

All-purpose flour is mixed with eggs and oil to make *pasta all'uovo* (egg pasta)—the tender but resilient pasta that is rolled very thin and cut into noodles or shapes. It is usually cooked while freshly made and still soft, as it tends to become brittle and crack easily when dried.

Semolina flour is rarely, if ever, used alone to make pasta in the home. But it is used commercially—the best dried pastas are made from 100 percent semolina flour. I use a combination of semolina and all-purpose flours to make fresh semolina pasta. When kneaded well, the dough is elastic, silky, and durable, and it dries well—any of the sturdy pasta shapes made from semolina pasta dough in this chapter can be cooked when freshly made or completely dried.

The best way to learn the difference between these flours is to prepare both *pasta all'uovo* and semolina pasta. You will feel the difference between the doughs when you knead and shape them, and when you bite into them, you will experience the difference in texture and flavor. After making each once or twice, feel free to experiment with the proportion of flour given in the recipes. It is the understanding of these basic products that promotes success and versatility in the kitchen.

To cook fresh pasta for six, bring 6 quarts of salted water (about 2 tablespoons salt) to a rapid boil in a large pot—pasta should have enough space to turn comfortably in the pot when you stir it. Shake the pasta lightly in a colander to remove any excess flour. Drop the pasta into the boiling water a handful at a time. Immediately stir with a fork or wooden spoon after the addition of each handful, separating any pieces that stick together. When the pasta rises to the top of the water after it has returned to a full boil, it is done. (Semolina pasta that has been fully dried at room temperature, however, may require additional cooking time—up to 10 minutes after the water returns to a boil.) Watch carefully to avoid overcooking.

Drain the pasta gently, lowering the pot as close as possible to the colander. Shake the colander gently to remove excess water and return the pasta to the pot before adding sauce and cheese.

Stuffed pasta should not be drained in a colander, but rather lifted from the boiling water with a slotted spoon or a skimmer. Shake the spoon gently to remove water before transferring the pasta to serving bowls or a skillet containing the sauce.

Approximate Cooking Times for Fresh Pasta

- *Basic egg pasta*: 3 to 5 minutes, depending on whether or how long the pasta was dried before cooking
- *Stuffed pasta*: 6 to 8 minutes for freshly made pasta; slightly longer for pasta that has been refrigerated; up to 12 minutes for pasta cooked directly from the freezer
- *Semolina pasta*: 8 to 10 minutes for freshly made pasta; up to 16 minutes for fully dried pasta

Basic Egg Pasta Dough ★★★

☐ Pasta all'Uovo ☐

The ingredients for fresh egg pasta are simple. Figure one egg per person, and about half to two thirds of a cup of flour per egg. A little salt, olive oil, and possibly water are the only other things needed.

The kneading of the dough is what ultimately determines the texture of the pasta. Food processors and dough mixers do a great job of forming a dough from the raw ingredients, but I always like to finish kneading it by hand. I like the feel of the dough in my hands, and I can tell by touch when it feels right. You, too, can develop this touch—when the dough feels silky, rolls smoothly, and has a subtle sheen, it is ready. It will take some practice to develop this feel, but once you have it, it is yours to keep.

The way I knead pasta dough is probably different from other methods you may have read about or tried. My grandmother always did it this way, and I continue the tradition. By using different parts of my hands to knead the dough, and different ways to work the dough, I distribute the task of kneading evenly. It also helps me to tell when the dough is ready.

M A K E S 6 S E R V I N G S

To mix the dough by hand: On a marble or wooden work surface, pile the flour into a mound. Make a well in the center of the mound that goes all the way down to the work surface. In a small bowl, beat the eggs, salt, and olive oil together with a fork until blended, then add them to the well. Continue beating the egg mixture with the fork, gradually working the flour from the sides of the well into the egg mixture. As you work, the egg mixture will become thicker and the size of the well will expand. Continue beating until there is just a thin ring of flour around the egg mixture and the dough becomes too stiff to mix with a fork. If the dough becomes too thick to mix with a fork before almost all of the flour is incorporated, drizzle a tiny amount of the warm water over the egg mixture and continue mixing. It is possible you will not need any water at all.

