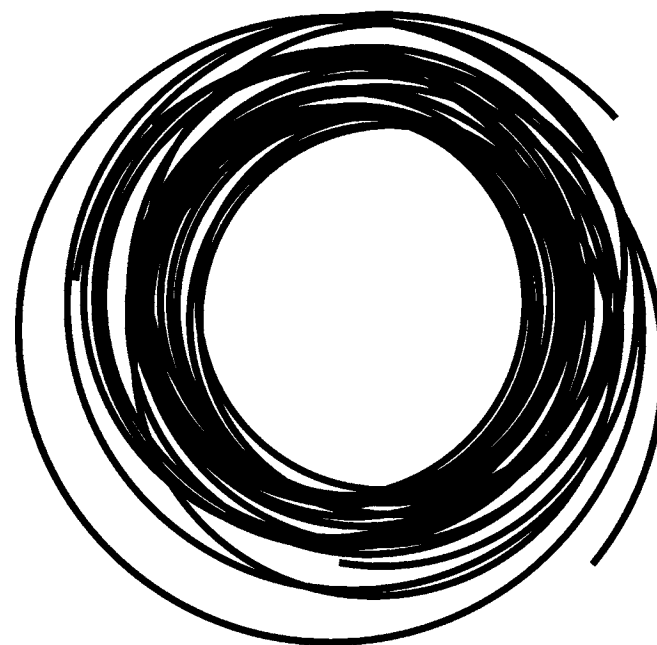


THE GEOMETRY OF PASTA

THE GEOMETRY --- OF PASTA

CAZ HILDEBRAND & JACOB KENEDY



B&X TREE

**For our mothers,
Haidee Becker and Judy Hildebrand**

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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 fine 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 quantity. 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 the following 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).

8 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.

BASICS: THREE TOMATO SAUCES

Tomato sauce is not only a sauce on its own, but a useful component of other dishes. Opposite are three sauces, subtly different in the making but quite different to eat.

The lightest sauce is best for the most delicate of pasta shapes – *spaghettini* in particular, or with subtly-flavoured filled pastas – *caramelle*, *ravioli*, *malfatti* and the like. It is a fresh sauce, more water- than oil-based, tasting much like fresh tomato, and is used in quite a high proportion to the pasta. I always keep some in my fridge, and use it as an additive to other sauces that need that touch of tomato.

The richest sauce is the opposite – reduced, concentrated and oily; a small amount is enough to coat chunky long shapes – *spaghetti* and *pici*; or tubular ridged ones: *penne rigate*, *tortiglioni* and *rigatoni*. Its concentrated acidity also makes it great to keep in the fridge – whilst I use it less than a light sauce, it keeps for a long while.

The medium sauce is most like your ‘common-or-garden’ tomato sauce. It is, to my mind, neither one thing nor the other. It is a good all-round sauce, even if I prefer the other two for their character.

Yields 700ml sauce, enough for 500g dried pasta
1kg ripe vine tomatoes
3 cloves garlic, thinly sliced
4 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
a small pinch of crushed chilli flakes (optional)
1/2 rounded teaspoon fine sea salt

Yields 600ml sauce, enough for 600g dried pasta
3 cloves garlic, thinly sliced
6 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
a small pinch of crushed chilli flakes (optional)
500g ripe vine tomatoes, chopped
500g tinned tomatoes, chopped or crushed
1/2 rounded teaspoon fine sea salt

Yields 500ml sauce, enough for 700g dried pasta
4 cloves garlic, thinly sliced
5 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
a small pinch of crushed chilli flakes (optional)
1kg tinned tomatoes, chopped or crushed
1/2 rounded teaspoon fine sea salt

LIGHT TOMATO SAUCE

Cut the whole tomatoes into chunks, then purée (seeds and all). Fry the garlic in 3 tablespoons of the olive oil for a few moments until cooked, but not yet coloured. Add the chilli flakes followed by the puréed tomato and salt. Bring to a fairly brisk boil and cook until the sauce has a little body (you will see the bubbles get a bit bigger), but is by no measure thick. The tomatoes should taste fresh, but no longer raw. Season with pepper and add the remaining oil to finish.

MEDIUM TOMATO SAUCE

Fry the garlic in the oil until it just begins to colour, then add the chilli flakes, then the tomatoes and salt, along with a few grinds of black pepper. Cook at a brisk simmer until thickened – about an hour. This sauce, of the three, is closest to one you might buy at a shop. It is my least favourite, but is useful in a number of other dishes.

RICH TOMATO SAUCE

Fry the garlic in the oil until golden brown (it’s ready when you start to become nervous of burning it, but before you actually do), then add the chilli, tomatoes and salt. Bring to a boil, then simmer gently until the sauce is very thick, and the oil has all risen to the top. If your spoon (which you must use frequently – the thicker the sauce, the greater the risk of burning) is small and wooden, you may be able to stand it upright in the sauce when it’s ready.

AGNOLOTTI

Dimensions

Length: 50mm

Width: 25mm

Synonyms

agnellotti, agnulot, angelotti, langaroli, langheroli, piat d'angelot

Also good with this pasta

in brodo; tomato sauce; butter and sage; stew juice

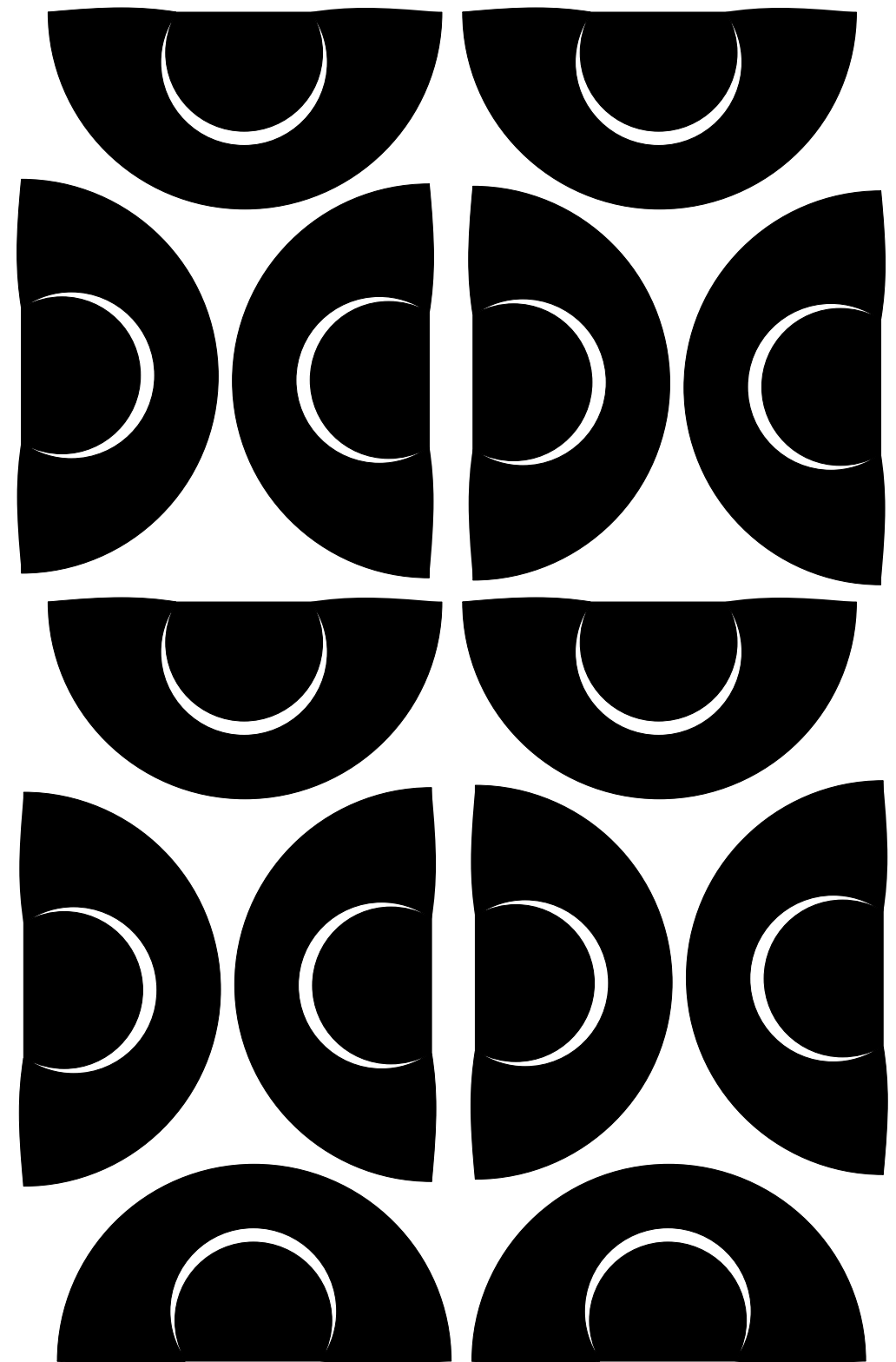
Agnolotti are, in essence, *ravioli* (page 208), but instead of being made from two squares of pasta, they are made from one piece folded in half. The pasta sheet may be circular (semicircular *agnolotti*, illustrated) or rectangular (for square or rectangular *agnolotti*). A speciality of Piedmont, they were named after a cook called Angiolino from Monferrato, known as 'Angelot', their reputed inventor (the ancient spelling, still sometimes found today, is *piat d'angelot* or *angelotti*).

