

Basic Pasta Dough

Makes 1 pound fresh pasta - Serves 4 to 6

Making fresh pasta at home may sound entirely too painstaking, but it is easier than you think! It simply takes a little practice. Because fresh pasta can be a little time consuming to roll out, it is the perfect dish to make when you have a few extra hands to help.

2 cups unbleached all-purpose flour
3 large eggs
1 tablespoon extra-virgin olive oil

On a clean surface, make a mountain of flour, and then make a deep well in center. Break the eggs into the well and add olive oil.

Whisk eggs very gently with a fork or your fingers, gradually incorporating flour from the sides of the well. When the mixture becomes thick and forms a ball, begin kneading with your hands. If the mixture is dry and not coming together then sprinkle mixture with a couple of drops of water until it all comes together.

Knead dough for 8 to 12 minutes, until it is smooth and supple. As you knead, dust dough and work surface with flour as needed to keep dough from sticking to your work surface. Wrap dough tightly in plastic and allow it to rest at room temperature for 20-30 minutes.

Fresh Pasta Dough Ratio:

*2/3 cup flour for every 2-3 people
1 large egg for every cup of flour
1 teaspoon olive oil (optional)*

Flavoring and Coloring Pasta Dough

For Spinach (green) Pasta:

Use 1 cup cooked spinach – puree and drain well by squeezing through a clean linen towel. Add the squeezed puree to the pasta dough and continue to make the dough and shape as you desire.

For Tomato (red) Pasta:

Add 3 tablespoons of tomato paste to the pasta dough ingredients and continue to make the dough and shape as you desire.

Rolling, Cutting, and Shaping Fresh Pasta Dough

Filled Pasta – Ravioli:

Divide dough into 4 pieces and cover with plastic. Roll out two pieces of dough with a pasta machine into thin sheets.

Working quickly so dough does not dry out -- place heaping teaspoonfuls of filling on one thin sheet, about 2-inches apart. Place second sheet over first and press with fingers around each cheese mound. Cut into 2-inch squares, ensuring that all edges are well sealed. If dough does not seal (and is a little dry), water or egg whites can be brushed around the edges with your finger or a pastry brush to seal the edges. Repeat process with the remaining dough.

Place ravioli on a baking sheet covered with a piece of parchment paper sprinkled with a little semolina flour. Don't place them too closely together or they will stick together. Cook fresh ravioli within 1 hour or refrigerate until ready to cook covered up to 2 days.

Filled Pasta – Tortellini:

Run the dough through a pasta machine to form long sheets of dough. Sheets should be at least four inches wide. It is important that your pasta sheet be thin enough so that you can see your fingers through it, but not so thin that it tears. Keep the pasta sheets covered with plastic wrap, as they dry out quickly, and proceed with filling the tortellini.

Lay the pasta sheet on a lightly floured surface with a long side facing you. Trim the edges so they are straight, and cut sheet into two 2-inch strips. Cut strips into 2-inch squares. Put approximately 1/3 teaspoon filling in the center of each square. Brush borders of squares with egg or water. Fold the square diagonally in half, forming two triangles; press the edges firmly together to seal. Pick up the triangle and bring two points together to form a small hat shape; press the points together to seal.

Place the tortellini on a parchment lined baking sheet dusted with a thin layer of semolina flour, which will help prevent sticking. Do not let the tortellini touch each other, or they may stick together. Repeat the same procedure on the remainder of your pasta sheets.

Spinach and Ricotta Tortellini

Serves 4 - 6

1 10-ounce package frozen chopped spinach, thawed and squeezed
1 cup whole milk ricotta cheese, drained for a few minutes in a fine strainer
1 large egg
1 cup freshly grated Parmesan cheese
Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste
1/2 teaspoon freshly grated nutmeg
1 pound basic fresh pasta dough
Egg wash (1 egg, beaten with 2 teaspoons water)

Squeeze the spinach well to remove as much water as possible – it helps to squeeze the spinach through a clean kitchen towel or a potato ricer.

In a mixing bowl, stir the spinach together with the ricotta, egg, Parmesan, salt, pepper and nutmeg. Stir until combined and refrigerate until ready to use.

Divide dough into 4 pieces and cover with plastic. Roll out two pieces of dough into thin sheets.

Lay a pasta sheet on a lightly floured surface with a long side facing you. Trim the edges so they are straight, and cut sheet into two 2-inch strips. Cut strips into 2-inch squares. Put approximately 1/3 teaspoon filling in the center of each square. Brush borders of squares with egg or water. Fold the square diagonally in half, forming two triangles; press the edges firmly together to seal. Pick up the triangle and bring two points together to form a small hat shape; press the points together to seal.

