

creamy consistency, then add the pasta to the bowl and stir and toss with the pesto until the strands are well coated with the sauce, adding a little more of the cooking water if needed to loosen the sauce. Serve immediately. Serves 4.

Adapted from Williams-Sonoma *The Pasta Book*, by Julia della Croce (Weldon-Owen, Inc., 2010).

Spinach and Cheese Cannelloni

Here, tubes of fresh pasta filled with creamy spinach and ricotta are topped with a savory meat and tomato sauce. The sauce, filling and pasta can be made up to a day in advance, and then the dish can be assembled just before baking and serving.

To make the sauce, in a fry pan over medium heat, warm the olive oil. Add the onion and sauté until golden, 6 to 8 minutes. Add the garlic and sauté until fragrant, about 1 minute. Stir in the sausage, beef, and a pinch *each* of salt and pepper. Cook, stirring and breaking up the meat with a wooden spoon, until the meat is browned, about 7 minutes. Add the tomatoes and tomato puree and simmer until the sauce has thickened, about 20 minutes. Stir in the basil, remove from the heat and set aside.

To make the filling, in a saucepan, combine the spinach, ¼ cup water and a pinch of salt. Cover, place over medium heat and cook, stirring, until tender, 3 to 4 minutes. Drain the spinach and let cool, then squeeze to extract the excess liquid. Finely chop the spinach. In a bowl, stir together the spinach, ricotta, eggs and 1 cup of the Parmigiano-Reggiano. Season with salt and pepper. Cover and refrigerate until ready to use.

Make the pasta dough as directed, then divide and roll out each piece into a sheet ⅙ inch thick. Lightly flour a rimmed baking sheet. Lay the pasta sheet on a lightly floured work surface and, using a knife or pastry wheel, cut into 4-inch squares. Layer the squares flat on the prepared baking sheet, spacing them so they don't touch and separating each layer with a lightly floured kitchen towel.

Preheat an oven to 375°F.

Spread a thin layer of the sauce in the bottom of two 9-by-13-inch baking dishes. Lay a pasta square on a work surface, spoon about 3 Tbs. of the filling down one end of the square and roll into a tube. Place the tube, seam side down, in one of the prepared dishes. Fill the remaining pasta squares in the same way and arrange them in the dishes. Spread the remaining sauce on top of the rolls, dividing it evenly between the dishes. Sprinkle the remaining ¼ cup Parmigiano-Reggiano over the top, dividing it evenly.

Bake the cannelloni until they are tender and heated through, and the sauce and cheese are bubbling, about 40 minutes. Serve hot. Serves 8 to 10.

Adapted from Williams-Sonoma *Essentials of Italian*, by Michele Scicolone (Oxmoor House, 2007).

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Pasta-Making Tools and Equipment

Food mill: For creating fine-textured sauces.

Food processor: For making pasta doughs, bread crumbs and fillings for stuffed pastas.

Fry pan or sauté pan: Large, for cooking sauce and then accommodating both the sauce and the cooked pasta.

Graters and grinders: A box grater for slicing and shredding vegetables and cheese; rasp graters in different sizes for grating spices and cheeses; and a pepper mill for freshly ground pepper.

Knives: A heavy chef's knife and a paring knife for general cutting tasks.

Pasta machine: Manual or electric machine for rolling and sometimes cutting fresh pasta.

Pasta pot and colander: A heavy 8-quart pot for cooking pasta and a colander for draining pasta.

Pastry wheel and pizza cutter: A fluted pastry wheel for creating fluted edges on stuffed pasta, and a pizza cutter for cutting pasta sheets and straight edges on stuffed pastas.

Slotted spoon or skimmer: For lifting stuffed pastas, dumplings and vegetables out of cooking water.

Wooden spoon: Long-handled spoon for stirring pasta in boiling water and for stirring sauces.

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Technique Class: From Scratch—Fresh Pasta

The World of Pasta

Few foods are more universal than pasta. In Italy, which boasts a wealth of recipes for both making noodles and for dressing them with an unbelievable array of sauces, it is a gastronomical passion. In nearly every culture where pasta is enjoyed, its myriad forms engage the cook's imagination. Whether fresh or dried, stuffed or baked, sauced, in soup, steamed or stir-fried, pasta is one of the most welcome sights on the dinner table.

