

# PASTA

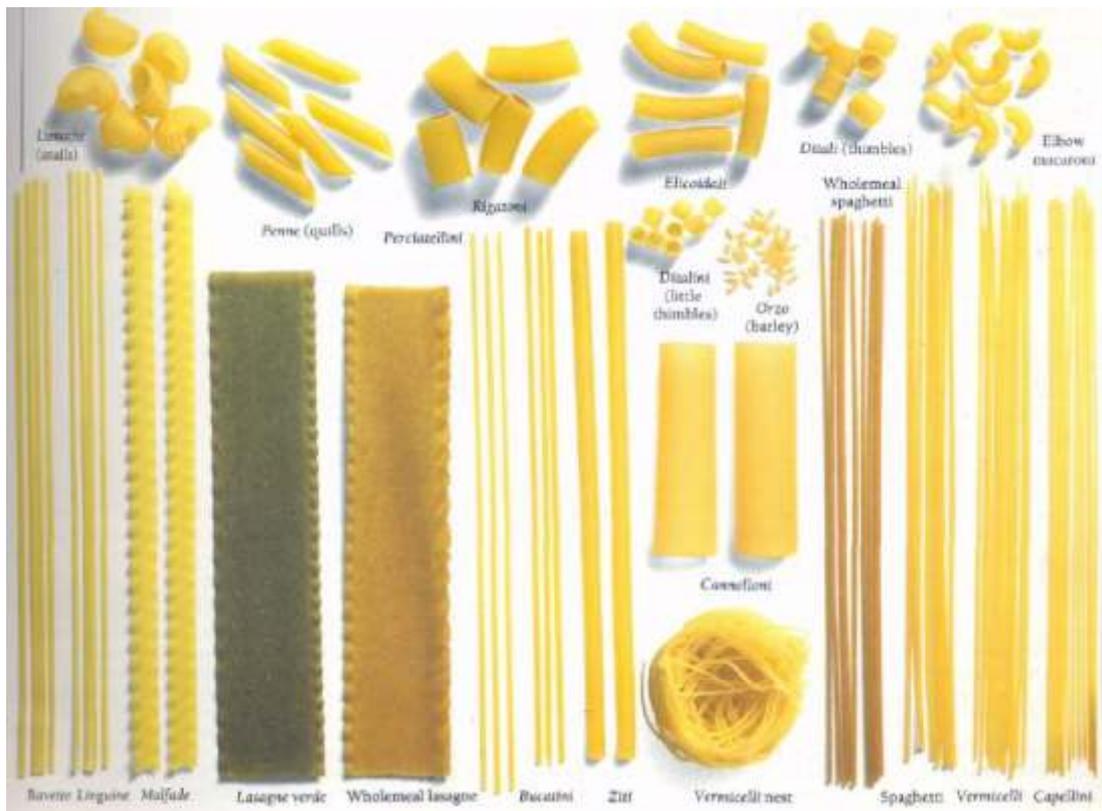
The word pasta simply means dough in Italian, but it is also used to describe spaghetti, macaroni, lasagne and many other pasta shapes made from the basic dough mixture. There are said to be over 500 different varieties of pasta throughout Italy, although only about 50 of these are widely known. It falls into 2 main types - commercially dried pasta sold in packets (pasta secca) and fresh pasta (pasta all'uovo or pasta fatta in casa). The best commercially dried pasta is made from 100% hard durum wheat (semola di grano duro).

Durum wheat is grown in Italy, the Mediterranean, the Middle East, Russia and North & South America. It is a hard wheat, high in gluten, which is ground in to semolina. It is a popular belief that the 14th century explorer Marco Polo introduced pasta into Italy from China, but in fact the first known reference to pasta can be traced to Cecily in the Middle Ages, when the island was under Arab domination. It had been a basic food in Italy for many years, particularly in Naples and Rome, before Catherine de'Medici introduced it into France, although it only become really popular throughout France under the Europe.

