

Buying and Cooking Pasta

- Pasta may be fresh or dry. Fresh cooks very quickly and must be kept refrigerated or frozen. Dried is more common in grocery stores and keeps 1-2 years on a pantry shelf.
- Whole wheat pasta has more fiber than regular pasta. Many more whole wheat shapes and styles are now available.
- Recipes usually specify a particular pasta shape or type to complement the sauce or other ingredients in the recipe. Substituting one shape or size for another usually works well, except for lasagna, shells to be stuffed or orzo which are shaped like grains of rice.
- Colored pastas typically have small amounts of pureed vegetables added. Any changes in flavor are usually very subtle, but the color can add interest to a recipe.
- Italian cooks reserve a cup of the cooking water before draining pasta to thin and flavor sauces.
- Control fat in cream sauces by using evaporated skim instead of cream or half and half.

- No-salt added tomatoes helps reduce sodium content of tomato based sauces.

- Increase the nutritional value of pasta dishes by adding extra vegetables like grated carrots, or chopped bell pepper.



Pasta Cooking Tips:

- To prevent sticking, use a large amount of water and put it on to boil before starting the sauce.
- Pasta may be cooked without salt added to the water, especially if following a low sodium diet.
- Likewise, it is not necessary to add oil to the pasta cooking water.
- Stir the pasta as soon as it goes into boiling water and again often throughout cooking to prevent sticking.
- Drain pasta in a colander set in the sink.
- Add a small amount of oil or margarine to pasta to prevent sticking.

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Pasta Recipes

Spinach Lasagna

4 teaspoons olive oil, divided
2 cloves garlic, minced
1 8-oz. can “no salt added” tomato sauce
1 14.5-oz. can diced tomatoes
¼ teaspoon pepper
½ teaspoon dried oregano
¼ cup chopped onions
1 10-oz. package fresh spinach, washed stemmed and chopped (or 1 10-oz. package frozen chopped spinach, thawed)
8 oz uncooked lasagna noodles
12 oz 1% fat cottage cheese or reduced-fat ricotta cheese.)
8 oz. shredded part-skim mozzarella cheese
¼ cup grated parmesan cheese
Nonstick baking spray

Preheat oven to 375°. Lightly coat 9 x 13-inch baking dish with nonstick spray.

In medium saucepan over low heat, sauté garlic in 2 teaspoons olive oil over low heat for 1 minute. Do not let garlic brown. Add tomato sauce and tomatoes, pepper and oregano. Simmer gently over low heat, uncovered, while preparing other ingredients.

In large skillet over low heat, sauté onions in remaining 2 teaspoons olive oil, stirring constantly, until onions are transparent but not brown. Add chopped spinach, stirring constantly to separate and heat spinach.

Layer *uncooked* lasagna noodles, sauce, spinach mixture, cottage cheese and mozzarella in baking pan. Repeat, using all ingredients, ending with a layer of sauce. Sprinkle top with parmesan cheese.

Cover baking dish tightly with foil. Bake for one hour at 375° or until lasagna noodles are cooked. (If noodles are cooked before assembling lasagna, bake uncovered and reduce baking time to 25 minutes.)

Makes 16 servings. Nutrition information per serving: 263 calories, 19g protein, 26g carbohydrate, 9g fat, 508 mg sodium.

Pasta Primavera

1 cup broccoli florets
1 cup sliced carrots
1 cup sliced zucchini
1 cup macaroni, rotini or penne pasta
1 tablespoon flour
1 tablespoon margarine
1 cup skim milk
¼ teaspoon dried basil
1/8 teaspoon black pepper
1 tablespoons parmesan cheese

Steam broccoli and carrots about 5 minutes. Add zucchini slices and steam an additional 2 to 3 minutes or until all are crisp-tender. Meanwhile, cook pasta according to package directions.

To make sauce: Melt margarine in a small saucepan. Blend in flour. Gradually stir in milk, then basil and pepper. Cook over medium heat, stirring constantly, until sauce thickens. Remove from heat and blend in cheese.

Stir in steamed vegetables and serve over hot pasta.

Makes 2 generous servings. Nutrition information per serving: 360 calories, 15g protein, 56g carbohydrate, 5g fiber, 8g fat, 200mg sodium.