In accordance with ancient custom, different fillings were made for feasting days (i.e. normal ones) and fasting days (at one time, no meat was eaten on 150 days in the year):

– *Agnolotti di magro* (for 'lean' or fasting days) – filled with a mixture of greens, cheese, egg and perhaps a little breadcrumb. You can make these using the fillings from *pansotti di preboggion* (page 182), or spinach and ricotta *ravioli* (page 210).

– *Agnolotti di grasso* (for 'fat' or feasting days) could be filled with boiled breast of veal, the stock used first for cooking the meat, then cooking the *agnolotti*, and finally eaten with them bobbing in it. Alternatively, they could be filled with pot-roasted meats, as in the recipe on page 22 and the pasta dressed with the pan-juices before serving.

As with all Piedmontese pastas, these are dressed with butter and cheese – a sign of the wealth of the area, and a symptom of its poor climate for olives.



MAKING AGNOLOTTI

Serves 16 as a main

1.4 kg enriched egg pasta dough (page 13)
200g calves' or lambs' brains
250g escarole
200g lean veal (loin, fillet or escalope meat), cut in 2cm cubes
200g lean pork (loin or leg meat), cut in 2cm cubes
100g butter
1 medium onion, chopped
1 clove garlic, chopped
3 sprigs rosemary, leaves picked
15–20 sage leaves
100g sliced prosciutto crudo
2 eggs
150g grated Parmesan
80ml double cream

This filling is similar to that for *agnolotti dal plin* (page 22), and is in some ways easier to make (you don't have to make a pot-roast first), in some ways more challenging (everything is cooked from raw, and you need to source some offal). Choose whichever seems more convenient to you – both are delicious.

Poach the brains in salted water for 10–12 minutes at a gentle simmer, leave them to cool in the water and pick off any nasty-looking bits of membrane. Boil the escarole in well-salted water until tender (2 minutes), drain, refresh and squeeze as dry as possible.

Heat the butter and brown the veal and pork over a medium-high heat for 10 minutes, until caramelised all over. Add the onion, garlic, rosemary and sage and fry for a further 10 minutes on a slightly lowered flame until softened. Leave to cool in the pan.

Add the rest of the ingredients and transfer to the bowl of a food processor (make sure all the buttery meat juices go in too) and work until you have a finely textured pâté. This will yield just over a kilo of filling, enough for 1.4kg of pasta dough, or a lot of *agnolotti*. Less can be made, and the filling frozen for future use (either in *agnolotti*, or other shapes like *tortellini* (page 262), *ravioli* (page 208), *cannelloni* (page 50) et al.). In this case, use 5 parts of filling to 6 parts of pasta by weight, allowing 75g filling per main course per person – 150g *agnolotti*, allowing for wastage of the dough. Or be prepared to spend a long time forming these little pastas, and freezing the ones you don't need for today.

Roll a reasonably sized piece of dough to just under 1mm thick, the second-thinnest setting on most machines. Cut into 5cm rounds with a pastry cutter and dab a piece of filling the

size of a chickpea in the centre of each. Working quickly, pick up each disc and fold into a semicircle to enclose the filling, pinching the edges to close and exclude air. If too dry to stick to itself, or if you've got flour on the dough (you shouldn't need any flour to roll the pasta at all), mist with a little water before you start picking up the discs. Keep the *agnolotti* on a tray dusted with semolina until ready to cook.

AGNOLOTTI ALLE NOCI

Walnut sauce

Serves 4

550g, or 1/4 recipe *agnolotti* made as the recipe above

WALNUT SAUCE

100g shelled walnuts
60g bread (weighed without its crust)
4 tablespoons milk
1 tablespoon picked oregano leaves, or 5 sage leaves
80g grated Parmesan
300ml water
150ml extra virgin olive oil
grated Parmesan, to serve

Also good with this sauce
agnolotti dal plin, fazzoletti, fettuccine, pansotti, pappardelle, ravioli, tagliatelle, tortellini, tortelloni

This sauce is almost identical to that for *corzetti* (page 82), but for the omission of garlic and the extra water. The lack of garlic is my preference, but if you do make too much of the raw sauce used for *corzetti*, you can always slacken it for use here.

Only if they look dark and slightly bitter, soak the walnuts in boiling water for 15 minutes, then drain and pick off any extraneous bits of dark skin. Soak the bread in the milk, then combine with the nuts, oregano or sage and Parmesan in a food processor. Here you can choose to leave a little texture, or to grind the mixture finely. Both options have their advantages; I lean towards a finely textured, creamy sauce.

Add the oil and then, gradually, 300ml water. Season with salt and pepper.

When you put your pasta on, heat the sauce in a wide pan. It will do an amazing thing: the greenish hue from the herb will turn purple, from the walnut skins. Drain the pasta *al dente*, and toss into the sauce. Cook until well coated, and serve with grated Parmesan.

AGNOLOTTI DAL PLIN

Dimensions

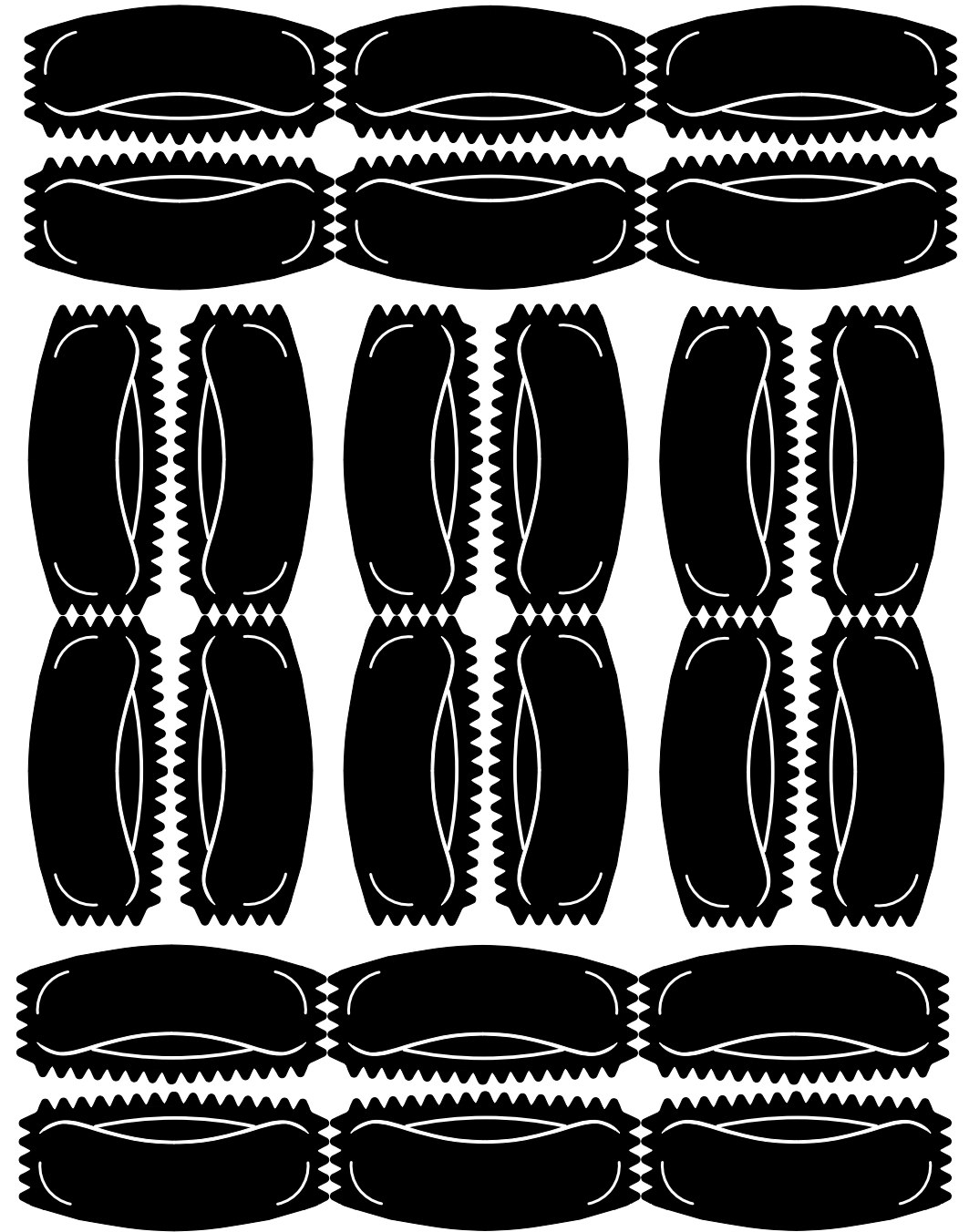
Length: 41mm

Width: 23mm

Also good with this pasta

in brodo, walnut sauce;
cream; stew juice; *tartufo*
d'Alba

Agnolotti dal plin are pinched or pleated tiny *agnolotti* (see page 16), *plin* being a pinch in Piedmontese dialect. They are almost always stuffed with a meat filling and may be served *in brodo* (in a broth) where the pleat improves the mouthfeel, or in a sauce, which the pleat helps to catch on the pasta. As with *tortellini* (the Bolognese equivalent, page 262), they may be further condimented with white truffles, especially when served in broth, for particularly festive occasions. The small size and dainty work required means these are not an everyday pasta, rather for times when there is something to celebrate, or when housewives had to fill long winter evenings with some sort of activity.



