PASTA SAUCES

Every region of Italy has its traditional pasta favorites. Although pasta sauces are easy to invent and improvise, it is helpful to keep in mind certain principles and time-proven traditions.



All pasta dishes contain a liquid component that functions as a carrier for flavor and prevents the pasta from sticking to itself. Cooked and drained pasta tossed only with solid ingredients will soon become a gummy mess. In Italy, a popular method of serving pasta, especially stuffed pasta, is in a minestra. A minestra is simply a broth, to which a simple garniture such as vegetable cubes, a spoonful of Parmesan cheese, or several pieces of stuffed pasta is added. For stuffed pasta, the broth and a little grated Parmesan cheese are the only "sauce." We Americans, however, are more familiar with pasta served with a limited amount of savory sauce or saucelike liquid. The most familiar sauces are based on tomatoes or olive oil, but other ingredients such as cream, butter, the cooking liquid from shellfish, meat juices, rendered fats (especially pancetta and prosciutto fats) are all used to create a flavorful medium for a pasta sauce. Once the basic liquid medium is established, the sauce can be augmented with herbs, vegetables, shellfish, salty condiments such as capers or olives, and chopped meats.

A Note About Serving Sizes

In Italy pasta is always served in relatively modest amounts before the main course—never with the main course or as the main course as it is sometimes served in the United States. The amount of pasta served in Italy as a first course (or second course if it follows antipasti) is about $^2/_3$ the amount served in the United States as a main course. One pound (450 grams) of dried pasta or $1^1/_2$ pounds of fresh (675 grams) is usually about right for 4 main course or 6 first courses.

Olive Oil and Butter: The Base for the Simplest Sauces

One of the simplest and most satisfying ways to eat pasta is to toss it with the best extra virgin olive oil or sweet butter and sprinkle it with freshly grated Parmesan cheese. Butter is the basis for the famous (or nowadays perhaps infamous) fettuccine alfredo, which is simply cooked fettuccine tossed with triple the amount of butter normally served with buttered pasta, plus reduced heavy cream, cheese, and other seasonings.

PASTA WITH BUTTER OR OLIVE OIL

Yield:			
6 PASTA-COURSE OR 4 MAIN-COURSE SERV-	fresh pasta	1 1/2 pounds	675 grams
	or		
	dried pasta	1 pound	450 grams
	extra virgin olive oil or sweet butter, cut into small chunks, or more to taste	12 tablespoons	175 milliliters
	salt and pepper	to taste	to taste
	freshly grated Parmigiano Reggiano		

Boil the pasta until al dente, drain, and toss with the oil or butter, salt and pepper. Pass the Parmesan cheese at the table.

Simple Additions to Basic Pasta with Butter or Olive Oil

Many of the best pasta sauces are made by adding one or more simple ingredients to cooked pasta that has simply been tossed with olive oil or butter. Much of the time, these ingredients can be tossed raw with the cooked pasta. Other ingredients (such as garlic or sage) may also be gently cooked first in the olive oil or butter before being tossed with the pasta. Remember, however, that extra virgin olive oil should be cooked very gently so that its perfume isn't destroyed by the heat. The creamy texture of sweet butter is also lost when the butter is overheated rather than simply allowed to melt on the pasta. However, butter can be cooked to the noisette stage (until lightly browned) before being tossed with the pasta (see "Pasta with Butter and Sage,'' page 475).

Anchovies. Italians, especially those from the South, are fans of both fresh and salted anchovies. In the United States, fresh anchovies are almost impossible to find, so we must rely on anchovies packed in oil. In Italy, anchovies are usually sold packed whole in salt and have a deeper more complex flavor than anchovies packed in oil (see Chapter 3, "Ingredients,'' page 82).

Bell Peppers. Grilled and peeled red bell peppers—in Italian called peperoni—are cut into strips or cubes, quickly simmered with tomatoes and garlic, and used as a pasta sauce.

Capers. These miniature salted or brine- or vinegar-soaked berries

give a savory accent to pasta sauces based on simple combinations of fresh tomatoes, herbs, olives, and anchovies. Italian cooks prefer the small non pareil capers, which in Italy are available packed in salt but in the United States are usually found packed in brine and vinegar in jars.

Garlic. So often used in Italian cooking that it's almost universal, finely chopped or sliced garlic gently cooked in olive oil or butter makes a simple and satisfying sauce. Italian cooks often cut the garlic into paper-thin slices and then cook them very slowly until they turn pale brown and develop a nutty flavor.

Herbs. The simplest way to give distinction to simple butter- or olive oil-coated pasta is to add fresh herbs. Basil is the best known—just add a small handful of whole leaves with the basic pasta tossed with olive oil—but finely chopped marjoram (especially with garlic) works magic with pasta tossed with butter or olive oil. Throughout Italy, sage and butter are cooked together in one of the best and simplest of pasta sauces. Mint and oregano are also popular herbs for flavoring pasta.

Olives. A variety of green and black olives are found throughout Italy, and each variety can be used to give its own particular nuance to a pasta sauce. The olives are pitted—easy to accomplish by just squeezing the pointier ends together between thumb and forefinger—and left otherwise whole, coarsely chopped, or on occasion ground to a paste. Olives give a salty and bitter note to pasta sauces, which makes them excellent in combination with basil, tomatoes, garlic, and anchovies.

