

Pasta All'Amatriciana e Pasta al Pomodoro

It serves 4 ... depending on who is invited for dinner. On average, consider 100g per person. Yes, we use a scale in the kitchen and we cook by eye. You will never find a measuring cup in an Italian kitchen.

Ingredients

- About 400g of bucatini, thick spaghetti or another pasta shape. (It is difficult to find bucatini in an American grocery store.) I usually buy the Barilla brand. One box contains 1 lb ~ 454g.
- Extra virgin OLIVE oil (Use the amount of olive oil you are comfortable with, as long as it does not stick. Usually one spoonful is enough.)
- salt (*sale*), pepper (*pepe*), dry crushed red pepper (*peperoncino*)
- About half teaspoon of sugar (*zucchero*)
- If you are at least 21, 1 glass of wine, red or white. It does not have to be particularly good.
- Half chopped onion (*cipolla*)
- About 350g of PLAIN strained/chopped tomatoes (*pomodori*). I buy Pomi' at Shaws
- 100g of *pancetta*/bacon (literally cute belly) in cubes. You can find *cubetti* (little cubes) of pancetta Citterio, from Trader Joe's. I was told that in the US you make bacon from pig's cheek, also called jowl bacon. That is equivalent to our *guanciale* (the kind of pancetta I would use in Italy). You can use any good bacon and cut it in cubetti.
- Grated pecorino romano or parmesan cheese

Vegetarians can prepare the same sauce without pancetta, and the result is a tasty tomato sauce. In this case you may want to add extra spices (e.g. basil, oregano).

Directions

1. Cook the onion and olive oil at low heat in a saucepan. When the onion is soft and translucent, the sweat (*il soffritto*) is ready.
2. Add the diced pancetta until the bacon is brown.
3. Then pour the wine on the pancetta and onion mix. If you have no wine just skip this step. Let it simmer on a high flame until almost dry. You want the alcohol to evaporate completely.
4. Add the tomatoes, half a glass of water, sugar, a pinch of salt, crushed red pepper, and pepper as you like.
5. At this point you start heating a pot of water.
6. Let the sauce cook on a low flame for at least 20 minutes (if you leave it longer you may need to add water), mixing from time to time.
7. About 10 minutes before dinner, add salt to the boiling water you heated in the pot and cook the pasta *al dente*.
8. Once drained, return the pasta to its pot or to the saucepan and mix quickly with the sauce on the low flame.
9. Serve and top with grated cheese!

How much salt do you need to put in the boiling water for pasta?

Start with a small amount (1-2 spoonfuls.) After the pasta has cooked for a few minutes, taste it and decide whether you want to add more salt. In Italy we use coarse salt (sale grosso), but in the US fine (regular) salt is more common. Notice that if you use iodized salt you may need a little more because ... it is less salty :)

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