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Super simple
recipes for
Canned tomatoes
and dry pasta

Introduction

This mini cookbook contains six super simple recipes for canned tomatoes and dry pasta. Among the most basic pasta recipes, but also the most brilliant, pasta and tomatoes makes it easy to prepare a quick, healthy, and delicious dinner with only a few simple ingredients.

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Cooking pasta

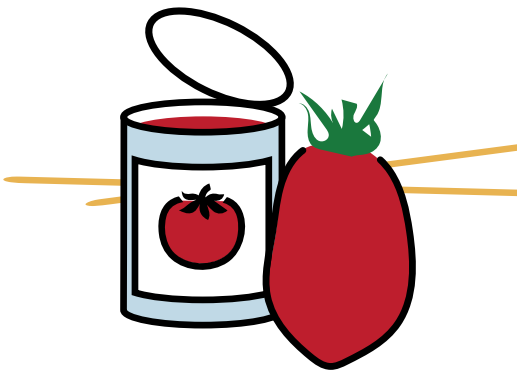
1. Use a large pot with plenty of water.
2. Add a handful of coarse salt when the water comes to a boil and then add the pasta.
3. About 2.8 to 4.4 ounces (80 to 125 grams) of uncooked pasta per person is a standard serving size. If you don't have a kitchen scale, a standard box or bag of pasta of approximately 1 pound (454 grams) can be divided into four even portions.
4. Cook the pasta al dente which means to the tooth in Italian and refers to pasta that is still a bit firm to the bite.
5. You can cook the pasta for the length of time specified on the package or bite into it to check if it is ready.
6. Save some of the starchy pasta water when draining the pasta to correct the consistency of the final dish.

Key ingredients

Canned tomatoes

Canned or jarred tomatoes generally come in two sizes, small around 14.5 ounces and large around 28 ounces. One small can is usually good for one or two people and one large can for three or four.

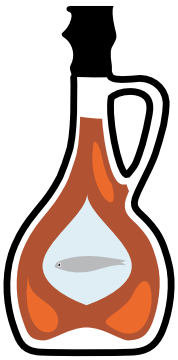
Canned tomatoes can be whole, diced, or puréed, and the different textures can be used interchangeably in many recipes.



Check the ingredients when purchasing canned tomatoes as unnecessary additives and sugars may be included. Taste different types and various brands as not all tomatoes taste the same.

San Marzano tomatoes grown in volcanic soil near Naples are prized for their low acidity, strong, sweet flavor, thick skins, and low seed count. But fraud is common in the tomato market and not all cans labeled San Marzano contain San Marzano tomatoes.

Colatura di alici

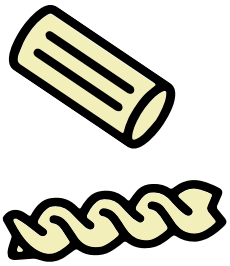


A fermented anchovy extract made in a small fishing village on Italy's Amalfi Coast by aging anchovies in salt. I use it frequently as a replacement for salt as it has a strong salty and umami or savory flavor that adds a level of complexity to a dish.

Dry pasta

Dry pasta is not an inferior industrial version of fresh pasta, but it is a quality food product in its own right and served in the best restaurants in Italy.

Made from 100% durum wheat semolina, a hard wheat, dry pasta holds its shape better than fresh pasta which is made from soft wheat. Hard wheat not only gives it a longer shelf life, but it makes it healthier as your body digests it slower, releasing energy more efficiently.



Foods that release energy slowly over a long period of time can contribute to weight loss and aid in the prevention of chronic diseases linked to obesity such as diabetes and heart disease.

While it is true that dry pasta is often made from refined white flour and that many nutrients are lost when the flour is milled, it is also an easy way to eat more fiber-rich vegetables and heart-healthy olive oil which balances out the equation.

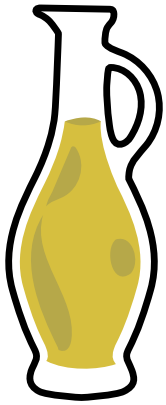
In the United States, dry pasta is often enriched with micronutrients

to replace those lost when the flour is milled, such as niacin, riboflavin, folate, thiamine, and ferrous iron.

Olive oil

The oil extracted from olives is rich in heart-healthy monounsaturated fats and antioxidants and is used abundantly in Italian cooking.