Peperoncini. These little dried red peppers, found in any Italian grocery, are a favorite condiment for simple Italian pasta sauces. The peppers are coarsely chopped and need very little if any cooking before being tossed with the pasta. Red pepper flakes make a good substitute.

Pine nuts. In addition to their use in pesto sauce, pine nuts are a popular ingredient in pasta sauces (especially those made with vegetables and garlic) to provide texture. The flavor of pine nuts is enhanced when they are lightly browned in a dry sauté pan or in the oven.

Tomatoes. In many Italian sauces, chopped tomatoes are gently stewed with aromatic vegetables, often combined with meats and wine, into deep-flavored and complex sauces such as ragù or bolognese sauce. But in simpler sauces, tomatoes can simply be peeled and seeded and cut into cubes and tossed with pasta—often in conjunction with other condiments such as olives and anchovies, producing pasta sauces that are fresh and light.

Truffles. The most famous truffles used in pasta dishes are the pungent white truffles from the Piedmont region of northern Italy. Umbria, in central Italy, is also renowned for its winter black truffles, the same species (Tuber melanosporum) as French truffles from the Perigord and other regions. Tuscany is also gifted with summer truffles (Tuber aestivum), which, although less aromatic than white truffles or winter black truffles, are much less expensive. White truffles are shaved raw over simple dishes of fresh pasta tossed with butter or olive oil, whereas black truffles are more likely to be cooked in preparations such as spaghetti alla norcina (see recipe, page 478).

PASTA WITH BUTTER AND SAGE (FETTUCCINE CON BURRO E SALVIA)

This simple but delicious pasta sauce shows off the combination of sage and garlic. The secret to success is that both the butter and garlic should be lightly browned before they're tossed with the pasta.

Yield: 6 PASTA-COURSE OR 4 MAIN-COURSE SERVINGS

1 1/2 (675 grams) pounds fresh pasta or 1 pound (450 grams) dried		
unsalted butter	12 tablespoons	175 milliliters
fresh sage leaves	1 2	1 2
cloves garlic, peeled, very thinly sliced	4	4
salt and pepper	to taste	to taste
freshly grated Parmigiano Reggiano		

1. Bring a large pot of water to a rapid boil for cooking the pasta.
2. Heat the butter in a small saucepan or sauté pan over medium heat with the sage leaves. When the butter starts to froth, stir in the garlic.
3. Cook the pasta in the boiling water while the butter is cooking.
4. When the butter stops frothing, the garlic is pale brown, and light brown specks of coagulated milk solids appear along the bottom and sides of the pan, toss the butter, garlic, and sage with the pasta. Season to taste with salt and pepper. Pass the Parmesan cheese at the table.

SPAGHETTI WITH STREETWALKER'S SAUCE (SPAGHETTI ALLA PUTTANESCA)

This sauce, said to be from the Island of Ischia (off the coast of Naples) has become popular not only in Naples but in all of Italy and even abroad. The name "puttanesca,'' usually translated somewhat less delicately than "streetwalker,'' comes from the fact that the ladies of the night, after whom this sauce is named, had little time to shop and had to rely on ingredients such as olives and anchovies, that would keep without spoiling. Or so the story goes.

Yield: 6 PASTA-COURSE OR 4 MAIN-COURSE SERV-			
	extra virgin olive oil	4 tablespoons	60 milliliters
	cloves garlic, peeled, finely chopped, crushed to a paste	2	2
	dried pepperoncini, chopped	2 teaspoons	5 grams
	or		
	red pepper flakes	2 teaspoons	5 grams
	24 anchovy fillets, drained, patted dry, coarsely chopped		
	plum tomatoes, peeled, seeded, coarsely chopped	1 1/2 pounds	675 grams
	about 60 black olives cured in brine (not the oil-cured kind) Gaeta, pitted,	6 ounces	175 grams

coarsely chopped		
capers, drained	4 tablespoons	50 grams
dried spaghetti or other strand pasta	1 pound	450 grams
or		
fresh strand pasta such as fettuccine or linguini		1 1/2 pounds 675 grams
Salt	to taste	to taste

1. Bring a large pot of water to a rapid boil for cooking the pasta.

2. Heat the oil over medium heat in a sauté pan large enough to hold the cooked pasta, and stir in the garlic, peperoncini, and anchovies. Let the garlic sizzle for about 1 minute and stir in the tomatoes, olives, and capers.

3. Put the spaghetti on to cook while continuing to stir the sauce over medium heat. Season the sauce with salt—it many not need any because of the olives and anchovies—and toss with the boiled and drained spaghetti.

Pasta Styles

Although cooks in America tend to combine sauces with any variety of pasta that comes to mind, most Italians associate particular kinds of pasta with a region's own specialties and sauces. In Northern Italy, fresh pasta made with eggs is more popular than the dried pasta, often made only with water, usually served in the south. To delineate which sauces are traditionally served with what pasta would be the subject of an entire book but there are a few principles and traditions that help make a judicious paring of pasta and sauce.

Fresh pasta is usually cut in strands and served with the richer sauces—often containing cream, butter, and meats—associated with northern Italian cooking, whereas dried pasta, which comes in a myriad of shapes (often contorted) and size is usually associated with the tomato-based and vegetable sauces of the south. One reliable approach when deciding what pasta to use is to consider how much of the sauce will cling to the pasta and how rich is the sauce. A pasta with a lot of nicks and crannies such as

radiotori (little radiators) will absorb too much of a very rich sauce based on butter or cream. A light tomato sauce, on the other hand, will slide off a smooth slippery fettucini or spaghetti. If pasta with a meat sauce is being served as a first course, a smooth strand pasta and relatively little sauce will be appropriate while the same dish served as a main course might be better with an irregularly shaped pasta and relatively more sauce.

