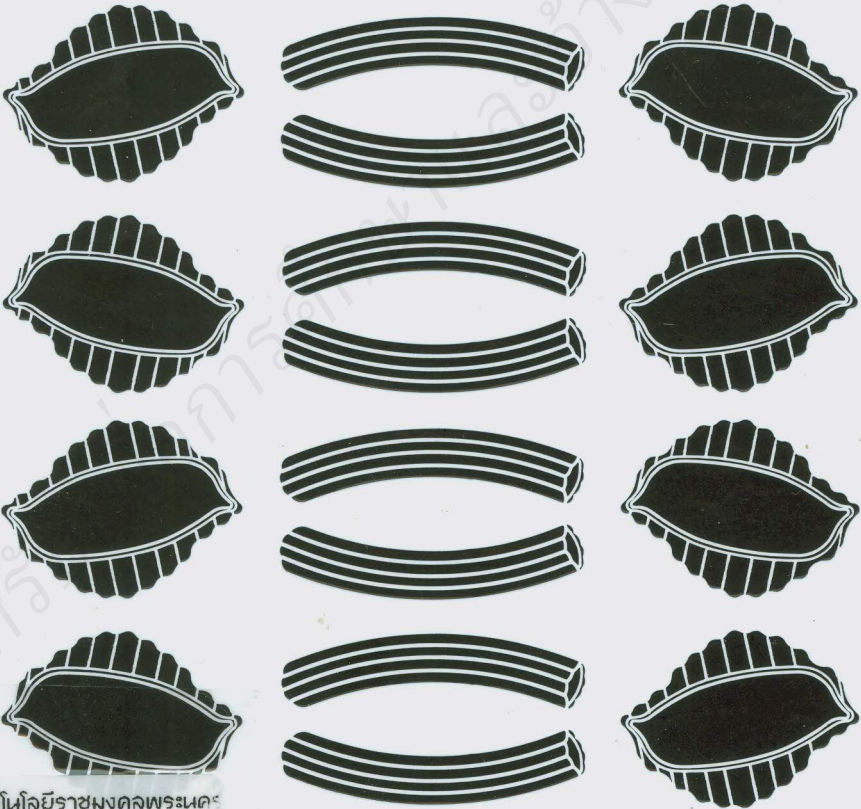


'Beautiful, and an instant classic'
NIGELLA LAWSON

THE GEOMETRY OF PASTA

The A-Z of pasta with 100 authentic recipes



มหาวิทยาลัยเทคโนโลยีราชมงคลพระนคร

ห้องสมุดสาขาโชติเวช



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DEBRAND & JACOB KENEDY

CONTENTS

6	INTRODUCTION
8	IMPORTANT NOTES
10	BASICS
16	PASTAS A-Z
286	ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS
288	INDEX OF SAUCES

INTRODUCTION

This book was not my idea, although I would be so very proud if it were. It was conceived by Caz, the graphic designer, in whose mind it grew over a period of more than five years before she first discussed it with me. Kudos is due.

The selection of pastas, writing and recipes are all my own, but again I cannot take all the credit. Centuries of Italian invention, industry, agriculture, hunger and politics have shaped pasta into its myriad of forms and flavours. Few (if any) of the shapes described were designed by any one hand, and the same goes for the accompanying recipes. Instead, subtle differences have increased as methods to prepare modern Italy's staple food have passed from mother to daughter, neighbour to neighbour, and town to town. The startling diversity we wonder at in the natural world is mirrored in microcosm in pasta. Evolution is at work.

Pasta is different across Italy. In the poorer south, pastes of semolina and water are shaped by hand into chunky peasant forms. In south-central Italy, the same semolina dough is extruded by machine into simple long shapes and complex short ones, dried, packaged and sold. North and north-central Italy, wealthier by far, uses expensive egg yolks and refined flours to make exquisite golden-yellow marvels – silky ribbons and tiny stuffed shapes like fine jewellery. In the far north, cold and under the influence of Germany and Eastern Europe, white flour is often replaced by other starches – breadcrumb, chestnut, buckwheat and rye. The properties of each type of dough, the mechanics of each shape, and the tastes and traditions of each region have determined also that an equal panoply of sauces exists, to match the requirements of the pasta and the people's palates.

This diversity is true at every level. From region to region, the same pasta is cooked with a different sauce. Oily sauces

to coat, light ones to dress, rich ones to enhance and impress, fresh ones to lighten, and all to enjoy. From town to town, the same sauce with differing ingredients. From door to door, the same ingredients in differing proportions and to different effect, each cook convinced their method is the best, the only correct way. Whilst the majority of the recipes that follow are traditional in some respect, their precise formula is my own – just one of an infinite number of interpretations. It is this subtle influence I take ownership of – my contribution to the ongoing evolution of the taste and geometry of pasta.