Place the tortellini on a parchment lined baking sheet dusted with a thin layer of semolina flour, which will help prevent sticking. Do not let the tortellini touch each other, or they may stick together. Repeat the same procedure on the remainder of your pasta sheets.

Cook fresh tortellini within 1 hour or refrigerate until ready to cook covered up to 2 days. To freeze, place baking sheet of tortellini in the freezer and freeze until they are frozen. Store in a zip-lock bag and return to the freezer. Frozen tortellini will keep in the freezer for about 3 months.

Butternut Squash Ravioli

Serves 6 – 8

1 small butternut squash (about 1 pound)
2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
Pinch kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper
½ cup grated Parmesan cheese
Pinch grated nutmeg
1 pound fresh pasta dough
Egg wash (1 large egg, beaten with 2 teaspoons of water)

Preheat the oven to 400°F.

Cut the squash in half lengthwise and scoop out the seeds. Drizzle with olive oil and season with salt and pepper. Place the squash in a baking dish and roast, uncovered, for about 25 – 30 minutes or until tender. Set aside to cool.

Scoop out the roasted squash into a mixing bowl and mash with a fork or potato masher. Stir in the Parmesan cheese, salt, pepper and nutmeg. Set aside or refrigerate until ready to use.

Divide dough into 4 pieces and cover with plastic. Roll out two pieces of dough with a pasta machine into thin sheets.

Working quickly so dough does not dry out -- place heaping teaspoonfuls of filling on one thin sheet, about 2-inches apart. Place second sheet over first and press with fingers around each cheese mound. Cut into 2-inch squares, ensuring that all edges are well sealed. If dough does not seal (and is a little dry), water or egg whites can be brushed around the edges with your finger or a pastry brush to seal the edges. Repeat process with the remaining dough.

Place ravioli on a baking sheet covered with a piece of parchment paper sprinkled with a little semolina flour. Don't place them too closely together or they will stick together. Cook fresh ravioli within 1 hour or refrigerate until ready to cook covered up to 2 days.

Herb Brown Butter Sauce

Serves 4 - 6

2 sticks unsalted butter 8 tablespoons butter
3 garlic cloves, peeled, thinly sliced
½ bunch sage leaves, chiffonade
¼ teaspoon white balsamic vinegar
Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper

In a heavy-bottomed sauté pan melt the butter and sauté garlic until softened. Add the herbs and cook until the herbs turn bright green and the butter begins to brown. Add the vinegar and season with salt and pepper and set aside until pasta is ready.

Remove pasta from heat, strain, and add to warm butter sauce. Adjust salt and pepper to taste. Heat mixture over low heat, gently tossing until just heated through. Serve pasta immediately.

Rustic-Style Tomato Sauce

Makes 3 cups

3 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
2 cloves garlic, peeled and minced
1 yellow onion, peeled, small diced
One 28-ounce can Muir Glen Fire Roasted Crushed Tomatoes
Kosher salt and freshly ground pepper to taste
8 fresh basil leaves, minced

Heat oil in a heavy bottom saucepan over medium heat. Add garlic and onion and sauté, stirring frequently, about 3 minutes. Add the tomatoes and season with salt and pepper. Simmer sauce until it has reduced and thickened, approximately 20 minutes. Stir in basil. Season sauce to taste with salt and pepper.

Classic Alfredo

Makes 3 cups

2 cups heavy cream
2 cloves garlic, peeled and smashed lightly
½ white onion, coarsely chopped
3 whole cloves
1 bay leaf
2 tablespoons unsalted butter
2 tablespoons all-purpose flour
1 cup shredded Parmigiano-Reggiano cheese
Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste

In a small saucepan, heat the cream over low flame. Add the garlic, onion, cloves and bay leaf and simmer for 10 minutes.

In a small skillet, melt the butter over medium flame. Add the flour to the melted butter and stir with a whisk for about 2 minutes, or until the flour has a nice toasty and nutty fragrance.

Strain the hot cream mixture directly into the saucepan and whisk until the sauce thickens. Reduce the flame to low and add the cheese. Stir gently to incorporate the cheese into the sauce. Taste and season with salt and pepper.

To cook the pasta, add salt to the boiling pasta water and cook pasta, until tender but still al dente. Remove pasta from heat, drain, and add to simmering sauce. Toss to coat and serve immediately.