Pasta Shapes

Acini de pepe	peppercorns
Anelli	little rings
Bucatini	little hollows
Cannelloni	large reeds
Capellini	fine hairs
Conchiglie	shells
Ditali	thimbles
Ditalini	little thimbles
Elbow macaroni	dumplings
Farfalle	butterflies or bowties
Fettuccine	small ribbons
Fusili	twisted spaghetti
Gemelli	twins
Linguine	small tongues
Mafalda	girl's name
Manicotti	small muffs
Mostaccioli	small mustaches
Orecchiette	little ears
Orzo	barley
Pappardelle	wide strips
Penne	quill pens
Perciatelli	small pierced
Radiatore	radiators
Rigatoni	large grooves
Rotelle	spiral shapes
Rotini	little spiral shapes
Ruote	wagon wheels
Spaghetti	length of rope
Stellini	little stars
Tagliatelle	cut noodles
Tripolini	little bows

Tubetti	little tubes
Tubettini	very little tubes
Vermicelli	little worms
Ziti	bridegrooms

SPAGHETTI WITH BLACK TRUFFLES, GARLIC, AND ANCHOVIES (SPAGHETTI ALLA NORCINA)

This dish is named after Norcia, a town in Umbria famous not only for its black truffles but for its excellent pork and pork products. The slightly dissonant flavor of the anchovies is lovely with the truffles and garlic.

Yield:			
6 PASTA-COURSE OR 4 MAIN-COURSE SERVINGS	black truffle	1	1
	extra virgin olive oil	1 cup	250 milliliters
	cloves garlic, peeled, finely chopped, crushed to a paste	2	2
	anchovy fillets, soaked for 5 minutes in cold water, patted dry, finely chopped (soaking optional)	12	12
	dried spaghetti	1 pound	450 grams
	or		
	fresh strand pasta such as fettuccine or linguini	1 1/2 pounds	675 grams
	salt and pepper	to taste	to taste

1. Bring a large pot of water to a rapid boil for cooking the pasta.
2. If the truffle has dirt in its crevices, scrub it with a small brush, quickly rinse it, and pat it dry. Grate it with the small teeth of a hand grater.
3. Gently heat 4 tablespoons of the olive oil in a pan large enough to hold the cooked pasta over low heat and stir in the garlic and anchovies. Stir the sauce for about 4 minutes, until the garlic sizzles and releases its aroma. Stir the grated truffle in the hot sauce for 1 minute and pour in the rest of the olive oil.

4. Boil and drain the pasta and toss it in the pan with the sauce. Season to taste, while tossing, with salt and pepper.

Cream-Based Pasta Sauces

Heavy cream, because it is so receptive and forms so perfect a medium for other flavors, is often simmered with one or more aromatic ingredients to make a rich and flavorful pasta sauce. Unlike butter, which turns oily if overheated, cream thickens just enough so that it coats the pasta with a suave and velvety sauce. Pasta cream sauces require little effort—ingredients are simply infused in the simmering cream until the sauce thickens slightly. Almost any flavorful ingredient can be infused in cream, but here are a few suggestions. The following ingredients can be used alone or in combination.

Dried Mushrooms. Dried mushrooms, especially porcini, rinsed and soaked in barely enough water to cover, make a full-flavored pasta sauce that is especially delicious when the chopped mushrooms and their soaking liquid are simmered in heavy cream. Dried mushrooms can also be tossed in butter- or olive oil-based sauces.

Prosciutto. Tiny slivers or cubes of prosciutto, simmered in cream, give pasta sauces an inimitable depth of flavor.

Walnuts. Ground walnuts are used in Genoa and the surrounding region of Liguria to make pasta sauces. Traditionally the walnuts are ground raw to a paste, but it's also possible to leave them slightly chunky so the sauce has some texture. The walnuts can also be roasted to bring out their flavor.

Pappardelle with Dried Porcini Mushrooms (Pappardelle ai Porcini Secchi)

Pappardelle are flat long noodles, originally from Tuscany, measuring about $^3/_4$-inch wide. Any flat strand pasta, such as linguini or tagliatelle, can be substituted. Dried porcini mushroom

sauces often contain tomatoes, but the simplest and perhaps most delicious versions are made with only cream and seasonings.

Yield:				
6 PASTA-COURSE OR 4 MAIN-COURSE SERVINGS	dried porcini mushrooms	1 cup	250 milliliters (about 1 1/2 ounces/40 grams)	
	heavy cream	2 cups	500 milliliters	
	fresh papardelle or other strand pasta such as fettuccine or linguini		1 1/2 pounds	675 grams
	or			
	dried strand pasta	1 pound	450 grams	
	salt and pepper	to taste	to taste	
	grated Parmigiano Reggiano			

1. Rinse the mushrooms under cold running water and place them in a small bowl with 1/4 cup warm water. Turn the mushrooms around in the water every 5 minutes and soak for a total of 20 minutes until soft and pliable.
2. Bring a large pot of water to a boil for cooking the pasta.
3. Heat the heavy cream over medium heat in a pot large enough to hold the drained pasta.
4. Squeeze the soaking liquid out of the mushrooms and reserve both mushrooms and liquid.
5. Coarsely chop the mushrooms and pour the liquid slowly into the cream, leaving any grit or sand behind. Simmer the cream until it thickens slightly, about 5 minutes, and season to taste with salt and pepper.
6. Boil and drain the pasta, toss with the sauce, and serve. Pass the Parmesan cheese at the table.