MAKING AGNOLOTTI DAL PLIN

Serves 4

150g cabbage or escarole
25g butter
400g leftover braised or
pot-roasted veal or pork*
4 sage leaves
80g grated Parmesan
1 egg
nutmeg

*Substituting 100g boiled veal brains for a quarter of the meat makes for a smoother, richer filling. If you need to braise your meat specifically for this dish, start with 500–600g of raw meat, brown it in butter, add some herbs and white wine and simmer with a lid on for an hour or two.

This filling is a simplified version of that for *agnolotti* (page 18) – the two can be used interchangeably.

300g (1 recipe of enriched pasta dough, made with 200g flour) pasta dough will require 200g of filling (the rest can be frozen), and yield 500g of *agnolotti* – about enough for four people.

For the filling, boil the greens in salted water until tender. Drain well, and leave to steam dry spread out on a cloth. Chop finely, squeezing any extra water out in your hands, then fry gently in the butter for a few minutes. Leave to cool, then combine with the other ingredients in a food processor until quite smooth.

To make the *agnolotti dal plin* roll the pasta just under 1mm thick (the finest setting on most machines), and cut into long, 5cm wide strips. Along the centre, dot even, hazelnut-sized pieces of filling 15mm apart. Barely moisten the flap of dough with egg or water only if it is too dry to stick to itself. Fold the strip over along its length, towards you (with the fold away from you, and the two edges facing you) to loosely enclose the filling. For ‘normal’ filled pasta, you would press down to seal between the little dumplings – not so here! Pinch to either side of each lump of filling, to make a vertical pleat in the top layer of pasta and exclude any air. Now press down – both to flatten the pleat towards you, and to close the long open edge of the folded pasta. Use a rotary dough cutter (anything really) to cut the dumplings apart – one which cuts frilly edges is often preferred. Spread out in a single layer until ready to use, or freeze for future use.

AGNOLOTTI DAL PLIN CON BURRO E SALVIA

Butter and sage

Serves 4 as a starter or
2 as a main

250g *agnolotti dal plin*
100g butter
16 sage leaves
Parmesan, to serve

Also good with this sauce
agnolotti, cappelletti, ravioli,
tortelli, tortellini, tortelloni

Burro e salvia, or butter and sage, is one of the simplest sauces for stuffed pasta, and one of the best. Sage is one of my favourite herbs, reminding me of a kindly older lady in flavour – elegant, feminine, complex and slightly dusty. It marries beautifully with butter, especially when lightly caramelised, and together they act as an excellent foil to even the simplest of fillings.

Cook the pasta usual, i.e. boil in salted water, in this case, for 2–3 minutes. Whilst they boil, you have a short window of time in which to make your sauce. Fry the butter and sage until the butter caramelises (the solids turn hazelnut-brown), then add a ladleful (about 100ml) of the pasta water, and shake the pan. It will foam up and start to emulsify and thicken as you shake. It should still be a little runny when you add your drained *agnolotti* (leave the pasta slightly under-done, it will cook for 20 seconds more in the sauce), as it will thicken more as the sauce bubbles away on a medium heat. The sauce is done when it coats the pasta like cream. Taste for seasoning (your pasta water may have already provided enough salt), and serve with a liberal grating of Parmesan.

ALFABETO

Dimensions

Length: 4.5mm

Width: 3.5mm

Also good with this pasta
acquacotta, chicken stock
and butter

Aka ‘*alphabeti spaghetti*’, *alfabeto* is a *pastina* (tiny pasta for soups) made in the shape of the letters of the alphabet. Almost certainly invented to appeal to children, it might also appeal to parents as an educational tool and a source of nostalgic pleasure.



MINESTRA DI ALFABETO

Alphabet soup

*Serves 4 as a starter
or 2 as a main*

80g *alfabeto*

1 small bunch asparagus

1 courgette, diced 1cm

700ml chicken broth,
preferably clarified
(p242, or vegetable
stock)

10 leaves basil

1 tablespoon extra virgin
olive oil to serve

Also good in this soup
canestrini, *quadrettini*,
stelline

Using an A to Z of vegetables (only two – asparagus and zucchini), this broth is tasty enough for grown-ups willing to forgive the gimmick.

Trim the tough parts of the stem from the asparagus and cut the tender remainder into 1cm lengths, leaving the tips intact.

Heat the broth or stock until boiling, check for seasoning and add the pasta. About a minute before it is done, add the vegetables. Serve with the basil stirred in and the oil drizzled over.

ALFABETO WITH KETCHUP

*Serves 1 adult, or more
likely 2 children*

100g *alfabeto*

50g ketchup, plus a little
more for decoration

50g butter

Boil the *alfabeto*. Meanwhile, warm the ketchup with half the butter and a dash of pasta water to make a sauce. Drain the *alfabeto*, and mix with the remaining butter. Spread the sauce out on a warm plate, and make a mound of pasta in the middle. Decorate the top with a bit more ketchup – polka dots, or the eater’s initials if you have a squeeze bottle of ketchup and great dexterity.

ANELLETTI

Dimensions

Diameter: 8mm

Length: 2.5mm

Wall thickness: 1.5mm

Synonyms

cerchionetti, taradduzzi,
in Sicily, *anidduzzi*,
anelloni d'Africa, anelli

Similar forms

anelli, anellini

Also good with this pasta
in brodo

Anelloni d'Africa, which can still be found in southern Italy, are great hoops of pasta. They originated in the 1930s, probably inspired by the huge earrings worn by some African women, who became known to the Italian military during campaigns in the First World War. *Anelletti* are their little brother, meaning 'little rings'. They are now widespread, although they are best known in a Sicilian baked pasta that is itself made in the shape of a ring. Best eaten cold, it is traditionally the dish taken to the beach for *Ferragosto* (the mid-August bank holiday). The recipe is opposite.

Anelletti have other uses within Italy – primarily in soups. But it is likely that by far the majority of their consumption is outside her borders – open a tin of pasta hoops (perhaps the most popular remaining tinned pasta), and *anelletti* is what you get.

ANELLETTI AL FORNO

Baked in a ring

Serves 6–8 as a picnic dish

300g anelletti

1 medium onion, diced

1 stick celery, diced

1 clove garlic, chopped

50ml extra virgin olive oil

30g butter, plus extra for greasing the tin

250g minced pork or veal

1/2 teaspoon crushed dried chilli flakes

200ml wine (red for pork, white for veal)

500ml tomato passata

200g frozen peas, or blanched fresh ones

3 tablespoons chopped flat-leaf parsley

3 tablespoons chopped basil

100g caciocavallo or provolone cheese, diced

50g grated pecorino

1–2 eggs (optional)

40g breadcrumbs

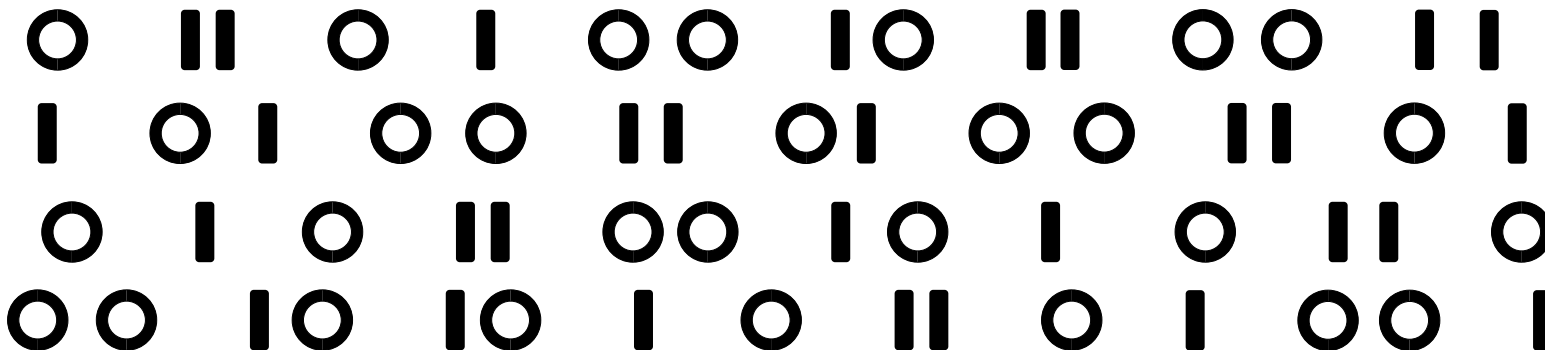
Also good in this dish

ditali

Anelletti al forno, baked rings of pasta, the whole dish often formed as a great ring itself, is a classic Sicilian dish. A favourite for Easter time, and picnicking in general, it is best served at room temperature – perfect for those who like to cook in advance, or aren't sure what time their guests will arrive for dinner. A vegetarian version can be made by omitting the meat, and stirring in 350g diced buffalo mozzarella just before the pasta goes into the baking dish.

Fry the onion, celery and garlic in the butter and oil over a medium heat with a hefty pinch of salt until softened – about 10 minutes. Add the meat and chilli, increase the heat to high, and fry for a quarter of an hour until the meat is partly browned. You'll want to break it up with a spoon for the first 5 minutes, until the meat is grey and particulated, then stir only occasionally to give it a chance to caramelise properly. Add the wine and let it reduce by half, then add the passata and peas, reduce the heat to low and simmer for 45 minutes until well thickened. Taste for seasoning.