Always buy extra virgin olive oil as it is extracted without the use of heat or chemicals that are harmful to antioxidants and to flavor. It is also of the highest quality and tested for defects.



Olive oil should be consumed within one year of production and should not be stored in direct heat or light as it can become rancid. Buy olive oil sold in metal containers or in tinted glass.

Color is also not an indication of quality and top-quality olive oil can range in color from dark green to pale gold.

There is a lot of fraud in the olive oil market. Try to buy directly from the producer when you can or purchase from a trusted source.

Parmesan cheese

Parmesan is a generic term in the United States for any hard cow's milk cheese made in the style of the Italian Parmigiano-Reggiano cheese and used for grating.

However, by law in Europe, the word parmesan can only refer to the Italian Parmigiano-Reggiano which is a hard cow's milk cheese produced in designated areas in northern Italy and aged for 12 to 36 months.

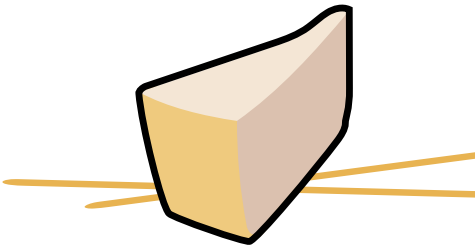
Low in fat and high in protein, Parmigiano-Reggiano is easy to digest and contains many vitamins and minerals. It's also naturally lactose-free and high in glutamate which gives it a strong umami or savory taste, the fifth basic taste along with salty, sweet, sour, and bitter.

Look for Parmigiano-Reggiano that has been aged for 24 months for pasta. Younger cheeses are often too soft to easily grate and older cheeses can be too dry to blend well.

Buy blocks of parmesan cheese instead of grated as the cheese will begin to lose flavor when it comes in contact with air.

In the United States, grated parmesan can also legally contain cellulose, an anti-caking agent. Buying a solid block of parmesan will ensure the best flavor and that it is 100% cheese.

I always specify parmesan in my recipes and not Parmigiano-Reggiano as the real deal is not always easy to find and can be expensive. Many artisanal cheesemakers make high-quality hard cheeses that don't taste exactly like Parmigiano-Reggiano, but which can still be used to make a delicious pasta dish.



Be creative

There is a lot of room for variation in Italian cooking and the measurements in the following recipes are guidelines and not requirements. Feel free to eyeball portions and to swap things out and to mix things up.

I've also included a suggested pasta shape with each recipe but many shapes will work.

SERVES 2

Canned tomatoes

- 1 small can of tomatoes, whole, diced, or puréed
- 1 clove garlic, crushed
- Salt
- Olive oil
- 8 ounces (250 grams) pasta
- Optional: parmesan cheese, grated

SUGGESTED PASTA:
Fusilli

1. Cook the garlic in a couple of tablespoons of olive oil in a skillet over medium heat until golden and then discard.
2. Add the tomatoes, season with salt, and simmer over medium-low heat until the sauce is thick.
3. Meanwhile, cook the pasta.
4. Drain the pasta and add it to the skillet with the tomatoes and toss.
5. Cook over medium-high heat for about 30 seconds while tossing.
6. Plate and top with grated cheese if using.

NOTES: A pinch of red pepper flakes can be added along with the garlic. A dash of colatura di alici, an Italian anchovy sauce, can be used to season the tomatoes instead of salt. A chopped onion can be added along with the garlic or in place of it.

SERVES 2

Canned tomatoes, bacon, and cheese

- 1 small can of tomatoes, whole, diced, or puréed
- Around 1 ounce (30 grams) of bacon, guanciale, or pancetta, cut into small cubes or 1-inch long strips.
- 5 heaping tablespoons of parmesan or pecorino cheese or a blend of the two, grated
- Salt
- Olive oil
- 8 ounces (250 grams) pasta

SUGGESTED PASTA:
Rigatoni

1. Cook the bacon in a tablespoon of olive oil in a skillet over low heat until it is crispy on the outside but still soft on the inside.
2. Add the tomatoes and simmer over medium-low heat until the sauce is thick.
3. Meanwhile, cook the pasta.
4. Drain the pasta and place it in a serving bowl with the cheese and toss.
5. Add the cooked tomato and bacon and mix together.
6. Plate and serve.

This sauce is known as sugo all'amatriciana and is named after the town of Amatrice in central Italy where it is only prepared with Pecorino Romano cheese and guanciale, a cured pork product made from pig cheeks.