RAVIOLI OR TAGLIATELLE WITH WALNUT SAUCE (RAVIOLI O TAGLIATELLE CON SALSA DI NOCI)

Traditional with ravioli or tagliatelle, walnut sauce is delicious on any flat strand, preferably fresh, pasta. The consistency of the chopped walnuts is largely a matter of taste; some Italian recipes recommend pureeing them to a paste, whereas some chefs leave them in lentil- to pea-size crunchy pieces.

Yield:			
6 PASTA-COURSE OR 4 MAIN-COURSE SERVINGS	shelled walnuts	1 2/3 cup	400 grams
	heavy cream	2 cups	500 milliliters
	cloves garlic, peeled, finely chopped	2	2
	finely chopped fresh marjoram or sage (optional)		2 teaspoons 5 grams
	small to medium ravioli	4 8	4 8
	or		
	fresh strand pasta such as fettuccine or linguini		1 1/2 pounds 675 grams
	or		
	dried pasta	1 pound	450 grams
	salt and pepper	to taste	to taste
	grated Parmigiano Reggiano		

1. Spread the walnuts on a sheet pan and bake in a preheated 350°F (175°C) oven for 15 minutes, until the walnuts smell fragrant and darken very slightly. Chop the walnuts by hand or in a food processor—the walnuts should be about the size of peas—and reserve.

2. Put a large pot of water to boil for cooking the pasta.

3. Heat the cream over medium heat in a pot large enough to toss the drained pasta, and stir in the garlic, marjoram, and walnuts. Simmer until the cream thickens slightly, about 5 minutes, and season to taste with salt and pepper. Cook and drain the pasta and toss with the sauce. (Ravioli can be tossed with a little butter and the sauce spooned over on the plates.) Pass the Parmesan cheese at the table.

SAUCES BASED ON PRESERVED PORK PRODUCTS

Although the best-known pasta sauces are based on olive oil, butter, or cream, Italy has delicious ham (prosciutto)—both cured (crudo) and cooked (cotto)—savory unsmoked bacon (pancetta), and a version of lard (strutto) far superior to the soapy-tasting American version. Good-quality American bacon can also be used in pasta sauces, but it will give the sauce a pronounced smokey flavor that although not authentic, is quite tasty.

Pork products such as pancetta or prosciutto are gently cooked so they render their delicious fat, which is then incorporated into the sauce. Pancetta is quite fatty and can be cut into cubes or strips and rendered in the same way as bacon. Prosciutto, on the other hand, is very lean, except for a layer of fat surrounding the meat just under the rind. This fat can be finely chopped or pureed to a paste in a food processor and then gently rendered and used as a cooking fat for sauces. It's important that the fat from pancetta or prosciutto be exposed to only very gentle heat—as with extra virgin olive oil—or it will lose flavor and finesse.

SPAGHETTI WITH PANCETTA, EGGS, AND PARMESAN CHEESE (SPAGHETTI ALLA CARBONARA)

This famous Roman dish is traditionally made with guanciale, a kind of unsmoked bacon made from pork cheeks. Guanciale is unobtainable in the United States, but pancetta or prosciutto make more than adequate substitutes.

Yield: 8 PASTA-COURSE OR 4 MAIN-COURSE SERVINGS			
	pancetta or cured prosciutto (such as prosciutto di parma) with fat left attached, both cut into 1/8-inch (3 millimeter) slices	1/3 pound	150 grams
	small garlic clove, peeled, finely chopped	1	1
	large eggs, beaten	3	3
	salt and pepper	to taste	to taste
	finely grated Parmigiano Reggiano	3/4 cup	180 milliliters
	dried spaghetti	1/2 pound	225 grams
	or		

fresh strand pasta such as fettuccine or linguini 450 grams	1 pound

1. Cut the pancetta into 1-inch by 1/8-inch strips. If using prosciutto, cut off and discard the rind—or save it for braises—and remove and finely chop the fat and cut the meat into 1-inch strips.
2. Over low to medium heat, render the pancetta strips or chopped prosciutto fat in a heavy-bottomed pan, large enough to hold the cooked pasta, until the fat becomes slightly crispy, 10 to 15 minutes. If using a very fatty pancetta, drain off all but 1/3 cup of the fat. Stir the garlic into the pan with the remaining fat and cook for 1 minute more.
3. Season the eggs with salt and pepper and stir in half of the grated Parmesan cheese. Boil and drain the pasta and quickly toss with the rendered fat and garlic, the beaten eggs, and the remaining cheese. Season to taste with salt and pepper and serve on hot plates.

SEAFOOD SAUCES

Fresh shellfish sauces and, to a lesser extent, sauces made from fresh fish—especially fresh anchovies and sardines—are popular in regions of Italy that border the sea. Preserved seafood, especially salted anchovies and tuna preserved in oil or brine, are more typical in those inland areas with limited access to fresh seafood.

