

# Pasta



Pasta is an excellent source of many nutrients. Choose whole grain pastas for more fiber and protein. There are also gluten-free pastas made with rice, beans, and quinoa for people who cannot eat wheat or other sources of gluten. Use pasta to create quick and tasty meals, even on a budget.

## Getting Started

Pasta comes in a variety of sizes and shapes, such as macaroni, penne, spaghetti, and linguine. Use the type of pasta that works best with your recipe. One pound (16 ounces) of dry pasta will make about 5 servings.

## Cooking Steps

1. Fill a large pot with 4 quarts of cold water for every pound of pasta. Do not overfill the pot, or the water could boil over. Add  $\frac{1}{8}$  teaspoon salt to the water if desired. Cover the pot with a lid.
2. Bring the water to a rolling boil over high heat. This should take about 9–10 minutes.
3. Add the pasta to the pot. Stir occasionally using tongs or a pasta fork so the pasta does not stick together. Leave the lid off the pot.
4. Bring the water back up to a boil. Turn the heat down slightly if the water looks foamy or like it might overflow.
5. Check the directions on the package to find out how long to cook the pasta. The cooking time will depend on the type of noodle used. Whole grain pasta generally takes longer to cook than white pasta. Fresh pasta takes less time to cook. Take a piece or two of the pasta out of the pot using tongs or a pasta fork about 1 minute before the suggested cooking time ends. Taste the pasta after it has cooled a bit. It should be firm but tender.
6. Boil the pasta for a minute or two longer if it is not done. Taste the pasta once more.

### Equipment

- Large pot with lid
- Tongs or pasta fork
- Colander
- Potholders

7. Turn off the stove. Place a colander in your clean kitchen sink. Using potholders so you don't burn yourself, carry the pot to the sink. Pour the water and pasta into the colander to drain.
8. Place the empty pot back on the stove. Let the pasta drain for a minute, then shake the colander to remove excess water. Pour the pasta back into the pot or into a large bowl.
9. Add sauce, vegetables, or other ingredients to the pasta. Enjoy!

### Recipe Ideas

Pasta dishes can simply be topped with different sauces, like marinara, olive oil and garlic, or pesto. You can buy prepared sauces at the store or make your own. Also try these recipe ideas:

- **Pasta Primavera:** Cook  $\frac{3}{4}$  pound (12 ounces) of dry pasta. Cook 1–2 cloves chopped garlic in  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup olive oil over low heat until the garlic smells fragrant. Mix this sauce with cooked pasta. Then use tongs or a pasta fork to toss in your favorite chopped vegetables, such as raw tomatoes or cooked asparagus, carrots, peas, bell peppers, or mushrooms. Top the pasta with up to 2 tablespoons parmesan cheese per serving. Serves 4.
- **Cold Pasta Salad:** Rinse cooked pasta under cold water. Add your favorite veggies, such as cooked peas, grated carrots, chopped fresh tomatoes, black olives, and chopped zucchini. Then toss with Italian dressing (2 tablespoons per cup of salad). For extra protein, add drained canned beans, tuna, or leftover chicken. Chill for at least an hour to let the flavors combine. Stir well before serving.
- **Easy Baked Penne:** Cook 1 pound penne according to package directions. While the penne is cooking, preheat the oven to 350°F and lightly coat a baking dish with nonstick cooking spray. Drain the cooked penne in a colander and transfer it to a large bowl. Mix the cooked pasta with 1 cup part-skim ricotta cheese and  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup marinara sauce. In the pan, layer half the pasta mixture, another  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup marinara sauce, and  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup shredded part-skim mozzarella cheese. Repeat the layers and bake for 20 minutes or until cheese has melted. Serves 6.

