

MAKE A KILLER CARBONARA

As sumptuous as it is simple, this pasta dish is just what January demands

I WOULDN'T BE the first to call it "bacon and eggs Italian-style." Spaghetti alla carbonara is certainly just as quick and easy to prepare, requiring nothing more than tossing al dente spaghetti and a little of its starchy cooking water with eggs, grated Parmesan and pecorino, and guanciale or some other tasty cured-pork product. But what occurs when those elements combine qualifies, in my mind, as a kind of alchemy.

The creamy sauce comes together with no cream at all. Ideally the hot pasta cooks the eggs without scrambling them, so they coat the noodles smoothly, which is easy to achieve when you follow the steps below. Just don't forget (as I sometimes do) to set aside a couple cups of the hot, starchy pasta-cooking water before

draining the spaghetti. Adding some at the last minute allows the cheese, eggs and rendered pork fat to coalesce, ensuring the beautiful silkiness that defines this dish.

Calling for just a few basic ingredients you're likely to have on hand, spaghetti carbonara can be summoned spontaneously any night of the week. If you don't have guanciale or pancetta, use bacon—a non-traditional substitute, to be sure, but there's a lot to be said for adding a hint of smoky flavor. Served with a salad, carbonara makes a welcome Sunday supper, week-night meal or romantic dinner for two.

January can be a harsh month. We need all the comfort and convenience that carbonara provides. —Gail Monaghan

INGREDIENTS

1½
tablespoons
olive oil



Coarsely ground
black pepper

16 ounces
spaghetti



5 ounces slab pancetta,
guanciale, or best-quality
bacon, ¼-inch cubes



Salt



½ cup grated
pecorino Romano,
plus extra
for serving



½ cup grated
Parmesan



3 large eggs and 3 large yolks
at room temperature



STEPS



1.

Place a large pot of lightly salted water (no more than 1 tablespoon salt) over high heat, and bring to a boil. Add pasta and cook according to package directions until just al dente. Drain, reserving 2 cups pasta water.



2.

Meanwhile, in a medium bowl, whisk together eggs, yolks and cheeses until well combined. Season with a pinch of salt and lots of black pepper.



3.

Heat oil in a large skillet over medium heat. Add guanciale and sauté until just beginning to crisp, 5 minutes.



4.

Reduce heat, add drained pasta, and toss to combine and finish cooking. Off heat, toss in egg-cheese mixture and add just enough reserved pasta water to form a creamy sauce. Serve topped with more grated pecorino and pepper.