Cook the pasta until *al dente*, drain and mix with the sauce. Stir through the herbs and most of both the cheeses. You can add an egg or two if you want a more robust texture; I prefer mine a little crumbly so I follow tradition and leave the eggs out. Butter a suitable baking dish (a 24cm round cake tin or 28cm ring mould is best), line the bottom with buttered baking paper if practical, and thoroughly coat with the breadcrumbs, keeping any excess crumbs to one side. Pour in the pasta mixture, pressing down with the back of a spoon, and top with the remaining cheeses and left-over breadcrumbs. Bake in a preheated oven (200°C fan oven, 220°C conventional) for 45 minutes until browned on all sides. Leave to cool for at least two hours before turning out onto a plate – this dish should be served at room temperature, and won't hold together when still hot.



BIGOLI

Dimensions

Length: 155mm

Diameter: 2.5mm

Similar forms

fusarioli, passatelli, pici

Also good with this pasta

tocco; pesto, sausage sauce; scallops and thyme; tartufo dei poveri; arrabbiata; puttanesca

Until recently, there was scarcely a home in the Veneto that didn't have its own *bigolario* – a rugged hand-cranked press bolted on to the kitchen table or a work-horse – that would force a stiff dough of wholewheat flour, water, and perhaps a duck egg through a brass die. The resulting strands, like thick *spaghetti* with a rough-textured surface, are *bigoli*, the signature pasta of the region. They are supposed to be as thick as a knitting needle used to knit tights, but as few homes have knitting needles as they do *bigoli* presses nowadays. The haberdashery parallel doesn't stop, however: there is a lesser-known variant, *fusarioi* whose name comes from *fuso da filare* – a knitting spool.

There are three key features of this pasta that render it unique. Firstly, the flour – wholewheat doughs are unusual, in this case lending an earthy flavour and pleasant texture, and also being rather healthy, incidentally. Secondly, the freshness – this is the only cylindrical pasta, traditionally cooked from fresh (rather than dried), apart from *pici* (see page 198). This allows its thick shape to cook quickly, the interior already being moist, leading to a finished product that is springy and chewy, rather than faintly crunchy, when *al dente*. Thirdly, the roughness, produced by a coarse dough rubbing against a bronze die, which allows the pasta to take up more sauce than its counterparts.

MAKING BIGOLI

350g wholemeal flour
(finely ground, if possible)
50g *semola* (not traditional,
but pleasing – you
could use an extra 50g
wholewheat flour if
you are a staunch
traditionalist)
3 large eggs
50ml water

This recipe is nigh on impossible to make exactly, as it relies on the use of a *bigolaro* – something resembling a gymnastics horse which you sit astride, with a brass hand-cranked press attached to one end. Given that probably only a very small minority of families in the Veneto (where *bigoli* come from) have such a device, it seems a fair assumption that even fewer of my readership will.

There are ways to cheat:

- 1) Buy dried *bigoli*.
- 2) Buy dried wholewheat *spaghetti*.
- 3) Buy fresh *spaghetti*.
- 4) Roll the dough out 1.5mm thick, and cut (with a knife or the *tagliolini* cutter of a pasta machine) into very thin square noodles – not the right shape, but still nice.
- 5) Not my idea, but a workable one: remove the blade from a meat mincer, and pass the dough through the finest plate.

Here is a recipe for those who happen to have a *bigoli* press, or who wish to attempt one of the latter options above.

Knead together very well (15 minutes of hard labour), then rest for an hour before passing through your press. Allow the *bigoli* to fall directly on a board dusted liberally with *semola*, and dust themselves, lest they stick. Use fresh.

BIGOLI IN SALSA

Anchovy sauce

*Serves 4 as a starter or
2 as a main*

1/2 recipe fresh *bigoli* (or
200g dried)
140g salted whole
anchovies or sardines in
salt, or 80g fillets thereof
1 medium onion (200g)
4 tablespoons extra virgin
olive oil
125ml white wine
250ml water
1 1/2 tablespoons chopped
flat-leaf parsley

*Also good with this sauce
bucatini, maccheroni alla
chitarra, pici, spaghetti*

Clearly, there is only one sauce to go with *bigoli*. If you like anchovies, it's the bomb...

Like *tartufo dei poveri* (page 158), this is a somewhat dry sauce that goes excellently with fresh noodles – fresh spaghetti are the most readily available substitute if you can't get or won't make *bigoli*.

If using whole salted fish, rinse and fillet them under cold running water. Chop the fillets of anchovy or sardine, but no need to do so very finely.

Halve the onion and slice very thinly across the grain. Put into a cold frying pan large enough to hold the pasta along with the fish and the oil. Fry over a medium heat for about 10 minutes, stirring away until the anchovy/sardine has disintegrated, and the onion softened and just starting to colour. Add the wine and water and simmer gently for 45 minutes or so, until the sauce attains its thick, dry texture.

Cook the pasta and add to the sauce marginally undercooked, along with a few tablespoons of the pasta water and one tablespoon of the parsley. Cook together until the pasta is well coated in the sauce – it should look a little dry but not taste so (if it does, add a splash of water).

Serve with the remaining parsley on top. I am not, in general, one for over-refining presentation – nor am I averse to ubiquitous brown food, which often tastes so nice. The particular hue of this sauce is so unappetising, however, that it may be worth going the extra mile and serving it as *nidi* (nests), by winding large forkfuls against a spoon and carefully depositing a few of these neat, domed mounds on each plate before adding the final parsley.

BIGOLI ALL'ANATRA

Duck sauce

**Serves 4 as a starter or
2 as a main**

**1/2 recipe fresh bigoli (page
28) or 200g dried**

DUCK RAGÙ
1 whole duck (2–2.5kg)
2 onions
2 carrots
3 sticks celery
4 cloves garlic
4 bay leaves
50g butter
400ml red wine
**250g tinned chopped
tomatoes, or puréed fresh
tomatoes**
**grated grana cheese (such
as Parmesan), to serve**

Also good with this sauce
maccheroni alla chitarra,
maltagliati, pappardelle, pici,
spaccatelle

On second thoughts, there may actually be more than one sauce for *bigoli*. The following method of cooking the pasta in the broth from a boiled duck, and using the meat to make the sauce, is as ancient as it is worthwhile.

Remove the giblets from the duck. Finely chop the gizzard, heart and liver and set aside. You are going to boil the duck, and use the leg meat to make the *ragù*. You can leave the breasts on (and serve them with boiled potatoes and *mostarda* as a second course), or cut them off raw and use in a grander dish.

Take 1 onion, 1 carrot, 1½ sticks celery, 2 garlic cloves, 2 bay leaves and put with the duck in a large pot. Just cover with water, season with some salt (not too much), and simmer gently for 1½ hours. Drain the duck then set aside until cool enough to handle. Strain and skim the stock, and return to the pan for later use.

If you've boiled the bird with the breasts on, cut them away and set aside for later. Pick all the other meat off the legs, wings and body (don't forget the neck) and chop roughly. I like to leave most of the skin to enrich the *ragù*, but you can discard it if you prefer.

Finely dice the remaining vegetables and chop the garlic. Heat the butter (you could use the fat skimmed from your stock if you had a mind to) in a medium pan and fry the vegetables, bay and chopped giblets in it for 10 minutes, until soft.

Add the wine and reduce by half, then add the tomatoes, chopped duck meat and a good cupful (250ml) of the stock. Simmer the sauce until very thick and reduced, about 45 minutes.

When ready to eat, bring the duck stock back to the boil, check it is well seasoned with salt and cook the pasta in it.

Drain when just on the uncooked side of *al dente*, toss in the heated sauce and cook together for a minute before serving with grated *grana* cheese at the table.

