

WHOLE-WHEAT PASTA WITH PECORINO AND PEPPER

SERVES 4 TO 6

ACTIVE TIME: 20 MIN START TO FINISH: 20 MIN

We often take black pepper for granted, grinding it onto every dish in sight. But the classic Roman dish cacio e pepe puts this distinctive spice front and center, which is exactly where we have it in this heartier whole-wheat version. Make sure you keep the robust, rib-sticking pasta as hot as possible—it will not only help melt the salty Pecorino but will also intensify the pepper's flavor.

1 tablespoon black peppercorns
1 lb dried whole-wheat spaghetti
1½ cups grated Pecorino Romano
(4½ oz), divided
2 tablespoons chopped flat-leaf
parsley (optional)

GARNISH: extra-virgin olive oil

► Toast peppercorns in a dry small skillet over medium-high heat, shaking skillet, until fragrant and beginning to pop, 2 to 3 minutes. Coarsely crush peppercorns with a mortar and pestle or

wrap in a kitchen towel (not terry cloth) and press with bottom of a heavy skillet.
► Cook spaghetti in a pasta pot of boiling salted water (2 tablespoons salt for 6 quarts water) until al dente.

► Meanwhile, fill a large ceramic bowl with hot water to warm it. Just before pasta is done cooking, drain bowl but do not dry.
► Reserve 1 cup pasta-cooking water, then quickly drain pasta (do not shake off excess water) and add to warm bowl. Sprinkle 1½ cups cheese and ½ cup cooking water evenly over pasta and toss quickly. Toss in parsley (if using) and 2 teaspoons crushed pepper. If pasta seems dry, toss with some additional cooking water.
► Serve pasta immediately, sprinkled with remaining pepper and cheese. Serve additional cheese on the side.

GARLIC-ROASTED CHICKEN BREASTS

SERVES 4 (MAIN COURSE)

ACTIVE TIME: 15 MIN START TO FINISH: 40 MIN

Thick chicken breasts can be hard to get just right; often you're left with a too-dry, too-bland dinner. But this high-heat

roasting method results in crisp, crackly skin that gives way to moist flesh, perfumed throughout by a pocket filled with herbed garlic paste.

3 large garlic cloves
1 teaspoon dried oregano
Scant ½ teaspoon dried hot
red-pepper flakes
2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
4 chicken breast halves with
skin and bone (2 to 2½ lb total)

► Preheat oven to 500°F with rack in upper third.
► Mince and mash garlic to a paste with ½ teaspoon salt, then transfer to a bowl. Stir in oregano, red-pepper flakes, oil, ½ teaspoon salt, and ½ teaspoon pepper.
► Cut a 2-inch-long pocket (about 1½ inches deep) horizontally in side of each breast half and spread ½ teaspoon garlic mixture into each pocket. Coat chicken with remaining garlic mixture.
► Roast chicken, skin sides up, in a foil-lined large shallow baking pan until just cooked through, 20 to 25 minutes.

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With only four ingredients—one of which is optional—this simple, delicious dish relies on the quality of each one.

