Mussels, Fennel & Ouzo

Serves 4

INGREDIENTS:

500 g **Spaghetti**
1.5 kg **mussels** in their shells (or 350 g frozen mussels without shells)
½-1 head of fennel, finely sliced
1 medium red onion, chopped
1 green pointed pepper, sliced
1 garlic clove, finely chopped or crushed
¼ fresh chili pepper, very finely chopped or ½ tsp of chili flakes
3-4 star anise
300 g chopped tomatoes (in a carton)
10-15 cherry tomatoes of different colours, sliced in half
3 tsp flat leaf parsley, finely chopped
50 ml **ouzo**
40 ml Greek virgin olive oil
salt, pepper

ALLERGENS HIGHLIGHTED IN BOLD

PREPARATION:

1. Prepare the mussels
Clean the mussel shells and remove their 'beards'. Put them into a large saucepan with 1 cm of boiling water. Cook for 3-4 minutes so the mussels open flavouring the pan with any seawater, which was inside them. Remove the mussels and place in a bowl.
Strain the water into a bowl to remove any sand, and then pour it into the saucepan in which you are going to boil the pasta, holding back approx. 150 ml. which will be added to the sauce later.

2. Start preparing the sauce
In a large pan, start by sautéing the peppers, garlic, onion and the fennel in the olive oil.
Add the star anise and chili flakes and stir
After five minutes, when the vegetables have started to soften, add the 150ml. water from the mussels, then the cherry and chopped tomatoes, salt and pepper and stir. Allow the sauce to simmer and gradually reduce.

3. Prepare the pasta
Add enough water to the saucepan, which already has the mussels' water in it to cook the pasta. Bring to the boil and wait until the sauce is almost ready to add salt and the pasta.

4. Finish the sauce
Remove most of the mussels from their shells, keeping just 10 -15 in their shells for decoration, and add them to the sauce. Pour in the ouzo and flambé.
Mix the pasta with the sauce

Combine the pasta with the sauce and add the parsley.

Serving
Bring the pan to the table and serve, making sure to scoop up the vegetables that tend to stay in the base of the pan.