Fresh shellfish sauces are approached in several ways. One typical method, usually used for clams and mussels, consists of steaming open the shellfish with a little water or white wine, combining the cooking liquid with olive oil, butter, or occasionally cream, and tossing the liquids (sometimes reduced but often not) with the cooked pasta. Crustacean sauces are often nothing more than the whole crustacean—shrimp, scampi (langoustines), or mantis shrimp (Mediterranean shrimplike crustaceans)—sautéed in olive oil, sprinkled with chopped herbs, and perhaps some chunks of tomato. The whole combination is then tossed with the pasta. Occasionally, crustacean shells are infused in cream or used to make a crustacean butter, either of which is then used in the sauce (see "Fettuccine

alla Crèma di Scampi,'' page 486).

Italians are fond of tentacled creatures. Squid and octopus are familiar to Americans, but cuttlefish, which look like squid but are fatter and more squat, aren't found in American waters and must be imported—they're hard to find in the United States except in East Coast ethnic markets. Cuttlefish ink is much darker, thicker, and more abundant than squid ink, so it works better in black Italian sauces and as a coloring for fresh pasta. Squid and baby octopus are usually lightly sautéd with olive oil, herbs, and white wine (they can also be grilled) and simply tossed with the cooked pasta. Cuttlefish, which is meatier and tougher, is braised in stews with tomatoes and occasionally red wine, and finished with its ink in a method analogous to making a civet. Squid can also be trimmed, the hoods cut into rings, the cluster of tentacles sectioned (if it is large), and tentacles and rings braised in red wine, with the sauce reduced and tossed with pasta. Large octopus, a favorite Italian antipasto and salad ingredient, is also best when braised—much like a red-wine beef stew—and the full-flavored and gelatinous braising liquid reduced and used as a sauce. The braised octopus sections can also be quickly grilled and combined with their reduced braising liquid just before tossing with the pasta.

Contemporary French-influenced sauces also crop up in Italian restaurants. Two examples are smoked salmon sauce, made by infusing slivers of smoked salmon in cream, and sauces based on caviar butter.

SPAGHETTI WITH CLAMS OR MUSSELS (SPAGHETTI ALLE COZZE O VONGOLE)

Americans are probably most familiar with the classic linguini with clam sauce, but in Rome and Naples clams and mussels are usually served with spaghetti. Virtually any cooked pasta can be tossed with steamed mussels or clams and their delicious briny liquid. This version is based on olive oil, but it is also possible to combine the cooking liquid with butter or with heavy cream (reduced until slightly thickened), flavor with chopped herbs—especially parsley—and toss with the pasta.

Yield:			
6 PASTA-COURSE OR 4 MAIN-COURSE SERVINGS	cloves garlic, peeled, finely chopped	2	2
	small clams or mussels, scrubbed and sorted	4 pounds	1.8 kilograms
	tomatoes, peeled, seeded, coarsely chopped	2 medium	2 medium
	extra virgin olive oil or heavy cream	2/3 cup	150 milliliters
	finely chopped parsley or basil (chopped at the last minute)	2 tablespoons	15 grams
	dried spaghetti or other strand pasta such as linguini or fettuccine		1 pound 450 grams
	or		
	fresh pasta	1 1/2 pounds	675 grams
	butter or olive oil	1 tablespoon	15 grams
	salt and pepper	to taste	to taste

1. Combine the garlic with 1/3 cup (75 milliliters) water in a pot large enough so that the clams or mussels come only half way up its sides (to leave room for them to open). Add the clams, cover the pot, and cook over medium to high heat until all the shellfish have opened, about 10 minutes for clams and 6 minutes for mussels.

2. Remove the clams or mussels from the pot with a big spoon or skimmer, put them in a bowl or pot, cover them, and keep them warm. (The cooked clams or mussels can be taken out of the shell—or just remove the top shell—but the dish looks more festive when they're left in their shells.) Slowly pour the shellfish cooking liquid into a small saucepan, leaving any grit behind in the large pot (if the liquid is very gritty, it can be strained).

3. Combine the tomatoes, olive oil, and parsley with the cooking liquid and bring to a simmer. Season to taste with salt and pepper (salt may not be necessary).

4. Toss the boiled and drained pasta with butter or olive oil and distribute the pasta in hot bowls. Ladle the sauce over the pasta and arrange the shellfish over and around.

SPAGHETTI WITH SQUID OR BABY OCTOPUS (SPAGHETTI AL RAGÙ DI TOTANO)

This dish, from the southern Italian region of Calabria, can be made with squid (called totani in the regional dialect) baby octopus, or cuttlefish. Unlike many Italian pasta dishes that use squid that has been quickly sautéed, this version calls for gentle braising in tomato sauce. One interesting difference between this dish and classic French stews is that French stew recipes call for cooking the ingredients in a minimum of fat and skimming off the fat during or after cooking so that little if any ends up in the final sauce. In this stew, a large amount of olive oil is used and the stew is gently cooked, uncovered, until the olive oil separates back out. This separated mixture, heresy to a French cook, becomes the sauce. The original version calls for braising the basil with the other ingredients, but the basil's flavor and freshness will remain more intact if it is chopped and added at the last minute.