BUCATINI

Dimensions

Diameter: 3mm

Length: 260mm

Wall thickness: 1mm

Synonyms

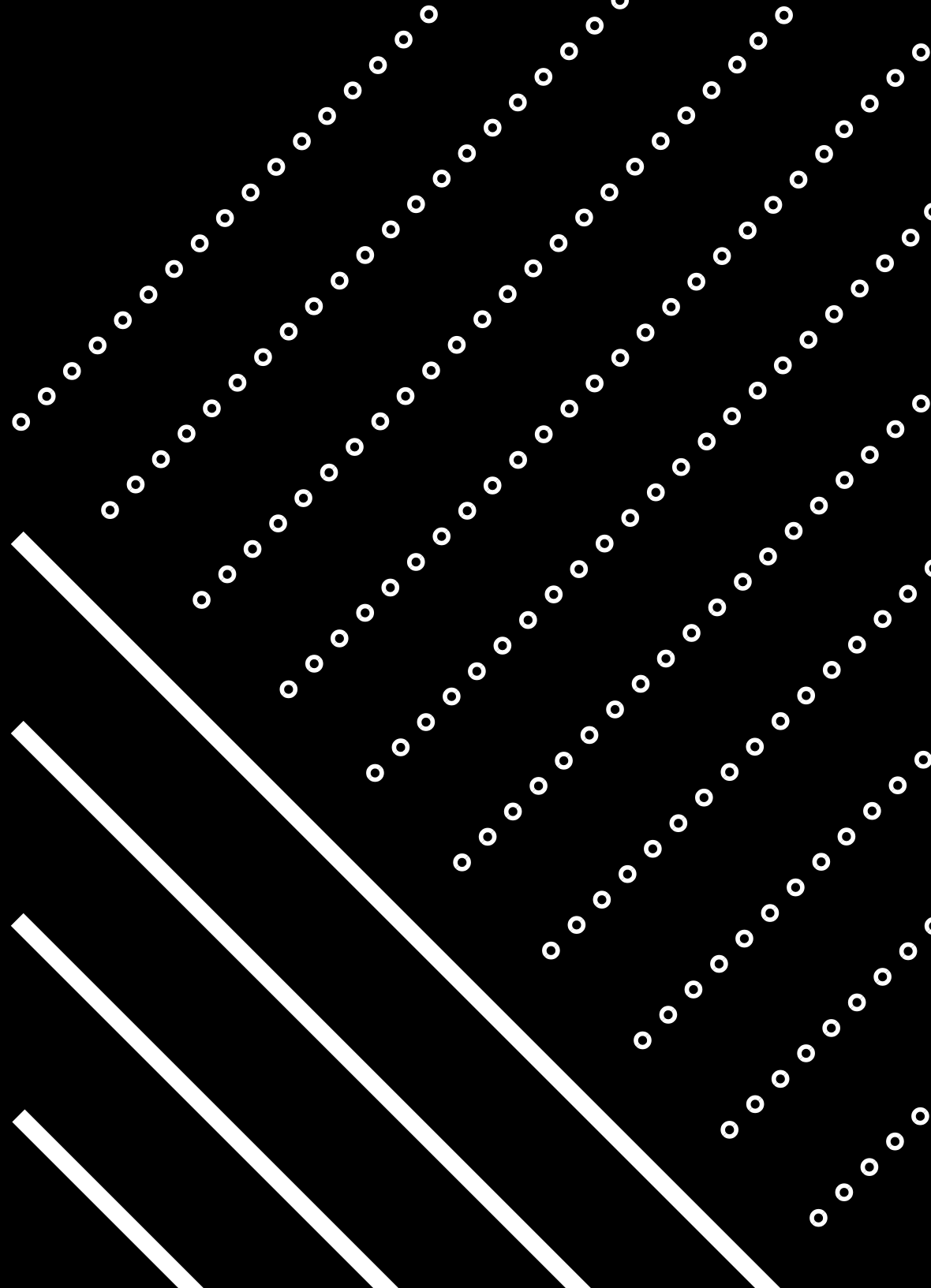
boccolotti (from *boccolo*, 'ringlet' or 'roll'), *fidelini* *bucati*, *perciatelli* (from the French 'percer' - to pierce); in Sicily *agoni bucati*, *spilloni bucati* ('hat-pin-with-a-hole')

Also good with this pasta

al'aglione, *amatriciana*, anchovy sauce, *arrabbiata*, cream and prosciutto, *gricia*, *norma*, *sugo di coda*, *cacio e pepe*, pork and pigskin; *puttanesca*, ricotta and tomato, tuna belly and tomato

Their name stems from *buco* (hole), or *bucato* (pierced), and the hole has a specific function. A pasta with a large cross-section takes a long time to cook. Above a certain diameter (see *bigoli*, page 28 and *pici*, page 198), the form would take so long to cook from dry that the outside would be overcooked before the middle was *al dente*. These forms are therefore always made fresh, so that the inside, already hydrated by the water the pasta was made with, takes less time to cook. *Bucatini* on the other hand are an industrial, die-extruded pasta (the modern equivalent of *maccheroni inferrati*, page 160), and the manufacture and distribution processes require that the product be dried before packaging. The ingenious solution is the fine hole that gives this pasta its name. Water enters as the pasta boils, reducing the cooking time to no longer than that of *spaghetti*. Long before the advent of the microwave, people were finding ways to cook their food from the inside out.

By far the most famous dish they star in is the Roman *bucatini all'Amatriciana*. In Amatrice, this is made *in bianco* (see page 220); in Rome *Amatriciana* is red with tomato. Not out of any desire to be obtuse, a recipe for Roman *pasta all'Amatriciana* can be found under *rigatoni*, on page 221. I lived for some time in Rome, and remember fondly *rigatoni* served in this sauce at my favourite *trattorie*, notably Trattoria da Marcello in San Lorenzo.



BUCATINI CARBONARA

*Serves 4 as a starter or
2 as a main*

200g bucatini
100g guanciale, sliced
thickly (3mm), then across
into 2cm-wide lardons
1 dessertspoon olive oil
2 large eggs
80g grated Pecorino
Romano (or Parmesan, or
mixture of the two), plus
extra to serve
plenty of freshly crushed
black pepper

Also good with this sauce
fettuccine, maccheroni
inferrati, tagliatelle,
spaghetti

This famous pasta is unrecorded before the Second World War. There are any number of unsubstantiated tales of its origin, including that it was traditional sustenance for charcoal workers (*carbone* meaning ‘charcoal’), or that it was named after the *Carbonari* (‘charcoalmen’ – a secret society prominent in Italy’s unification). Whatever the origins, they were likely in Rome, which remains the spiritual home of this pasta today. A good *carbonara* is luscious, unctuous, piggy, and almost a heart attack on a plate. It is surely a good way to go...

Guanciale is pig’s cheek cured like pancetta or bacon. The result is a fatty, porcine treat, hard to find but worth seeking out.

Put the pasta on to boil. Fry the *guanciale* in the oil over a high heat until the fat has blistered and browned a little on the outside, but is still soft within. It will smoke profusely. Take the pan off the heat. Beat the eggs with the cheese in a large bowl, seasoning profusely with black pepper. It is a good idea to warm this over the boiling water – not to cook, but just to take the chill off. When cooked (but of course, *al dente*), drain the pasta and toss in the pan of *guanciale* until well coated in the fat. Transfer immediately to your bowl and stir well for about a minute until the eggs have partially thickened. Check for seasoning, and serve with extra cheese on top.

BUCATINI AL CONIGLIO ALL’ISCHITANA

Rabbit and spicy tomato

Serves 4

300–400g bucatini
1 farmed rabbit
150ml olive oil
6 cloves garlic, peeled and
broken but whole
1 or 2 whole dried chillies
250ml white wine
750g ripe tomatoes, cut into
chunks (probably 1/8ths)
a 30g bunch of flat-leaf
parsley, chopped
grated Pecorino Romano,
(optional), to serve

Also good with this sauce
maccheroni inferrati,
reginette, spaghetti

This is a punchy dish with concentrated flavours that work just as well at any time of year. Hailing from beautiful Ischia, it serves four as two courses of a meal.

Cut the rabbit into joints (cut the legs and shoulders off the spine, cut off tail, neck and ribs, cut the torso into four sections, leaving belly flaps, liver and kidneys attached).

Heat the oil in a very wide pan (40cm – you need space to brown the rabbit, although this can be done in two batches in a smaller pan). Fry the garlic with the chilli until the cloves begin to brown, remove with a slotted spoon and set aside. Add the rabbit, seasoned with salt and pepper, and brown very well over a medium heat – this will take a good 15 minutes if the heat isn’t too high. Return the garlic and chilli and add the wine. Allow to bubble slowly, uncovered, turning the rabbit every 5 minutes or so. After half an hour, when almost all the wine has evaporated, add the tomato and parsley and season to taste. Continue to cook over the same heat, still turning the rabbit every few minutes for longer than you might think.

This sauce is cooked until it is incredibly reduced, and the rabbit is coated in a concentrated paste of tomato in which it again starts to fry. This should take about 40 minutes from when you add the tomatoes, but keep on going until you are afraid the tomato might burn. Put the pasta on at this point.

There will appear to be almost no sauce for your pasta, but adding 200ml of water will rejuvenate and extend the meagre scrapings that stick to pan and rabbit. Remove the meat (keep it somewhere warm for your second course), and add the pasta (drained and *al dente*) to the pan and cook for a minute in the sauce. Serve as is, or with a little pecorino if you like.

PASTA CU LI SARDI

Sardines and fennel

**Serves 4 as a starter or
2 as a main**

200g *bucatini*
300g fresh sardines (or
150g fresh sardine fillets)
1 whole salted anchovy, or
2 fillets
25g bread, crustless, torn
up
4 tablespoons extra virgin
olive oil
1 small fennel head (with as
many leaves as possible,
or a small bunch of wild
fennel if you can get it)
1 medium onion, diced
20g pine nuts
20g raisins
2g fennel pollen (or fennel
seed, crushed)
1 pinch saffron strands, in 1
tablespoon boiling water

Also good with this sauce
maccheroni inferrati, penne,
rigatoni, sedanini, spaghetti

This dish seems to summarise Sicily on a plate, with earthy tones of pine nuts, fennel and saffron representing the wild and beautiful hills, combined with sardines, just one of the oily fish so loved on the island.

First clean and fillet the sardines and anchovy.

For the sardines, rub them under running water with your thumb to scale them. Then grasp a fish in your left hand (assuming you're right-handed), with the dorsal fin against your palm, belly facing out. With your right hand, pinch the nape of the neck to break the flesh above the spine. Now gently pull the head forwards towards the belly – it should, if you're lucky, draw out the spine and guts together, leaving two clean fillets in your left hand.

For the anchovy, rinse off the salt. Under running water, use your thumb to open up the two fillets, then pull out the spine. Blot the fillets dry.

Toss the bread with 2 tablespoons of oil, salt and pepper, and toast in a moderate oven until golden, then crush to crumbs.

Bring a pan of salted water to the boil. Halve the head of fennel (green stalks and all) and boil until tender, about 10 minutes.

In another, wide pan, fry the onion on a medium-low heat in the remaining oil until translucent – about 10 minutes. Then add the pine nuts, raisins and fennel pollen and fry for a further 10 minutes, until the onion is completely soft. Meanwhile, remove the fennel from the water (leave it boiling) and chop.