4 cups unbleached all-purpose flour

6 large eggs

½ teaspoon salt

½ teaspoon extra virgin olive oil

Warm water as needed

Work the remaining flour into the dough with your hands just until a rough, firm dough is formed. Rub your hands together to remove as much dough as possible and add that to the rest of the dough. Shape the dough into a rough ball and set it aside.

Sprinkle your hands liberally with flour, rubbing them together to remove any remaining scraps of dough from your skin. With a knife, loosen any dough and flour from the work surface. Pass these scrapings through a sieve so you can reuse the flour and discard the scraps in the sieve. Make sure your hands are clean and flour them lightly.

To mix the dough in an electric mixer: Place all but $\frac{1}{3}$ cup of the flour in the mixing bowl of a heavy-duty electric mixer fitted with the dough hook. In a small bowl, beat the eggs, salt, and olive oil together until blended. With the mixer on low speed, pour the egg mixture into the mixing bowl. Knead just until the mixture comes together to form a rough dough. If necessary, drizzle a very small amount of warm water into the bowl. Remove the dough from the bowl and knead, using the remaining flour, and more if necessary, as described below.

To mix the dough in a food processor: Place all but $\frac{1}{3}$ cup of the flour in the work bowl of a large-capacity food processor fitted with the metal blade. In a small bowl, beat the eggs, salt, and olive oil together until blended. With the motor running, pour the egg mixture into the feed tube and mix until the mixture forms a stiff dough. If necessary, drizzle a very small amount of warm water into the feed tube. Remove the dough from the machine and knead, using the remaining flour, and more if necessary, as described below.

To knead the dough: Once you have formed a rough dough, it is ready to knead. Flour a marble or wooden work surface. (For effective kneading by hand, the surface should be hip-high; this will allow you to put your body weight into the kneading motion.) Press the heel of one hand deep into the dough, keeping your fingers high. Then press down on the dough while pushing it firmly away from you—the dough will stretch and roll under your hand like a large shell. Turn the dough over, then press into the dough, first with the knuckles of one hand, then with the other; do this about ten times with the knuckles of each hand. Use the knuckles of your forefingers especially during this process. Then repeat the stretching and “knuckling” process, using more flour if needed to prevent sticking, until the dough is smooth and silky, 10 to 20 minutes. Roll the dough into a smooth ball.

Place the dough in a small bowl and cover with plastic wrap. Let the dough rest for at least 1 hour at room temperature, or up to 1 day in the refrigerator, before rolling and shaping the pasta. If the dough has been refrigerated, let it stand at room temperature for at least 1 hour before rolling and shaping.

Rolling Egg Pasta Dough

“Nervous” dough: Sometimes the dough will feel tight and actually fight back and shrink when you roll it. I call this “nervous” dough, and it can be caused by a number of things: inadequate kneading of the dough, stale flour, or using water that is too hot. Try kneading the dough for an

additional 5 minutes and letting it rest for an extra 30 minutes wrapped in plastic wrap before trying again.

To roll the dough out by hand: Cut the rested dough into four equal pieces. Work with one piece of dough at a time and keep the others covered with a kitchen towel. Roll the pasta out on a lightly floured work surface until it is very thin (about $\frac{1}{16}$ inch) and forms a rectangle approximately 10×20 inches. Use just enough flour to prevent the dough from sticking; too much flour will make the dough dry and difficult to roll. If you find that the dough is very elastic and difficult to roll, let it rest under a kitchen towel for 10 to 15 minutes. Start rolling another piece of dough and come back to the first one once it has had a chance to rest. Let the pasta sheets rest, separated by kitchen towels, for at least 15 minutes before cutting them.