Yield: 6 PASTA-COURSE OR 4 MAIN-COURSE SERVINGS

squid or baby octopus	2 pounds	900 grams
onion, peeled, finely chopped	1 medium	1 medium
garlic cloves, peeled, finely chopped	2	2
extra virgin olive oil	1/2 cup	125 milliliters
4 medium tomatoes, peeled, seeded, chopped		
or		
drained and chopped canned tomatoes	2 cups	500 milliliters
chopped basil leaves (chopped at the last minute)	3 tablespoons	20 grams
salt and pepper	to taste	to taste
dried spaghetti or other strand pasta such as linguini or fettuccine		1 pound 450 grams

1. Clean the squid by pulling out the innards and cutting off the tentacles just above where they join into a cluster. Cut the

(Recipe continued on next page)

hoods into 1/4-inch wide rings. (The purple skin may be scraped off before cutting the hoods into rings, but this is only for appearance—some cooks insist that the flavor is improved by leaving this skin attached.) Clean baby octopus in the same way as squid but leave the hoods and tentacle clusters whole.

2. Heat the onion and garlic over medium heat in 2 tablespoons of the olive oil in a heavy-bottomed pot until translucent, about 10 minutes. Stir in the tomatoes and the rest of the oil and bring to a gentle simmer. Stir in the squid or octopus, partially cover the pan, and simmer very gently, stirring the squid every few minutes, until the oil and tomatoes separate and the squid or octopus is tender, about 45 minutes. (If the squid or octopus is cooked before the sauce separates, continue cooking uncovered.)
3. Stir in the chopped basil, season to taste with salt and pepper, and toss with the boiled and drained pasta.

FETTUCCINE AND SHRIMP WITH CRUSTACEAN CREAM SAUCE (FETTUCCINE ALLA CRÈMA DI SCAMPI)

Scampi are salt-water crayfishlike crustaceans, not the shrimp that are usually served as a substitute in the United States. The correct English name for scampi is "lobsterettes,'' but most of the time the French name, langoustines, is used instead. Although some langoustines are imported into the United States (mostly from New Zealand), they are difficult to find. Shrimp, crayfish, and lobster can all be substituted. This sauce is made with crustacean butter made from crustacean shells (the shells needn't be from the same crustacean, see page 297). This sauce is very similar to the sauce crevettes on page 206.

Yield: 6 PASTA-COURSE OR 4 MAIN-COURSE SERVINGS			
	shelled raw shrimp tails, cooked shelled crayfish tails, or cooked lobster meat	1 1/2 pounds	675 grams
	heavy cream	1 1/2 cups	350 milliliters
	ripe tomatoes, seeded, finely chopped	2	2

or		
drained and chopped canned tomatoes	1 cup	250 milliliters
chopped fresh thyme	1/2 teaspoon	1 gram
or		
chopped fresh marjoram	1 teaspoon	2 grams
crustacean butter (see page 297)	1/2 cup	125 milliliters
salt and pepper	to taste	to taste
fresh fettuccine (tagliatelle) or linguini	1 1/2 pounds	675 grams
or		
dried fettuccine or linguini	1 pound	450 grams

1. If the shrimp are very large, cut them into 1/2-inch sections. If using crayfish tails, leave them whole. Slice lobster tails into 1/4-inch thick medallions. Leave lobster claws whole.
2. Combine the heavy cream, tomatoes, and chopped herbs in a medium saucepan over medium heat until the mixture thickens to a saucelike consistency, about 10 minutes. Whisk in the crustacean butter and strain the sauce through a fine-mesh strainer. Season to taste with salt and pepper, and reserve.
3. Just before serving, boil the pasta and very gently heat the shellfish in the sauce, never letting it boil for even a second—which would cause the shellfish to curl up, harden, and dry out. Toss the pasta with the sauce and shellfish and serve.

SPAGHETTI WITH TUNA (SPAGHETTI COL TONNO)

This Roman dish is traditionally made with tuna packed in oil, but nowadays in the United States fresh tuna is so widely available that it's worth making this dish with fresh tuna or, for that matter, any full-flavored firm-fleshed fresh fish. Avoid overcooking fresh tuna or it will turn very dry.

Yield:			
6 PASTA-COURSE OR 4 MAIN-COURSE SERVINGS	cloves garlic, peeled, finely chopped	2	2
	extra virgin olive oil	1/2 cup	125 milliliters
	tomatoes, peeled, seeded, coarsely chopped	3 medium	3 medium
	or		
	drained, seeded, and chopped canned tomatoes		1 1/2 cups 350 milliliters
	fresh tuna, cut into 1/2-inch cubes	1 pound	450 grams
	finely chopped parsley (chopped at the last minute)	1 tablespoon	7 grams
	finely chopped fresh basil (chopped at the last minute)	2 tablespoons	15 grams
	salt and pepper	to taste	to taste
	dried spaghetti or other strand pasta such as linguini or fettuccine	1 pound	450 grams
	or		
	fresh spaghetti or pasta	1 1/2 pounds	675 grams

1. Sweat the garlic in 2 tablespoons (30 milliliters) of the olive oil over medium heat in a heavy-bottomed pot large enough to hold the drained pasta. When the garlic turns translucent and smells aromatic (don't let it brown), after about 5 minutes, add the tomatoes and the rest of the olive oil and stew over medium heat, uncovered, until the tomatoes and oil separate, about 15 minutes.
2. Immediately before draining the pasta, add the tuna and chopped herbs to the sauce and stir over medium heat for 30 seconds. Season with salt and pepper and toss with the drained pasta.