Jacob Kenedy

The idea for this book began when I was thinking about the Italians' preoccupation with choosing the right pasta shape to go with the right sauce. As they will tell you, this makes the difference between pasta dishes that are merely ordinary, and the truly sublime.

Trying to understand the subject better led me to Pellegrino Artusi's wonderful book, *Science in the Kitchen and the Art of Eating Well*. Originally published in 1891, it was the first cookbook in Italian aimed primarily at the home cook. I was struck not only by the recipes and the entertaining text, but also the pure, graphic style of the illustrated instructions for making stuffed pasta. A chance encounter with a wallchart of plumbing grommets around the same time convinced me that using simple, geometric black-and-white drawings of the pasta shapes could demonstrate their differences, and help to identify the individual characteristics that make them particularly suitable for certain sauces. With this concept in mind I approached Jacob, who contributed his totally delicious and definitive recipes. Together, we offer a guide to the geometry of pasta; pasta at its simplest and best, to be enjoyed as the Italians do.

Caz Hildebrand

IMPORTANT NOTES

SALT

Salt is one of those things that makes pasta delicious. To most chefs, the correct level of seasoning is as much salt as a dish can take without in any way being over-salty – this is, to my mind, the greatest difference between restaurant food and home cooking. In all the recipes, I have left the level of seasoning up to you (except in the dose of salt for pasta water on page 13, although this can be reduced to taste). It is probably best to consider, in deciding how much salt to use:

- your enjoyment of the meal (the perfect amount of salt for the dish at hand).
- your enjoyment of all your meals over a lifetime (and enjoyment of everything else, for that matter). Using less salt will help to prolong your life, and improve its quality as time goes on.

Being a short-termist, I tend to favour the first argument in a live-fast, die-young mentality. I will likely regret this in later years.

FAT

Fat, just like salt, is key to the deliciousness of most pasta dishes. Unlike salt, in this book quantities of fat are specified – and are in the proportions you would be likely to find in a great Italian restaurant. Whilst these render the recipes to their perfect balance in my eyes, you may disagree. The quantities of butter, oil or cream can be halved to produce a healthier, more domestic version of any of the dishes. The arguments for salt apply for fat as well.

QUANTITY

Except where otherwise specified, all the recipes in this book serve two as a main course or light meal, or four as a starter (based on a 100g portion of dried pasta per person as a main course, or the rough equivalent for filled and fresh pastas). Where it is easier to prepare in larger quantities, the recipes are for a somehow sensible amount. Whilst any recipe can be scaled up or down, it is worth making sure that you have enough room in your pan (and heat on your hob) to cope.

COOKING PASTA

Boiling pasta requires a vessel capacious enough to allow it to move freely in the water, whilst sauces and pastas that need to be sautéed in a pan shouldn't be crowded. Pasta should be cooked *al dente* ('to the tooth', or with a little bite) for the modern palate, although in ancient times it would have been cooked as it is today in English schools – almost to a mush.

It is important to drain the pasta when slightly too *al dente* for your taste – it will continue to cook in those precious moments between colander and plate, and even more so if, as in most of these recipes, it is cooked for a further minute in its sauce. It requires precision: start tasting the pasta at 15–20 second intervals, from a minute or two before you think the pasta might be ready.

You don't need any special equipment to cook pasta – just a pot, a pan, and a colander. If you want to invest in something of great utility, buy a pasta basket – it allows quick draining of pasta without losing the boiling water, and keeps heavy shapes from sticking to the bottom of the pan.

BASICS: RECIPES FOR PASTA

SEMOLINA PASTA

The simplest sort of pasta to make, this really is nothing more than flour and water.

It isn't worth making extruded pasta shapes yourself (*rigatoni*, *spaghetti* and the like): their thinner section actually benefits from drying beforehand, so the packaged products are ideal. These are also impossible to make at home without considerable investment in equipment.

The 'peasant' pasta shapes – traditionally made by hand (*orecchiette*, *trofie*, *cavatelli*, anything that looks irregular) – are by their very nature thicker. These quite simply take too long to cook from dry – by the time the inside is beginning to cook, the outer surface will have turned to mush. Making these at home is laborious and time-consuming, but the returns are well worth the effort.

At least the dough is quick enough to make, once you've found the right flour: *semola di grano duro* – semolina, or a medium-ground flour made from strong wheat – or *semola di grano duro rimacinata*, more simply known as *semola rimacinata* (the same, but re-ground for a finer texture).

