

Cacio e Pepe

Time: 20 minutes

Salt

- 1½ cups finely grated pecorino Romano, plus more for dusting completed dish
 - 1 cup finely grated Parmigiano-Reggiano
 - 1 tablespoon ground black pepper, plus more for finishing the dish
 - ¾ pound tonnarelli or other long pasta like linguine or spaghetti
- Good olive oil

1. Put a pot of salted water on to boil. In a large bowl, combine the cheeses and black pepper; mash with just enough cold water to make a thick paste. Spread the paste evenly in the bowl.
2. Once the water is boiling, add the pasta. The second before it is perfectly cooked (taste it frequently once it begins to soften), use tongs to quickly transfer it to the bowl, reserving a cup or so of the cooking water. Stir vigorously to coat the pasta, adding a teaspoon or two of olive oil and a bit of the pasta cooking water to thin the sauce if necessary. The sauce should cling to the pasta and be creamy but not watery.
3. Plate and dust each dish with additional pecorino and pepper. Serve immediately.

Yield: 4 servings.

Pasta Alla Gricia

Time: 20 minutes

- 8 ounces guanciale (cured pig's jowl), cut into ¼-inch pieces
- ½ teaspoon finely ground black pepper, plus a pinch
- Salt
- ¾ pound tonnarelli or other long pasta like linguine or spaghetti
- ¼ cup finely grated pecorino Romano



As the Romans do: Pasta alla Gricia.

1. Cook the guanciale in a large skillet over medium heat until deeply golden (adjust the heat as necessary to render the fat without burning the meat). The meaty parts should be browned and the fatty parts should be cooked but still slightly transparent. This will take 15 to 20 minutes. When it's done, add the black pepper and turn off the heat.
2. Meanwhile, put a pot of salted water on to boil. When the water boils, cook the pasta until it's al dente, nearly but not quite done and still a bit chalky in the middle.
3. When the guanciale has cooled a bit, and while the pasta is cooking, add ¾ cup of the pasta cooking water to the pan, turn the heat to high and reduce by about half.
4. When the pasta is ready, use tongs to transfer it to the pan with the sauce. Stir the pasta as it finishes cooking, adding more pasta cooking water if necessary until the pasta is done and the sauce thick and creamy. Add half the cheese and a pinch of pepper, and stir vigorously to incorporate.
5. Divide the pasta among four dishes, and dust each with the remaining pecorino.

Yield: 4 servings.

'No,' Flavio said. 'Let me show you.'

Pasta Aglio, Olio e Peperoncino

Time: 20 minutes

Salt

- 2 to 3 whole fresh peperoncini (small red chiles), or small dried red chiles
- ¾ cup extra virgin olive oil
- 4 garlic cloves, thinly sliced
- ¼ cup chopped Italian parsley
- ¾ pound linguine or spaghetti

1. Put a pot of salted water on to boil. Remove the stems of the peperoncini, halve them lengthwise, then slice them into ¼-inch lengths. Put the oil, garlic and peperoncini in a large deep pan set over medium-high heat, and cook until the garlic is translucent and golden, 2 to 3 minutes. Add the parsley to the pan, and turn off the heat.
2. Meanwhile, cook the pasta until it is al dente, nearly but not quite done and still a bit chalky in the middle. Drain, and reserve 1 cup of the cooking liquid.
3. When the oil has cooled for a couple of minutes, add ½ cup of the pasta cooking water, and reduce over high heat by about half. Add the pasta, and stir vigorously as it continues to cook. Add the reserved pasta water a bit at a time as necessary to finish cooking the pasta, and develop the thickened sauce. Season with salt, and serve.

Yield: 4 servings. ♦