Pasta can be served for Lunch, Dinner, Supper or as a snack meal and also under as an accompaniment or garnish to other dishes. Traditionally, dried pasta is cooked Al Dente, which means 'to the teeth'.

## FOOD VALUE

Durum wheat has a 15% protein content, which makes it a good alternative to rice and potatoes for vegetarians. Pasta also contains carbohydrates in the form of starch, which gives the body energy. Eating more pasta is in line with the recommendation to "eat more starchy carbohydrates". An average individual portion (60gms.) of pasta provides 230 calories, the equivalent of 80gms bread, but it has almost the same protein content as beef. With a little fresh butter, fresh tomato sauce and grated cheese providing proteins, fat, carbohydrates, vitamins and some dietary fibre pasta makes a well balances meal.



## STORAGE

If eggs are used in the making of fresh pasta, the fresher they are the longer the keeping quality of the pasta. When fresh pasta is correctly stored it will keep for up to 3 to 4 weeks. Flat types of fresh pasta, such as noodles which are dried and transferred to a container or bowl will keep for up to a month in a cool, dry store. Other shapes can be stored in the freezer.



## COOKING PASTA

When calculating quantities of pasta per person, allow about 1 1/2 times as much fresh as dried. Allow 50 - 75gms uncooked dried pasta per person if serving pasta as a starter before a substantial main course dish. If serving pasta as a main course dish for an informal meal, increase the quantity to 100 - 175gms dried pasta per person.

Pasta should be cooked in fast-boiling salted water in a large saucepan. Allow about 2-3ltrs per 450gms of pasta. Adding 15ml oil to the water will prevent it boiling over and stop the pasta sticking together. Cooking times for dried pasta depends on the size of the pasta: long pasta takes about 8-10mins, short cut pasta 6-12mins and tiny pasta shapes 2-6mins. Lasagne takes about 12mins. Fresh pasta takes about 3mins.

Check just before the end of the cooking time by biting a piece of pasta. It should be what the Italians call "Al Dente", firm but not too hard or soft. Once it has reached this stage it should be drained thoroughly. If it is for a cold dish, rinse it under cold running water. If for a hot dish, it is best eaten or mixed with other ingredients immediately, although it can be kept hot in a colander over a pan of boiling water for a short time before serving.

## EXAMPLES OF SAUCES TO GO WITH PASTA :

- |                               |                                    |
|-------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| 1. Tomato Sauce               | 2. Cream, Butter or Bechamel Sauce |
| 3. Rich Meat Sauce            | 4. Olive Oil & Garlic              |
| 5. Soft, White or Blue Cheese | 6. Pesto                           |

## EXAMPLES OF CHEESES USED IN PASTA :

1. Parmesan, the most popular hard cheese, ideal for grating. The flavor is best when it is freshly grated. If bought ready grated, or if it is grated and stored, the flavor deteriorates.
2. Pecorino, a strong Ewe's milk cheese, sometimes studded with peppercorns. Used for strongly flavored dishes, it can be grated or thinly sliced.
3. Ricotta, creamy white in color, made from the discarded whey of other cheeses. It is widely used in fillings for pasta, such as cannelloni, ravioli etc. and for sauces.
4. Mozzarella, traditionally made from the milk of the water buffalo. It is pure white and creamy, with mild but distinctive flavor, usually round or pear shaped. It will only keep for a few days in a container half filled with milk and water.
5. Gorgonzola or Dolcelatte, distinctive blue cheeses that can be used in sauces.