VEGETABLE SAUCES

Many of the best pasta sauces are simple vegetable dishes made by chopping the vegetables somewhat more finely than if they were being served as a vegetable side dish and then tossing the vegetables with the cooked pasta. Tomatoes, chopped and gently stewed into a sauce, are the best-known examples, but greens such as spinach, chard, broccoli raab, kale, artichokes, asparagus, peas, green beans, and fennel can all be cooked and used alone or in com-

bination as simple sauces. Mushrooms and truffles are also used to make simple but extraordinarily delicious sauces.

Most vegetable sauces are made by gently stewing the vegetable in olive oil or butter or sometimes cream; sometimes adding chopped garlic or other condiments such as anchovies, pine nuts, or raisins; and sometimes herbs such as sage or marjoram, and then tossing the whole mixture with the cooked pasta.

SPAGHETTI WITH ARTICHOKES, GARLIC, AND PARSLEY (SPAGHETTI E CARCIOFI)

The suave delicacy of artichokes makes a luxurious pasta sauce that can be served with spaghetti—the pasta used for this dish in the far southern region of Calabria, where it is popular—but the sauce's sauve richness makes it even better served with fresh flat strand pasta such as fettucine. In typical southern Italian style, this sauce is based on olive oil—pancetta is optional—but the cubes of cooked artichokes can also be simmered in cream to make a delicate cream-based pasta sauce.

Yield: SAUCE FOR 6 FIRST-COURSE OR 4 MAIN-COURSE PASTA SERV-

artichoke bottoms (leaves trimmed off the sides, 4 large top two-thirds of the artichoke cut off)		4 large
juice of 1 lemon		
extra virgin olive oil	2/3 cup	150 milliliters
or		
2 tablespoons olive oil (for cooking the artichokes) and 1 cup heavy cream		
clove garlic, peeled, finely chopped	1	1
finely chopped parsley (chopped at the last minute)	2 tablespoons	15 grams
salt and pepper	to taste	to taste
dried spaghetti or other strand pasta such as linguini or fettuccine	1 pound	450 grams
or		
fresh spaghetti or pasta	1 1/2 pounds	675 grams
freshly grated Parmigiano Reggiano		

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1. Toss the artichoke bottoms with lemon juice immediately and put the artichoke bottoms, lemon juice, a tablespoon of the olive oil, and enough cold water to cover the artichokes by several inches in a large non-aluminum pot. Put a plate directly over the artichokes in the pot to keep them submerged. Simmer the artichokes for about 20 minutes from the time the water comes to the boil, until they can be easily penetrated on the bottom with a sharp knife. Drain and let cool.

2. Scoop the chokes out of the artichoke bottoms with a spoon and cut the bottoms into $^1/_3$-inch dice. Toss the dice with a tablespoon of olive oil and reserve.

3. Heat the remaining olive oil or heavy cream over medium heat in a pot large enough to hold the drained pasta. Add the garlic and cook until it smells aromatic or the cream thickens to a saucelike consistency, for about 5 minutes. Stir in the parsley and the reserved artichoke cubes and bring back to a simmer. Season to taste with salt and pepper and toss with the drained pasta. Pass the Parmesan cheese at the table.

ORECCHIETTE WITH COOKED GREEN AND LEAFY VEGETABLES (ORECCHIETTE CON CIME DI RAPA)

Orecchiette (the word means "little ears") are popular in Puglia, the region of Italy that Greece-bound travellers vaguely remember passing through on their way to the ferry in Bari. Many of Puglia's pasta dishes are based on vegetables and olive oil, and it is famous for both. Although the Puglielese have their favorite greens—broccoli raab among them—this simple method of combining greens and pasta can be used for Swiss chard, arugula, kale, turnip or beet greens, or even spinach.

Yield: SAUCE FOR 6 FIRST-COURSE OR 4 MAIN-COURSE PASTA SERV-

greens such as Swiss chard, kale, turnip or beet greens, or spinach — 2 pounds / 900 grams

or

arugula	4 bunches	4 bunches
or		
broccoli raab	2 pounds	900 grams
cloves garlic, peeled, very thinly sliced	4	4
peperoncini, stemmed and chopped	2	2
or		
red pepper flakes (optional)	2 teaspoons	3 grams
extra virgin olive oil	1/2 cup	125 milliliters
salt and pepper	to taste	to taste
dried orecchiette or short tubular pasta such as macaroni, ziti, or penne		1 pound 450 grams
freshly grated Parmigiano Reggiano		

1. Remove the stems from the greens or broccoli raab, wash and drain, and chop the leaves or flowers coarsely.

2. Heat the garlic and pepperoncini over medium heat in 2 tablespoons of olive oil in a heavy-bottomed pot large enough to hold the drained pasta. When the garlic smells aromatic and begins to turn very slightly brown, after about 3 minutes, stir in the drained vegetables. Continue stirring over medium heat until the vegetables release their moisture and become tender, about 5 minutes.

3. Season with salt and pepper and stir in the remaining olive oil. Toss with the cooked and drained pasta. Pass the Parmesan cheese at the table.

FETTUCCINE WITH PEAS (FETTUCCINE CON I PISELLI)

This simple dish, best known in the Veneto, the region surrounding Venice, is based on a mixture of pancetta and butter, but lightly reduced cream can replace the butter and even the pancetta. This approach need not be limited to peas; other delicately flavored green vegetables such as asparagus tips, baby string beans, or baby green onions or leeks can be quickly

blanched or boiled and tossed with the pasta. Parsley is called for in the traditional recipe, but other herbs such as chervil or chives can be used to give this dish a vaguely French touch.