You can use English, store-bought semolina as a substitute for Italian *semola*, but it isn't designed for pasta – or

bread-making – the semolina you're likely to find here is lower in gluten. You will therefore need to use slightly less water, and the resultant pasta might have a little less bite, but when we blind-tasted the two, they were almost indistinguishable.

Semola di grano duro is kneaded with half its weight of water, then left to rest a few minutes before shaping (i.e. 100g *semola*, 50g/50ml water = pasta for 1 person). The texture of the dough should be soft enough to work (like a stress ball), but dry enough that it won't stick to itself too easily. A good way to test it is to press and smear the dough against a dry wooden surface – if it is easy to do, the pasta doesn't stick to the wood, and the top surface tears and roughens against your hand, the texture is right.

EGG PASTA

More commonly made at home, below are three recipes. Each has its own use, but all are interchangeable in practice.

A note on technique

Egg pasta is rolled in sheets before cutting or shaping. This is normally done with a machine nowadays (domestic ones are inexpensive), which is reliable and easy to do. Roll the pasta on the thickest setting, then fold and turn 90°, repeating a few times to stretch the gluten in all directions before starting to roll progressively thinner. The traditional way, unsurprisingly, is to use a long (several foot) rolling pin and a flat wooden table. The pasta sheet is rolled into a large disc, and when too large and thin to work effectively is allowed to coil around the rolling pin like a sheet of wrapping paper. It is rolled until loose on the pin, then uncurled and re-rolled tight to the pin, the process repeated until the pasta is thin enough. As opposed to the mechanical method, this has the advantage of allowing (necessitating, in fact) the use of a softer, wetter dough, which in turn yields a more elastic, magical pasta when cooked. The disadvantage is the practice required to achieve any sort of results. Up to you...

The result

However you roll, you want to achieve an even, smooth sheet of pasta at the end. There should be no flour on the pasta, and if you work quickly it should be sticky enough to stick to itself, but not to anything else. You may therefore be able to close filled pastas without using egg or water as an adhesive, but will have to let the pasta dry to a leathery state before cutting into unfilled pasta shapes (which would otherwise stick together).

A note on precision

Eggs vary in size, flour in humidity and gluten content, days vary in their weather, locations in their climate – and you need to choose how stiff your dough is to be (for machine- or hand rolling). The measurements below are therefore imprecise. A little practice will tell you when to add a touch more flour or egg. As a general rule, your dough should have as much spring in it as a relaxed muscle in your forearm.

On ingredients

I mention only egg and flour below. Colours and flavours may be added, but these are a distraction and to my mind, normally to be avoided. Your eggs and flour, therefore, are of the utmost importance. It may seem silly to state, but try to make sure the yolks are as dark a yellow as possible. Pale pasta looks, and somehow even tastes, insipid. I use Italian eggs whose hens were fed on God-knows-what (I believe a mixture of purest corn and carotene), but they make my pasta a glorious buttercup yellow.

The best flour is '00' *farina di grano tenero*, but plain all-purpose flour is fine. Up to a third may be substituted for *semola di grano duro*, which will give your pasta a little more bite at the expense of its velvety texture, and improve it for drying.

Egg equivalents

All eggs used in this book are large. The size difference between large and medium eggs from the supermarket is about 10%. You may therefore substitute 1 medium egg for 1 large one with impunity where few are used, or 10 medium eggs for 9 large ones where many are used.

SIMPLE EGG PASTA

Good for any dish, especially typical of Umbria and Emilia-Romagna.

1 egg per 100g flour, kneaded well and allowed to rest before rolling. 2 eggs and 200g flour will make enough pasta for three as a main course (the same quantity as the following recipes).

ENRICHED EGG PASTA

A stronger colour makes this a little more dramatic, and it is a little richer. Good all-purpose pasta, for flat or filled shapes.

1 egg and 3 egg yolks per 200g flour.

PURE-YOLK PASTA

Very decadent, given the expense of eggs for much of modern history, and is used rarely. It is not so suitable for stuffing, as the dough lacks elasticity, and is especially typical of Piedmont, as in the famous *tajarin* (see page 254).

9 egg yolks per 200g flour.

PASTA WATER

All pasta should be cooked in an abundance of boiling water, 12g salt per litre and nothing else.

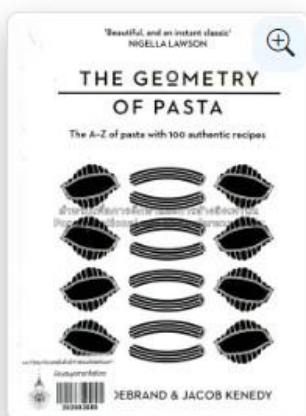
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The geometry of pasta / Jacob Kenedy and Caz Hildebrand.

Kenedy, Jacob.



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