## INGREDIENTS FOR PASTA DISHES :

The following are some examples of ingredients that can be used in pasta dishes. The list is almost endless but can include :

- |                   |                       |                         |
|-------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------|
| 1. Smoked Salmon  | 2. Shrimps            | 3. Lobster              |
| 4. Scallops       | 5. Tuna               | 6. Crab                 |
| 7. Anchovies      | 8. Cockles            | 9. Avocado              |
| 10. Mushrooms     | 11. Tomatoes          | 12. Onion               |
| 13. Courgette     | 14. Peas              | 15. Spinach             |
| 16. Chillies      | 17. Peppers           | 18. Broad Beans         |
| 19. Broccoli      | 20. Sliced Sausage    | 21. Salami              |
| 22. Ham           | 23. Bacon             | 24. Beef                |
| 25. Chicken       | 26. Duck              | 27. Prawns              |
| 28. Mussels       | 29. Tongue            | 30. Chicken Livers      |
| 31. Smoked Ham    | 32. Mustard & Cress   | 33. Parsley             |
| 34. Rosemary      | 35. Basil             | 36. Tarragon            |
| 37. Fennel        | 38. Chives            | 39. Spring Onion        |
| 40. Marjoram      | 41. Pine Nuts         | 42. Walnuts             |
| 43. Stoned Olives | 44. Capers            | 45. Cooked, Dried Brans |
| 46. Eggs          | 47. Grated Lemon Zest | 48. Saffron             |
| 49. Grated Nutmeg | 50. Sultanas          | 51. Balsamic Vinegar    |

## PASTA SHAPES

The variety of pasta shapes is endless and new shapes are constantly being introduced. the following is a guide to the most common shapes, although you may see slightly different shapes or the same shape under different names - especially in Italy. This is because the different regions of Italy have their own individual pasta shapes and names - and so do the manufacturers.

However some of the most common varieties are :

- |                                   |                             |                                    |
|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------|------------------------------------|
| 1. SPAGHETTI                      | 2. MACARONI                 | 3. BUCATINI                        |
| 4. TUBETTILUNGHI                  | 5. ZITE                     | 6. PENNE                           |
| 7. LASAGNE                        | 8. NOODLES                  | 9. TAGLIATELLE                     |
| 10. FETTUCINE                     | 11. VERMICELLI              | 12. CANNELONI                      |
| 13. LUMACHE (Snails)              | 14. CONCHIGLIE (Shells)     | 15. FUSILLI (Spirals)              |
| 16. RUOTINI (Wheels)              | 17. ANELLI (Rings)          | 18. FIOCHETTI (Bow)                |
| 19. RAVIOLI                       | 20. CAPPELETTI              | 21. TORTELLINI                     |
| 22. TORTELLONI                    | 23. TORTELLI                | 24. SCALLOPED LASAGNETTE           |
| 25. SPATZLE                       | 26. RIGATONI                | 27. FARFALLE (Butterflies)         |
| 28. GNOCCHI                       | 29. AGNOLOTTI               | 30. PAPPARDELLE (Nest)             |
| 31. CRAVATTINE                    | 32. TORTIGLONI              | 33. MANICOTTI (Large Ribbed Tubes) |
| 34. ELICHE (Spiral)               | 35. FIDELINE                | 36. LINGUINE (Small Grain)         |
| 37. RISONI (Rice Grains)          | 38. PENNETTE (Small Quills) | 39. STELLINE (Little Star)         |
| 40. CONCHIGLIETTE (Little Shells) |                             |                                    |

## HOME MADE PASTA

Making pasta at home is very easy - the actual dough is a simple mixture of flour, salt, eggs and olive oil. The best flour to use is semolina flour; a hard, very fine wheat flour. As this is difficult to obtain, a strong flour of the type used for making bread is a satisfactory alternative. General household plain flour can be used, but it produces a dough which cannot be rolled out as thinly by hand - it is best to use this only if you have a pasta making machine. These can cut larger quantities more evenly and quickly than you can by hand. They can also cut various shapes such as spaghetti, macaroni and long strips for lasagne.

### Recipe for HOME MADE PASTA

Semolina or strong plain flour	-	200gms.
Egg	-	2nos.
Salt	-	A Pinch
Olive Oil	-	15ml.

Note - Resting time before shaping is 30 minutes.