Remove any fins from the sardines, and chop the sardines and anchovy up. Season with salt, then add to the pan and cook

for a minute, then add in the fennel for a final 5–10 minutes.

To finish the sauce, add the saffron and its water, and taste for seasoning.

At about the same time as you add the sardines, put the pasta into your still-boiling fennel water. Cook firmly *al dente*, then add a spoon of the water to your sauce. Drain the pasta and add to the sauce. Cook in the sauce for a minute or two before serving with the breadcrumbs on top.

BUSIATI



Dimensions

Length: 80mm

Width: 10mm

Synonyms

subioti, fusarioi, maccheroni bobbese, busa, ciufolitti (Abruzzese term from *zuffolo*, 'panpipes'), *gnocchi col ferro*

Also good with this pasta

garlic sauce; green beans; *tocco*; *pesto Genovese*; tuna belly and tomato

There are two forms of *busiati*, made in almost identical manners but looking quite distinct. The other is listed under *maccheroni inferrati* (page 160) and is more similar to hand-made *bucatini* (page 34) or hollow *pici* (page 198) – the version described and illustrated here looks and behaves like a coiled telephone wire. From Sicily (and Trapani in particular) this, along with *spaccatelle* (page 228) and *cuscussù* (page 84), makes up the triumvirate of Sicilian pastas. Notwithstanding that all pasta came to Europe via the Arabs, the link between the Latins and the Moors is particularly strong in Sicily. *Cuscussù* is an obvious result – but this marriage of races is also evident in *busiati*, which take their name from *busa* (a type of reed), itself stemming from the Arabic *bus*.

To make spiralled *busiati* for two, make a semolina pasta dough (page 10) using 200g of *semola*. Take a piece the size of a lime and roll it out into a strand about 3–4mm across, then cut into lengths of 12–15cm. Starting from one end, hold a wooden skewer or thin dowel, or a thin iron rod like an old knitting needle, at a 45° angle to your worm of pasta. Wind and stretch the pasta around the rod with a rolling motion, applying some pressure to help the stretching process. Roll back and forth a couple of times to loosen them from the rod, which is pulled out from the pasta. The finished *busiati* should look somewhat like telephone wires – fairly tightly coiled, flattened strands of pasta. This is the real deal – the inspiration behind *fusilli bucati* (page 108).

Early recipes for *busiati* replace water with egg whites and rosewater in the dough (*Libro de Arte Coquinaria*, Maestro Martino, 1456, referred to as *maccheroni Siciliani*). This may have helped the pasta to store when dried for sailors about to embark on long voyages, but must have been especially wonderful with *pesto Trapanese*, the recipe given below.

BUSIATI CON PESTO TRAPANESE

Almond pesto

**Serves 4 as a starter
or 2 as a main**

1 recipe *busiati*

100g blanched almonds

2 cloves garlic, crushed

a 25g bunch basil

300g ripe cherry tomatoes

100ml extra virgin olive oil

Pecorino Romano, to serve

Also good with this sauce

casarecce, cavatappi,

fusilli bucati/fatti a mano,

gemelli, maccheroni inferrati,

spaghetti, trenette

Few sauces going by the name of 'pesto' are worth eating, other than the famous *Genovese* (page 276). This is one of those rare exceptions.

Grind the nuts and garlic in a food processor until fine, then add the picked basil leaves followed by the tomatoes. When you have a fine, but still textured paste, stir in the oil by hand. Season with salt and pepper to taste.

This sauce may be served on top of pasta or stirred through it, but never cooked with it in a pan. Great with grated *pecorino*, or without.

CAMPANELLE/GIGLI

Dimensions

Length: 25mm

Width: 13mm

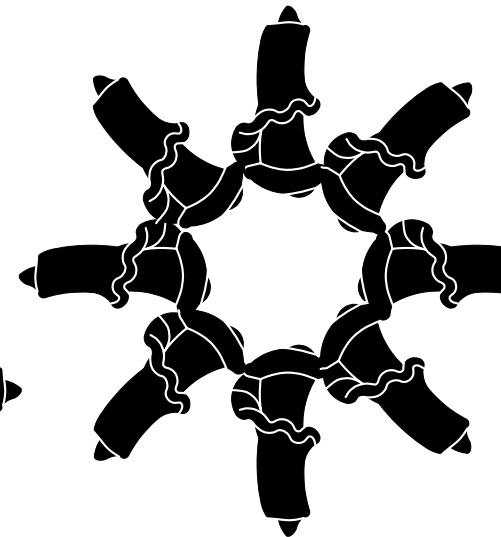
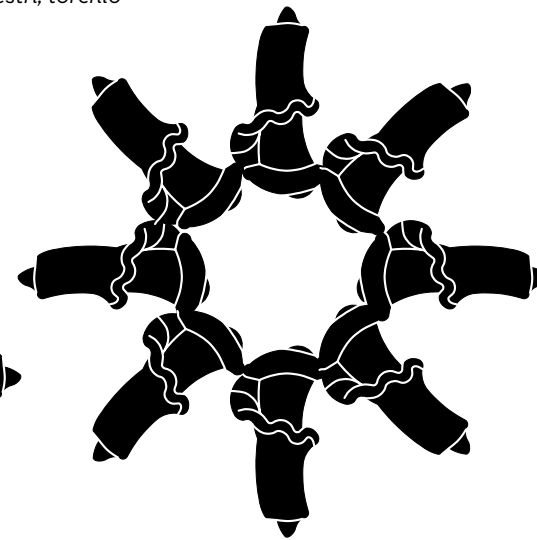
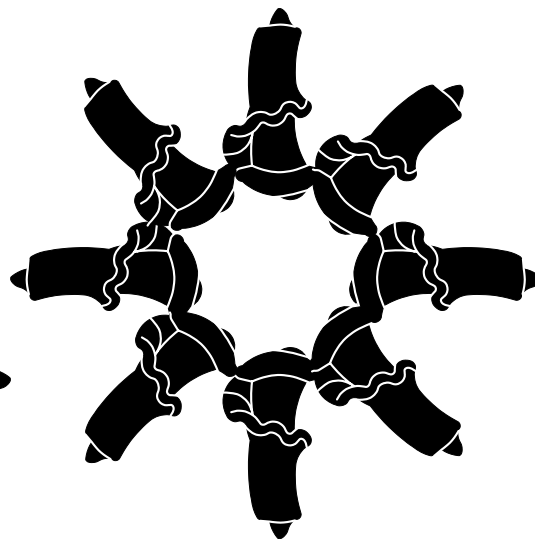
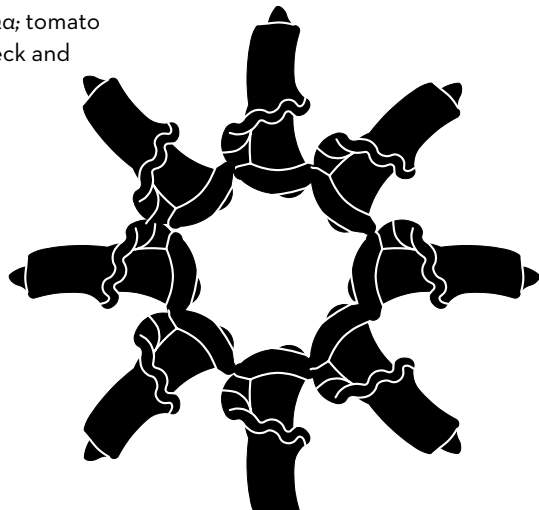
Synonyms

lilies, *campanelle* ('bell-flowers', or 'morning-glory flowers') or, with a turn-of-the-screw shape, *amorosi*, *cornetti*, *jolly*

Also good with this pasta

artichokes, broad beans and peas; *ragù Bolognese*; puréed broad beans; green beans; green olives and tomatoes; Hungarian fish soup; lamb sauce; lentils; *puttanesca*; *norcina*; tomato sauce; Treviso, speck and fontina

Unmistakably floral, even in name (*gigli* means 'lilies', *campanelle* 'bells' or 'bell-flowers'), these pastas are made from a single sheet of pasta with a frilly edge, twisted into a tapering helix – just as a baker might make flowers from sugar paste. They are a fantasy pasta shape – designed to meet consumer desire for something new – but the designers bore in mind the need for a shape that looked good, cooked evenly without breaking, and was a good vehicle for sauce, and so *campanelle* have become a well-used and respected form. As with a number of fantastical shapes, these may be made with semolina dough (in general, from larger and more industrial producers), or with a richer egg pasta from more artisanal production, but they are always sold dried.



CAMPANELLE CON SGOMBRO E ROSMARINO

Mackerel, tomato and rosemary

*Serves 4 as a starter
or 2 as a main*

200g *campanelle/gigli*

1 medium mackerel, about
300g

5 tablespoons extra virgin
olive oil

1 clove garlic, finely
chopped

1 tablespoon finely
chopped fresh rosemary

1/4 teaspoon crushed dried
chilli flakes

2 ripe tomatoes, chopped
(about 1cm pieces)

2 tablespoons chopped flat-
leaf parsley

Also good with this sauce

canestri, *torchio*

Fillet the mackerel, leaving the skin on. To avoid onerous pin-boning, cut each fillet in two by slicing down either side of the red central line, which you can discard along with the pin bones. Cut these four quarter-fillets across to make rough 1.5cm dice.