Pasta has long been a part of the Italian national diet. Dried pasta, called *maccheroni* or *pasta secca*, is typically made of nothing more than hard-wheat flour (semolina) and water and comes in countless forms: long or short, flat or cylindrical, wide or narrow, with holes, twists or divots. In contrast, most fresh pasta, or *pasta fresca*, is made from soft-wheat flour and includes eggs and sometimes also vegetable purees for color and a hint of flavor. Like its dried counterpart, fresh pasta comes in a wide assortment of shapes and sizes, and includes strand pastas, stuffed pastas, such as ravioli and cannelloni, as well as layered pastas, like lasagna. Italians make dumplings known as gnocchi, too, creating a dough from flour, potatoes, pumpkin, stale bread or even ricotta cheese before rolling the dough into ropes and cutting into small pieces.

The term pasta is also a broad umbrella for numerous other noodles and dumplings found around the world, from the spaetzle of eastern Europe to the *fideo* of Mexico to the *tallarines verdes* of Peru. But Asia offers the largest variety of noodles and dumplings outside of Italy. Cooks in kitchens from Saigon to Bangkok, Beijing to Seoul turn out pastas that honor both culinary tradition and local ingredients. They fashion them primarily from wheat flour, rice flour, buckwheat or mung bean starch and serve them in soups or tossed with sauces. Asian cooks are also famed dumpling makers, as both Japanese *gyoza* and Chinese *shumai* attest.

Cooking Italian Pasta

To ensure your pasta moves freely as it cooks, use at least 5 quarts of water to cook 1 lb. of fresh or dried pasta. Add 2 Tbs. kosher salt at the same time you add the pasta to the water. This may seem like a lot of salt, but the amount is necessary to flavor the pasta properly. Do not, as some books suggest, add oil to the water. It will coat the pasta, which will cause it to repel the sauce. Stir the pasta often as it cooks to keep it from sticking together, and maintain the pot's high heat to keep the water moving. Cook stuffed pastas, such as tortellini and ravioli, at a slightly lower temperature to prevent them from knocking against one another and breaking open.

Because most dried pasta cooks within 10 to 12 minutes and most fresh pasta cooks within a fraction of that time, keep an eye on the pot to prevent overcooking. As

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Seasoning and Serving Pasta *(Continued)*

Dress Italian pastas immediately after draining them, while they are still piping hot, by either adding them to the sauce in the pan or combining them with the sauce in an ample serving bowl. If you have tossed them together in a pan, serve the sauced pasta directly in individual shallow bowls or plates.

With the exception of lasagna and other baked pasta dishes, Italians traditionally eat pasta as a first course, preceding a meat or seafood course. Outside of Italy, pasta is often served as a main course, typically accompanied by a salad or vegetable.

Ingredients for Fresh Egg Pasta Dough

2½ cups unbleached all-purpose flour, plus more for dusting

4 eggs

2 tsp. extra-virgin olive oil

soon as the pasta is ready, add a glass of cold water to the pot to immediately stop the cooking. Scoop out a little of the cooking water in case you need to add moisture to encourage smooth and easy distribution of the sauce, and then drain the pasta. Don’t overdrain it, however, or it may stick together and/or absorb too much sauce.

Cooking Asian Pasta

Fresh and dried Asian noodles—wheat, rice, buckwheat—are typically cooked in boiling water before they are added to soups to remove the starchy coating that would otherwise cloud the broth. These same noodles are also boiled before they are combined with other ingredients in a stir-fry. Some dried Asian noodles, such as cellophane (bean thread) noodles, need only be soaked in hot water to cover until pliable before they can be used in stir-fries or other dishes. Asian dumplings are steamed, boiled or fried, depending on the type.

Seasoning and Serving Pasta

Although recipes indicate amounts for seasonings, be sure to taste and adjust the seasoning of a dish as it cooks. When making a slow-cooked sauce, add a minimal measure of salt in the beginning and adjust the seasoning after the sauce has reduced. *Continued at left*

Adapted from Williams-Sonoma *The Pasta Book*, by Julia della Croce (Weldon-Owen, Inc., 2010).

Fresh Egg Pasta Dough

Place 2 cups of the flour in a food processor. Add the eggs and olive oil and process until the flour is evenly moistened and crumbly, about 10 seconds. If the dough is very sticky, add some of the remaining ½ cup flour, 1 Tbs. at a time, processing until the flour is incorporated; you may not need all of it. After about 30 seconds of processing, the dough should come together and form a loose ball on top of the blade, and feel moist but not sticky when pinched.

