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Professional Chefs Share Their Top Tips For Making Pasta From Scratch



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Dining

I cover all things food and drink in New York City and beyond.




The easiest types of pasta to make (no pasta machine required), common pitfalls to avoid, and more. CREDIT: ANTICA PESA

Making fresh pasta from scratch has many of the same allures as baking bread; you only need a few pantry ingredients, you can feel a sense of pride having made something you typically buy from the store (or only enjoy at fancy Italian restaurants), and it's a way to keep your hands busy and mind off the news, if only for an hour or two.

For first-time pasta makers, Emanuele Baldassini, the executive chef of [Antica Pesa](#) in Williamsburg, Brooklyn, recommends choosing shapes like fettuccine or pappardelle “because they are simple to create and do not require any special tools, just a rolling pin and a knife.”

Christopher Gross, the executive chef of [The Wrigley Mansion](#) in Phoenix, Arizona, claims egg noodles are “definitely the easiest” to make. “All you need to do is add a few cups of all-purpose flour to your food processor, eggs and salt until the dough creates a ball,” he said. “Let it rest for about 30 minutes and roll it out with your rolling pin until the dough is very thin. You can cut it any way you'd like, but I like the method of rolling the thin dough up like a jelly roll and then cutting thin strips and cooking in simmering water for a few minutes. The recipe is very forgiving, so it's great for first-timers.”

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As for tools, while a food processor, stand mixer or pasta machine (hand crank or KitchenAid attachment) will definitely save you some time and an arm workout, you can still make pasta without them. “If you have a hand crank pasta maker, great! If not, you can 100 percent roll out pasta by hand,” Farideh Sadeghin, the culinary director of [MUNCHIES](#), said. “You really need a rolling pin, and if that isn't accessible to you, an old

wine bottle will work just as well! Having a large enough work space to roll is essential, and elbow grease is your best friend when rolling pasta by hand.”

Her “dead simple,” “no-fail” vegan pasta recipe doesn’t require eggs or making a well and mixing by hand with a fork. “Simply mix two cups of semolina flour with two-thirds cup water until smooth (you may need to add an extra tablespoon of water to assist),” Sadeghin said. “The dough should be supple and have a light spring to it when you push your fingertip into it lightly. Be sure to wrap the pasta dough in cling film after making it and allowing it to rest for two hours in the refrigerator before handling. This allows the water to be absorbed by the flour and the gluten to relax. The result? A much stronger, more pliable dough.”



Rolling dough through a pasta machine CREDIT: MUNCHIES GUIDE TO DINNER, TEN SPEED PRESS

Getting that perfect moisture balance, whether you’re hydrating your dough with water or eggs, is key. “When you’re kneading the dough, it will become a smooth ball. Sometimes when mixing the dough it looks too dry, but it’s actually fine and people will add more eggs prematurely,” Sarah Grueneberg, the chef/partner of [Monteverde Restaurant & Pastificio](#) in Chicago’s West Loop, said. “After kneading the dough, if it still feels too dry then you can go ahead and add more liquid. You should be able to grab the dough and smash it in your fingers; if it sticks together, then it’s good.

“One of the biggest pitfalls is that the dough is either too dry or too wet. Let your dough rest for at least 20-30 minutes for it to be workable. If it’s too soft or sticky, then add a bit of bench flour when you’re rolling it out. One common mistake is that people tend to just flour up their surface before rolling. It depends on your dough; if it’s already a bit too dry, then you’ll need to use less flour.”



Making fresh fettuccine at Antica Pesa CREDIT: ANTICA PESA

If you’re making your own pasta sauce to complement your fresh pasta, Baldassini recommends keeping things simple. “People often try to add too many ingredients and vegetables to a fresh sauce, but we like to stick to a few key ingredients that you can source from a local farmer’s market,” he said. “For a very flavorful and robust pasta sauce,

we use Piennolo and San Marzano tomatoes when they're in season in the summer, which both have a very concentrated and unique flavor.

“Our go-to summer sauce is very simple, and always a crowd-pleaser. Cut a few cloves of garlic and onion very thin, and simmer in a pot with extra virgin olive oil. Then, add chopped tomatoes and cook for one hour. Once the sauce is simmering nicely, you are ready to add chopped basil, salt and black pepper. Stir all of the ingredients together, and once the sauce looks thick but you still have a few of those juicy tomato chunks, you're ready to serve!”

Above all, just give it your best effort and don't be afraid to make mistakes. “I always tell people, pasta knows when you're scared. Have fun with it,” Grueneberg said. “If you fail, then just try again. It's like making bread, the first time might be OK but the second time will be even better.”

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I've been planning trips around notable eateries and the buzziest new dishes even before my food writing career began as an associate editor at The Daily Meal, where I... **Read More**

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