NOTES: If using bacon, I prefer slab bacon as it can be cut into thicker pieces than sliced, but both will work. A pinch of red pepper flakes and/or a chopped onion can be cooked with the bacon until the onion is soft and translucent.

SERVES 2

Canned tomatoes, onion, and butter

- ½ small can of tomatoes, whole, diced, or puréed
- 4 cups of onion, thinly sliced
- 2 tablespoons of unsalted butter
- ½ cup of parmesan cheese, grated
- Salt and black pepper
- Olive oil
- 8 ounces (250 grams) pasta

SUGGESTED PASTA:
Spaghetti

1. Cook the onion in the butter and a couple of tablespoons of olive oil in a large pot for about 20 minutes until soft and golden. Stir occasionally.
2. Add 1/2 cup of water and the tomatoes and cook over medium-low heat for about one hour until the onions begin to fall apart. Stir occasionally and add more water as needed.
3. Season with a pinch of salt and some black pepper.
4. Meanwhile, cook the pasta.
5. Drain the pasta and add it to the onions along with a few tablespoons of pasta water and the cheese and mix well.
6. Plate and serve.

NOTES: A dash of colatura di alici, an Italian anchovy sauce, can be used to season the onions and tomatoes instead of salt.

SERVES 2

Canned tomatoes and canned tuna

- 1 small can of tomatoes, whole, diced, or puréed
- 1 small can of tuna in oil or water, drained
- 1 clove garlic, crushed
- Salt
- Olive oil
- 8 ounces (250 grams) pasta

SUGGESTED PASTA:
Penne

1. Cook the garlic in a couple of tablespoons of olive oil in a skillet over medium heat until golden and then discard.
2. Add the tomatoes and simmer over medium-low heat until the sauce is thick.
3. Add the tuna, breaking it up with a spoon or fork, and cook through.
4. Season with salt if needed.
5. Meanwhile, cook the pasta.
6. Drain the pasta and add it to the skillet with the tuna and toss.
7. Cook over medium-high heat for about 30 seconds while tossing.
8. Plate and serve.

NOTES: A pinch of red pepper flakes and/or a chopped onion can be added along with the garlic and cooked until the onion is soft and translucent. A dash of colatura di alici, an Italian anchovy sauce, can be used to season the tomatoes instead of salt.

SERVES 2

Canned tomatoes and eggplant

- 1 small can of tomatoes, whole, diced, or puréed
- 1 eggplant, unpeeled and cut into small cubes
- 1 clove garlic, crushed
- Salt
- Olive oil
- 8 ounces (250 grams) pasta
- Optional: parmesan cheese, grated

SUGGESTED PASTA:
Penne

1. Cook the eggplant in a skillet over medium heat without oil until the eggplant wilts, and then remove from the skillet. Stir occasionally to keep it from sticking and burning.
2. Cook the garlic in a couple of tablespoons of olive oil in the skillet over medium heat until the garlic is golden and then discard.
3. Return the eggplant to the skillet and cook through.
4. Add the tomatoes, season with salt, and simmer over medium-low heat until the sauce is thick.
5. Meanwhile, cook the pasta.
6. Drain the pasta and add it to the skillet with the eggplant and toss.
7. Cook over medium-high heat for about 30 seconds while tossing.
8. Plate, top with cheese if using, and serve.

NOTES: A pinch of red pepper flakes can be added along with the garlic. A dash of colatura di alici, an Italian anchovy sauce, can be used to season the tomatoes instead of salt. The parmesan cheese can be replaced with crumbled feta. The final dish can be topped with basil.

SERVES 4

Canned tomatoes, anchovies and butter

- 1 large can of tomatoes, whole, diced, or puréed
- 4 oil-packed anchovy fillets
- 5 tablespoons of unsalted butter
- 1 onion, cut in half
- Salt and black pepper
- 1 pound (454 grams) pasta
- Optional: parmesan cheese, grated

SUGGESTED PASTA:
Penne

1. Preheat oven to 350°F (175°C).
2. Add the tomatoes, butter, onion, and anchovies to a baking dish and season with salt and black pepper.
3. Roast the tomato mixture in the oven until it becomes thick, about 40 minutes.
4. Meanwhile, cook the pasta.
5. Drain the pasta and add it to the baking dish with the tomatoes and mix.
6. Plate and top with grated cheese if using.

NOTES: A pinch of red pepper flakes and/or 4 crushed cloves of garlic can also be roasted with the tomatoes.

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