Put the pasta on to boil. Heat the oil until fragrant, but a long way from smoking. Add the garlic, rosemary and chilli and fry for a few seconds to release the flavours, then add the mackerel and tomatoes. Season with salt and pepper and cook over a medium heat for 3–4 minutes, until the fish is cooked and the tomatoes breaking up. Drain the pasta while it is still *al dente*, and add it, allowing it to cook for a minute in the sauce. Add the parsley, and a splash of the cooking water only if it all looks a bit dry.

CANEDERLI

Dimensions

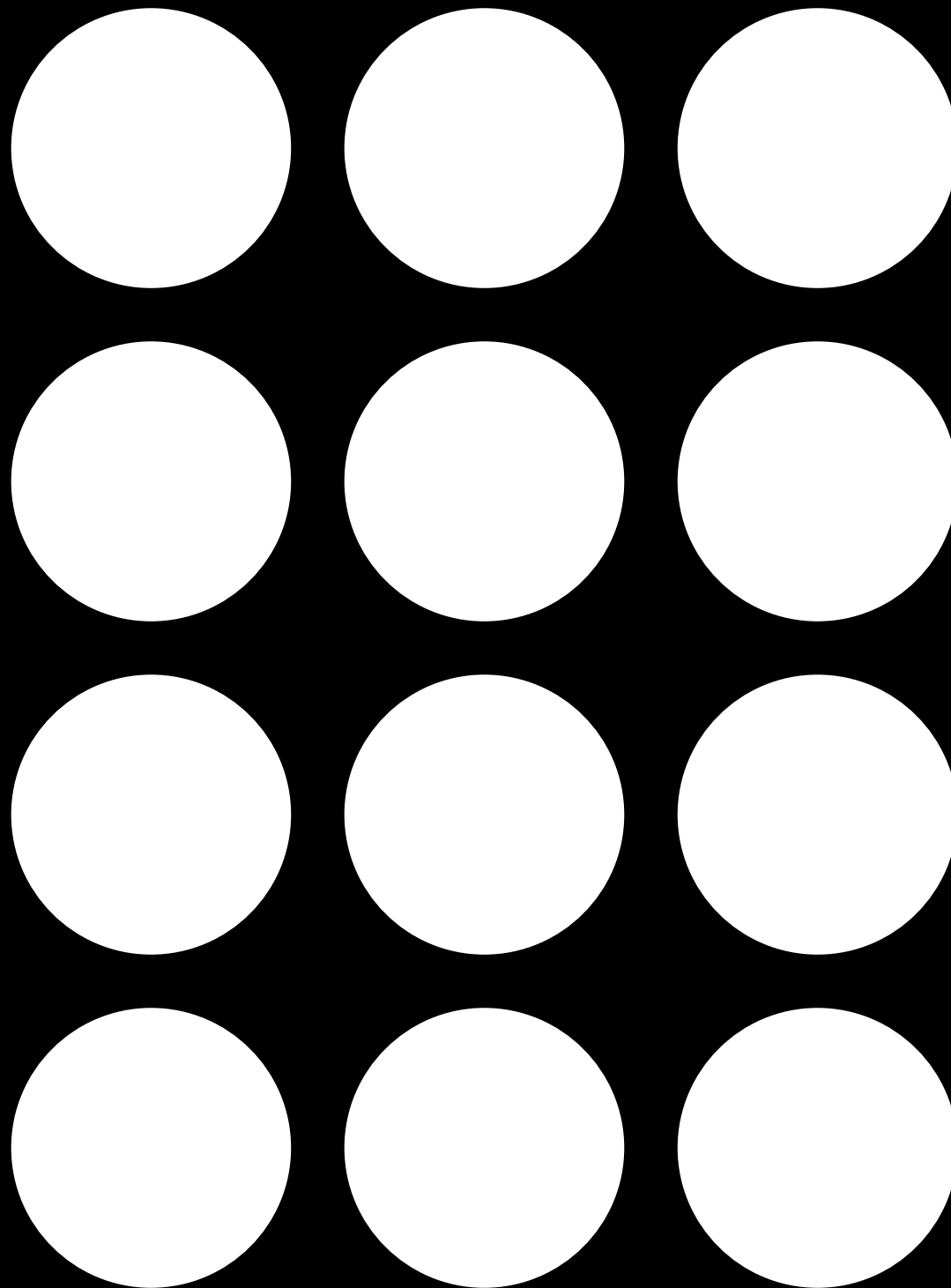
Diameter: 42mm

Synonyms

gnocchi di Pane,
canedeli, knödel

Canederli hail from the Alpine regions of Italy, Trentino-Alto Adige in particular, where the buildings, culture, customs and food seem altogether more Germanic than Italian. Indeed this pasta is German in origin, its name still similar to the original *knödel*. Plain ball-like dumplings, the simplest are made from seasoned breadcrumbs, but any number of variations combine ingredients readily available to mountain farmers. Wild herbs, cheeses, cured meats or pike might make an appearance, while sweet versions use a dough made from potato and are stuffed with plums or apricots.

The savoury versions tend to be firm and substantial. Most commonly served in broth, they might instead be eaten with cabbage, greens, dandelion or sauerkraut, cooked au gratin (with cheese), or served as a starch with a *spezzatino* (scarce stew).



CANEDERLI IN BRODO

Bread dumplings in broth

*Serves 4 as a starter or
2 as a main*

**1/2 medium onion, very
finely chopped**
50g butter
150g good day-old bread
**(weighed without its
crust), finely diced**
**40g plain flour, plus plenty
extra for rolling**
2 large eggs
125ml milk
40g pancetta or lardo,
finely chopped, or 75g
Italian sausage, skin
removed, broken up
50g grated Parmesan, plus
extra to serve
2 tablespoons finely
chopped parsley
a grating of nutmeg
some finely chopped chives
(optional)
1 litre good broth (page
242)

These light bread dumplings are delicious in broth, but can also be cooked (after boiling) au gratin with butter, herbs (sage, rosemary or thyme) and Parmesan. They can be made vegetarian by the omission of the pancetta, with no real loss of flavour. The only challenge is to make a good enough broth without meat, but dried wild mushrooms would do the trick.

Gently fry the onion in the butter until soft, then leave to cool. Mix together well with all the ingredients (except the broth) to make a soft, sticky dough (which won't be entirely smooth). Season with salt and pepper.

Take a small lump of dough, roll in flour, and test to see if it holds together when dropped in boiling water. If it fails, add a bit more flour to the mixture and try again. When satisfied that you are on safe ground, roll golfball-sized spheres of dough with generously floured hands. Refrigerate for at least an hour before cooking. Cook in the broth at a gentle simmer, seasoned with salt to taste. They will take about 20 minutes. Serve in their broth, with a scattering of Parmesan atop.

CANEDERLI GRATINATI

Bread dumplings au gratin

*Serves 4 as a starter or
2 as a main*

1 recipe canederli
3 tablespoons fresh
breadcrumbs
3 tablespoons grated
Parmesan
2 teaspoons finely chopped
fresh sage or thyme

Drain the *canederli*, reserving the flavoursome broth. Put them in a buttered baking dish, dot each dumpling with butter and sprinkle over a mixture of fresh breadcrumbs, grated Parmesan and herbs. Cook under a preheated grill until browned on top and serve moistened with just a tablespoonful or two of the cooking liquor – keep the rest of the broth for some other use.

CANEDERLI DOLCI

Fruit

Serves 6

**500g floury potatoes (Maris
Piper or King Edwards)**
1 whole egg
1 egg yolk
**200g flour, plus plenty for
extra rolling**

FILLING

**6 ripe apricots/small plums
or 12 soft dried prunes or
apricots or 12 dates**
12 apricot kernels or
**bitter almonds (if you
can get them, otherwise
a teaspoon of almond
essence)**
100g caster sugar
3 tablespoons rum
**1/2 teaspoon ground
cinnamon**
grated zest of 1 small lemon
100g marzipan

THE DISH

50g butter
30g breadcrumbs
50g caster sugar
1/2 scant teaspoon cinnamon

If the idea of a potato dessert seems bizarre, it is suggested you try the recipe below. Delicate and aromatic, and a substantial winter treat, these are a winner...

For the dough, boil the potatoes whole, skins on, until cooked through. Drain, peel with your fingers while still hot, and pass through a mouli or potato ricer. When cool enough to handle, mix in the remaining ingredients. Knead just enough to make an even dough, like that for *gnocchi* (page 116), only stiffer. Do not mix too much or the texture will be unpleasant.

For the filling, pound the apricot kernels to a fine paste if using. Stir in the sugar, rum, cinnamon and zest, then work into a paste with the marzipan. Remove the stones from the fruit, replace with as much filling as you can cram in, and close the fruit around. If using dried fruits, open them up like butterflies, and enclose the filling in two butterflied wrappers.

To assemble the dish, divide the dough into six balls. Take one in your hand, flatten and carefully wrap around one fruit. Be sure to get an even coating, with no little holes for water to enter. Roll each one in abundant flour. They have a tendency to stick to the bottom of the pot as they boil, so cut 6 rough 15cm squares of greaseproof paper. Loosely wrap each ball and lower it into a gently boiling pot of salted water, so the paper comes between pot and dumpling. Simmer for 45 minutes.

Meanwhile, fry the breadcrumbs in the butter in a wide pan until golden. When the dumplings are ready (they should have bobbed on the surface halfway through the cooking time), lift them gently from the water on a slotted spoon, and turn in the buttery breadcrumbs to coat. Mix the cinnamon and sugar together – either roll the dumplings in this, or sprinkle on top. Serve hot, with a scoop of vanilla, almond or cinnamon ice-cream if you like.