To roll the dough out with a manual pasta machine: Cut the dough into six equal pieces. Shape each into a rectangle about 5×3 inches. Lightly flour the pasta rectangles and cover them with a kitchen towel. Set the rollers of the pasta machine to the widest setting. Pass one of the pasta rectangles through the rollers long side first, then pass it through the rollers a second time. Repeat with the remaining pieces of dough. Keep the dough lightly floured—just enough to prevent it from sticking to the rollers. Reduce the width by one setting and pass each piece of dough through the rollers two times. Support the dough with your hand as it comes through the rollers—don't pull it through, or the dough will shrink so it is narrower than the width of the rollers. Continue working with the pieces of dough in the same order and reducing the width by one setting each time until all the pieces of dough have been passed through the next-to-thinnest setting on the pasta machine; the pasta sheets should be about $5\frac{1}{2} \times 30$ inches. Always keep the pieces of dough that aren't being rolled covered with a towel. If you find that the dough is very elastic, let all the pieces rest for 5 to 10 minutes before continuing. Once all the pasta has been rolled into sheets, let them rest, completely covered with towels, for about 15 minutes before cutting them.

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Hang pasta. Dust w flour on towel if don't cook immed.

Cutting Egg Pasta Dough

For papardelle: Cut the pasta sheets lengthwise into $1\frac{1}{2}$ -inch-wide strips. (The machine-rolled pasta sheets will be easier to work with if you first cut them in half crosswise to make two pieces, each about 15×5 inches.) Flour them lightly and stack four of the $1\frac{1}{2}$ -inch-wide strips. Cut the stack crosswise into 5-inch lengths. You will have wide ribbons of pasta, each about $5 \times 1\frac{1}{2}$ inches. Set the ribbons on a clean kitchen towel dusted with flour until ready to cook.

For malfatti: Proceed as above but cut the stacks of ribbon pasta diagonally at $1\frac{1}{2}$ -inch intervals to form rhomboid shapes. Toss the malfatti lightly with flour and set them apart on a clean kitchen towel dusted with flour.

For garganelli: Cut malfatti as described above and keep them covered with a towel. Lightly flour a chopstick or a similarly shaped short and narrow wooden dowel. Place one of the malfatti on the work surface in front of you with one of the shorter points facing you. Place the chopstick over the point nearest you and roll the dough around the chopstick to form a pointed cylinder. Press the seam to seal it and slide the cylinder off the chopstick. Set on a floured kitchen towel and continue until all are finished, spacing the cylinders on the towel so they aren't touching.

Both malfatti and garganelli can be frozen. Arrange them in a single layer on floured baking sheets and set the sheets in the freezer until the pasta is completely frozen. When frozen, transfer them to resealable freezer bags, dividing them into portions, if you like. They will keep for 4 to 6 weeks. To cook frozen malfatti and garganelli, take them directly from the freezer to boiling water; defrosting them first will make them stick to one another.

For tagliatelle: Cut the sheets of pasta into 10-inch lengths. Flour the sheets lightly and roll them up from a short end, as you would a jelly roll. With a knife, cut the rolls into ½-inch-wide strips. Unroll the strips and toss them lightly to separate them. Set on a clean kitchen towel dusted with flour.

For tagliolini: Proceed as for tagliatelle, cutting the pasta rolls into ¼-inch-wide strips.

To freeze tagliatelle, tagliolini, and other "ribbon" shapes made from egg pasta, toss a handful of the pasta with flour or coarse cornmeal, then form the strands into a *nido* (nest). Arrange the nests on a baking sheet and place in the freezer until solid. Transfer the pasta to resealable freezer bags and store in the freezer for up to 6 weeks.

There is plenty of room for flexibility between the time fresh pasta dough is made and when the final product is cooked. The dough can be refrigerated, wrapped in plastic wrap, for up to 3 days before rolling and cutting it. (With the exception of stuffed pasta shapes, which can be refrigerated briefly, I don't recommend refrigerating fresh pasta once it has been cut into shapes—the dough will become soft and stick together.)

Once the dough is cut and rolled, it can be cooked immediately or dried completely in a well-ventilated area (preferably on a low-humidity day) before cooking. It can also be cooked at any point in between. The longer fresh pasta is dried before cooking, the more time it will take to cook (see *How to Cook Fresh Pasta*, page 88). It is up to the cook to decide how long fresh pasta should dry—it is a matter of convenience and taste.