Dust a work surface with flour and place the ball of dough on it. To knead the dough, use the heel of one hand to push it away from you. Lift it from the far side, fold it back toward you and then rotate the dough a quarter turn. Again, push the dough away with the heel of one hand, pull it back and rotate a quarter turn. Stop kneading the dough when it feels damp without being sticky and is an even yellow with no streaks of flour. This will take only a minute or two. You will continue kneading with the pasta machine.

Shape the dough into a ball, cover with a large overturned bowl and let rest for 30 minutes. The dough is now ready to use. Makes about 1 lb.

Variations

- For black pepper pasta, add 1 tsp. freshly ground pepper to the eggs.
- For fresh herb pasta, add 1 Tbs. finely chopped herbs, such as basil, marjoram, oregano, parsley, thyme, chives or a mixture, to the eggs.
- For saffron pasta, add a pinch of crushed saffron threads to the olive oil.

Adapted from Williams-Sonoma *Essentials of Italian*, by Michele Scicolone (Oxmoor House, 2007).

Fresh Spinach Pasta Dough

In a large pot over medium heat, combine the spinach and ¼ cup water, cover and cook, stirring occasionally, until tender, 3 to 4 minutes. Drain the spinach and let cool. Place in a kitchen towel and squeeze to extract the excess liquid. Finely chop the spinach. You should have about ½ cup.

In a food processor, combine the spinach and eggs and process until the mixture is smooth and well blended. Add 2 cups of the flour and process until the flour is evenly moistened and crumbly, about 10 seconds. If the dough is very sticky, add some of the remaining ½ cup flour, 1 Tbs. at a time, processing until the flour is incorporated; you may not need all of it. After 30 seconds of processing, the dough should come together and form a loose ball on top of the blade, and feel moist but not sticky when pinched.

Dust a work surface with flour and place the ball of dough on it. To knead the dough, use the heel of one hand to push it away from you. Lift it from the far side, fold it back toward you and then rotate the dough a quarter turn. Again, push the dough away with the heel of one hand, pull it back and rotate a quarter turn. Stop kneading the dough when it feels damp without being sticky and is an even green with no streaks of flour. This will take only a minute or two. You will continue kneading with the pasta machine.

Shape the dough into a ball, cover with a large overturned bowl and let rest for 30 minutes. The dough is now ready to use. Makes about 18 oz.

Adapted from Williams-Sonoma *Essentials of Italian*, by Michele Scicolone (Oxmoor House, 2007).

Whole-Wheat Fettuccine with Arugula Pesto

For those who find basil pesto too sweet, here is a nice alternative that uses the more assertive arugula. The vibrant sauce is cut with parsley to temper the bold, peppery flavor of the arugula, and Spanish Manchego, a sheep’s milk cheese, lends a unique flavor in place of Parmigiano-Reggiano.

To make the whole-wheat pasta, follow the method for Fresh Egg Pasta Dough, but increase the kneading time to 12 to 14 minutes. Roll out and cut into fettuccine. Let dry for 30 minutes or up to 3 hours.

To make the pesto, in a food processor, combine the arugula, parsley, garlic, pine nuts, cheese, olive oil, and a pinch *each* of sea salt and pepper. Process to a paste, stopping occasionally to scrape down the sides of the work bowl. Be careful not to overprocess; the consistency of the pesto should be thick and fluid and have a slightly grainy texture. Transfer to a serving bowl large enough to accommodate the pasta later.

In a large pot, bring 5 quarts water to a rapid boil over high heat. Add the kosher salt and the pasta and cover the pot. When the water returns to a boil, uncover, cook for about 5 seconds and then drain, reserving about ½ cup of the cooking water. Blend a few tablespoons of the cooking water with the pesto to make a

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Ingredients for Fresh Spinach Pasta Dough

1 bunch spinach, about 10 oz., stemmed

3 eggs

2½ cups unbleached all-purpose flour, plus more for dusting

Ingredients for Whole-Wheat Fettuccine with Arugula Pesto

For the whole-wheat pasta:

1½ cups whole-wheat flour

½ cup unbleached all-purpose flour, plus more for dusting

¼ tsp. fine sea salt

3 eggs, at room temperature

1 Tbs. olive oil

For the arugula pesto:

2 cups firmly packed baby arugula leaves

1 cup firmly packed fresh flat-leaf parsley leaves

1 large garlic clove, coarsely chopped

¼ cup pine nuts, lightly toasted

½ cup grated Manchego cheese

½ cup extra-virgin olive oil

Fine sea salt and freshly ground pepper, to taste

2 Tbs. kosher salt