

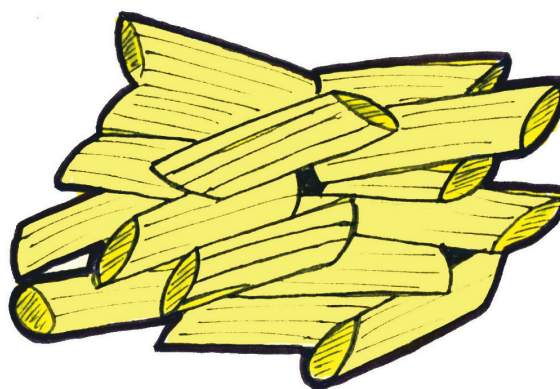
PASTA KNOWLEDGE



Pasta is an essential store cupboard staple (see *Cupboard essentials*). It's so versatile and easy to cook with that you should always have some on hand for last-minute meals.

WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN DRIED AND FRESH PASTA?

Dried pasta is made with flour and water, while fresh pasta is made from flour and eggs. You'll find fresh pasta in the refrigerated section of the supermarket as it has a much shorter shelf life than dried pasta. Because it's more expensive, people often assume that fresh pasta is better than dried, but that's not true. The truth is that they are just different and certain types of pasta are more suited to certain kinds of sauces and cooking methods (see below).



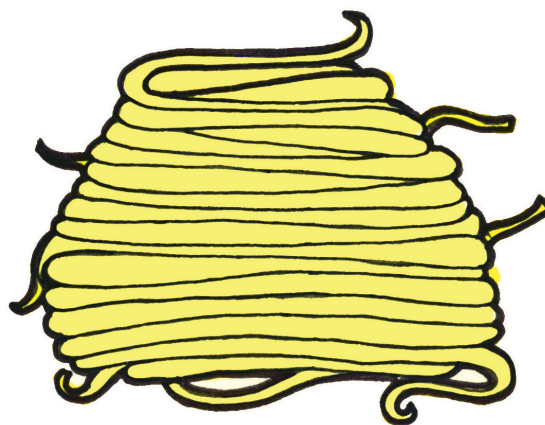
Most varieties of pasta – like lasagne sheets, tagliatelle, fusilli and penne – are available fresh or dried. Filled pastas, like ravioli and tortellini, tend to only be available fresh.

WHERE DOES PASTA COME FROM?

Traditionally, dried pasta is made in southern Italy and fresh pasta is made in the north. Dried pasta is often combined with oily or tomato-based sauces, vegetables or fish. Fresh pasta is normally served with richer sauces made with cream, butter, cheese or meat.

Even though the Italians invented pasta and made up these rules, they don't always stick to them. So don't get too worried about what you should and shouldn't do. If you like it, it works.

Making your own pasta at home is very simple to do, it just takes a little patience. Once you've learned how, you'll want to make it again and again.



TOP TIPS FOR COOKING PERFECT PASTA

Pasta is one of the easiest things to cook. If you follow these simple tips you'll get delicious results every time:

- Fill the pan with water and give it time to come to a fast boil before adding your pasta.
- Always add a good pinch of salt to the cooking water. You can't season pasta after it's been cooked so you need to let it absorb the seasoning as it cooks.
- Cook your pasta al dente. This translates as 'to the tooth' and what it means is that the pasta should be soft enough to eat, but still have a bit of a bite and firmness to it. Use the timings on the packet instructions as a guide, but try some just before the time is up to make sure it's perfect.

PASTA & FREE-RANGE EGGS

Fresh pasta, quiche, pies, mayonnaise, ice cream, biscuits and many other foods in our supermarkets are often made with eggs from battery farms where the hens are squashed together and kept in small cages (see *All about eggs*). But because more and more people have started buying free-range eggs, some producers have started to make their products with free-range eggs instead. Free-range egg pasta is becoming more common so it's worth checking the label and the ingredients lists on the products you buy to see which type of eggs have been used.