Yield:			
SAUCE FOR 6 FIRST-COURSE OR 4 MAIN-COURSE PASTA SERV-	1 slice pancetta, finely chopped	2 ounces	60 grams
	1 small onion, peeled, finely chopped		
	2–3 fresh peas, shucked	2 pounds	500 to 700 milliliters
	or		
	2 packages frozen baby peas, thawed	20 ounces	600 grams
	chicken broth	1/2 cup	125 milliliters
	finely chopped parsley, chopped at the last minute	1 tablespoon	7 grams
	salt and pepper	to taste	to taste
	fresh fettuccine (tagliatelle), linguini, pappardelle, or other fresh strand pasta	1 1/2 pounds	675 grams
	unsalted butter	2 tablespoons	30 milliliters
	freshly grated Parmigiano Reggiano		

1. Cook the pancetta over medium heat for about 5 minutes in a heavy-bottomed pot large enough to hold the drained pasta. Stir in the chopped onion and continue cooking, stirring occasionally, until the onion turns translucent, about 7 minutes more.

2. If using fresh peas, boil them in a large pot of salted water for 1 to 2 minutes and drain.

3. Add the chicken broth and the peas to the onion mixture, turn the heat to high, and boil the peas for 3 to 5 minutes, while gently folding them over each other so they cook evenly. Stir in the chopped parsley and season to taste with salt and pepper.

4. Toss the boiled and drained pasta with the butter and arrange in wide soup bowls (they must have rims, because the sauce is very liquidy). Ladle the peas and their cooking liquid over the pasta. Pass the Parmesan cheese at the table.

MEAT SAUCES

Italian meat sauces, called ragù, are usually made by gently cook-

ing chopped meat with aromatic vegetables (the Italian equivalent of a mirepoix is a soffritto) and then adding liquids such as red or white wine and chopped tomatoes. What distinguishes ragù from French sauces is that the meat is left in the sauce, whereas French brown sauces are based on the extract—the braising or poaching liquid (stock)—that has been separated from the cooking meats. This Italian method of including the meat right in the sauce makes ragù a substantial sauce, perfect for pasta. (A French brown sauce wouldn't cling to pasta and would lack substance.) Italian cooks do sometimes, however, serve pasta in the broth made from gentle simmering of meats (such combinations of pasta in broth are called minestre) and then serve the meat after the pasta with condiment-like sauces such as the salsa verde on page 414.

It's useful to think of a ragù as analogous to a ragout (a stew), in which the meat is cut up so finely that it becomes an integral part of the sauce. In fact, many ragù recipes are far better if the meat is cut into small cubes, by hand, rather than being chopped. Better yet—and taking the ragù/ragout analogy a step further—large pieces of meat or meat cubes can be braised and then chopped and combined with the reduced braising liquid after cooking. Using this system, any French stew or braise can be converted into a delicious pasta sauce. Italian meat sauces are not only based on the familiar beef or veal (bolognese sauce) or pork (popular in Naples) but also on rabbit, duck, hare, and variety meats such as sweetbreads, brains, kidneys, and chicken and duck livers.

RAGÙ

Although recipes for this famous Bolognese sauce vary, they all begin with the preparation of a flavor base with ground beef (or sometimes leftover cubes of cooked beef) and mirepoix vegetables. This recipe is slightly different from the classic one in that the flavor base is first cooked with the liquid released by the tomatoes; the pulp is added later. This recipe calls for ground beef, but the sauce will have more texture and an appealing hand-hewn quality if the meat is cut by hand into $^1/_4$-inch cubes.

Yield:			
1 QUART (1 LITER)	onion, finely chopped	1 medium	1 medium
	carrot, chopped	1 small	1 small

prosciutto, chopped	2 ounces	50 grams
extra virgin olive oil	3 tablespoons	45 milliliters
lean chopped or ground beef	12 ounces	350 grams
tomato concassée, including liquid	3 cups	750 milliliters
bouquet garni, containing fresh thyme and marjoram		1 1
heavy cream	1/4 cup	60 milliliters
salt and pepper	to taste	to taste

1. Gently sweat the chopped onions, carrot, and prosciutto in the olive oil until the vegetables soften. Add the beef and stir the mixture until the juices released by the meat evaporate and only oil is left. Do not cook beyond this stage.
2. Add the bouquet garni and the liquid released in preparing the tomato concassée to the meat and vegetables, and stew the mixture for about 30 minutes, until the liquid evaporates and again only fat is visible.
3. Add the tomato pulp and continue stewing the sauce until it has the right thickness. This should not take longer than 15 minutes.
4. Add the heavy cream and cook for 2 minutes more.
5. Adjust the seasonings. If the sauce seems to lack flavor, follow the recommendations for using sugar and vinegar, page 437.

PAPPARDELLE WITH TUSCAN DUCK SAUCE (PAPPARDELLE ARETINE)

Duck is cooked into pasta sauces in many regions of Italy. Each region has its preferred pasta shape and its own style of cooking and serving the duck. In some regions, the duck is left in large chunks—even on the bone—whereas in other places the duck flesh is finely chopped. This recipe falls somewhere in between.

Most Italian recipes call for removing the duck skin and cooking the whole duck, but this sauce is especially good when made with