CANESTRINI AND CANESTRI

Dimensions

Length: 22.5mm

Width: 9.5mm

Synonyms

canestri, *farfallini*, *galani*, *nastrini* ('ribbons'), *nodini* ('little bows'), *stricchetti*, *tripolini*

Also good with canestrini

in brodo, *stracciatella*, spring vegetable broth

Also good with canestri

artichokes, broad beans and peas; broccoli, anchovy and cream; lentils; mackerel and tomato; *porcini* and cream; *norcina*

Canestrini are 'little baskets', shaped like old-fashioned wicker trugs that might be taken to market, into the woods for foraging, or into the fields to gather flowers. They are an intermediate size, between the identically shaped but smaller *fiocchi di avena* ('rolled oats'), and the larger *canestri*, which may be used interchangeably with *farfalle* and *farfalle tonde* (page 92). The shape is, in fact, a derivation from *farfalle* and whilst it can be easily made at home, it can be purchased with even less effort. With its double-cupped shape, it provides an excellent scoop for sauces, especially types of fish and meat *ragù* in larger sizes, and in smaller ones the texture is delightful in soups and broths. Both semolina and egg versions can be found – and chosen to your personal preference.

Serves 2 as a substantial starter or light main

50g *canestrini*

5g dried *porcini*

1 clove garlic, thinly sliced

1 medium onion, chopped

1 or 2 sticks celery, sliced across into crescents

1 bay leaf

5 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil

5 cherry tomatoes cut into eighths

50g spinach or baby chard

2 eggs

10 leaves basil

grated Parmesan, to serve

Also good with this sauce

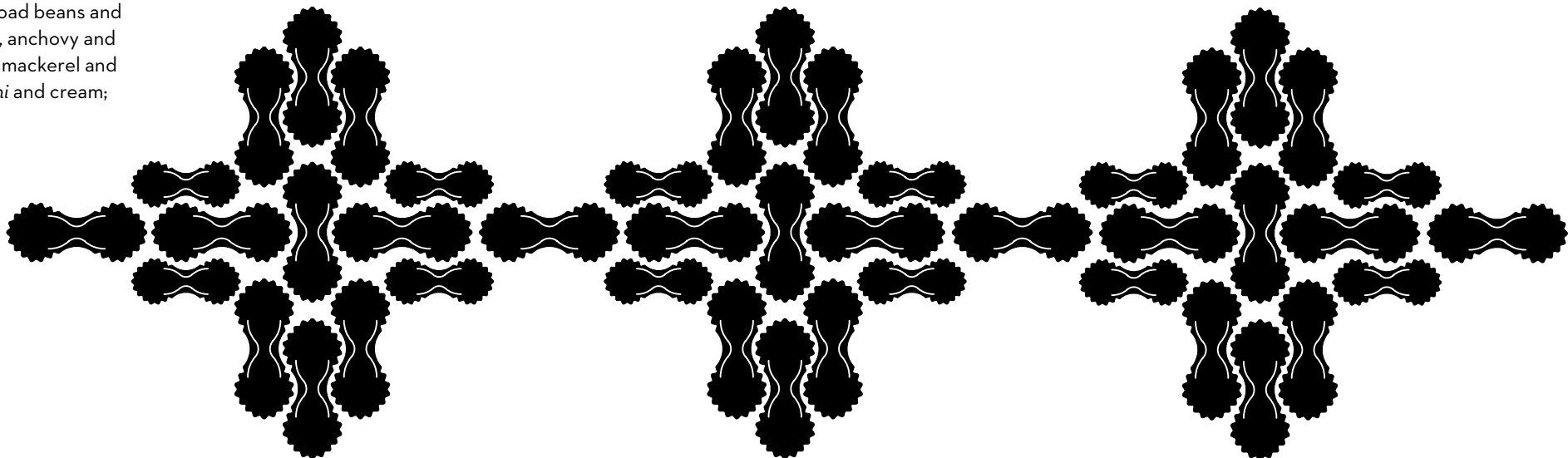
alfabeto, *cavatelli*, *orzo*, *quadretti*, *stelline*

CANESTRINI IN ACQUACOTTA

Vegetable soup with poached egg

Acquacotta is a simple peasant soup, normally made with bread. It is not dissimilar to *pancotto* (only thinner), or *ribollita* (only less beany). Here pasta replaces bread as the starch. The remaining ingredients are similarly open to interpretation – in spring, one might add peas, broad beans or artichokes; in summer, all sorts of greens; in autumn, fresh mushrooms, and pulses in winter.

Soak the *porcini* in 100ml boiling water, drain (reserving the liquid), chop, and return to their liquor. Fry the garlic, onion, celery and bay in half the oil until barely tender, about 5 minutes. Add the *porcini*, their juices and half a litre of water. Bring to a very gentle simmer, season to taste, and cook for 5–10 minutes until the vegetables have lost their bite, then add the pasta and the tomatoes. Continue to simmer until the pasta is two to three minutes from being done, then stir in the spinach and gently crack the eggs into the broth to poach. When the pasta and eggs are done (the yolks should still be soft), stir in the basil (shredded or torn) and drizzle with the remaining oil. Serve straight away in wide bowls with a fair bit of Parmesan on top.



CANNELLONI

Dimensions

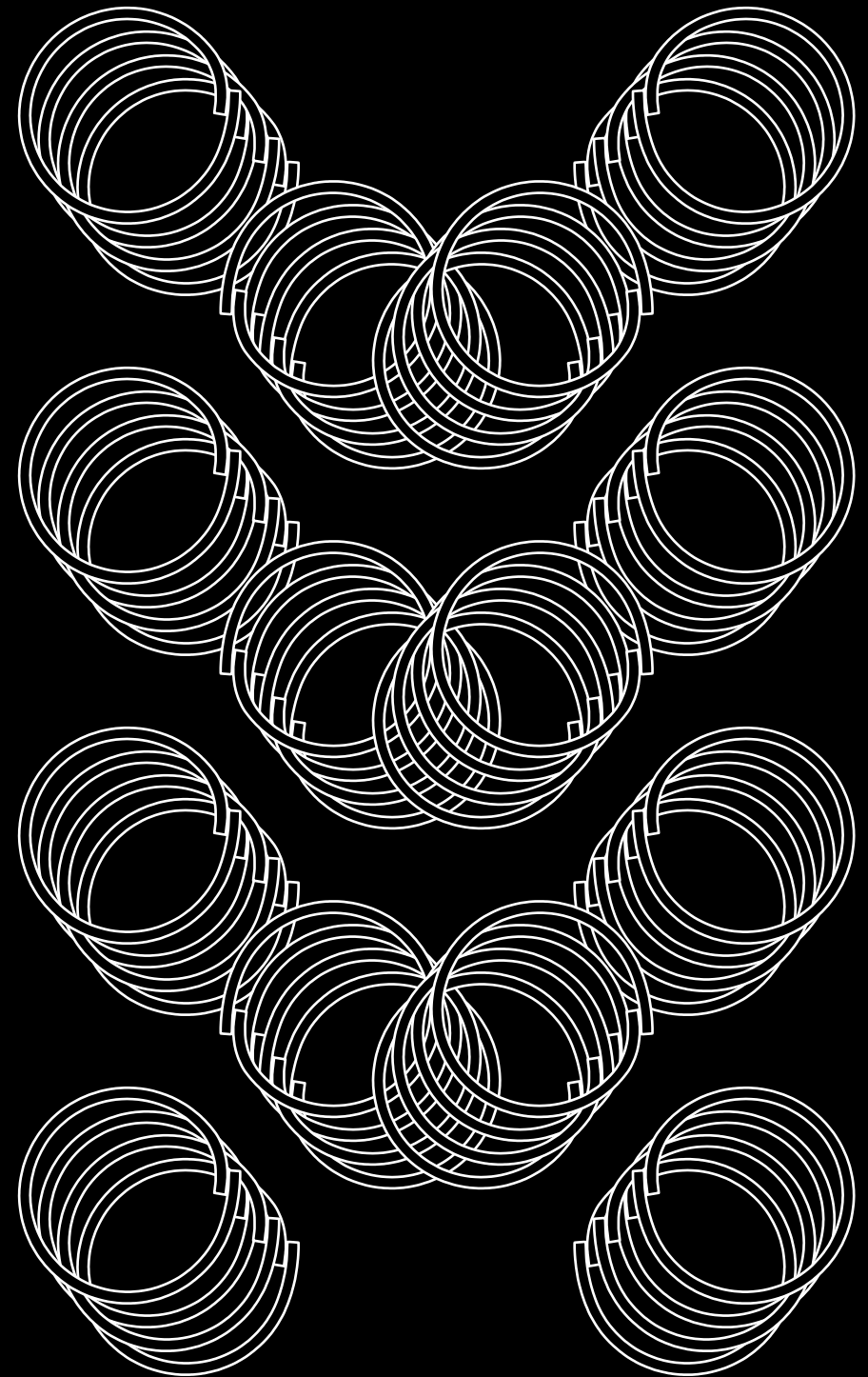
Length: 100mm

Width: 30mm

Synonyms

cannaciotti, *canneroncini*,
canneroni, *manfriguli* or
manfrigoli in Valtellina;
cannerone or *cannarone* in
Naples; *cannarune* in Puglia;
cannoli, *crusetti* in Sicily

Cannelloni are sheets of pasta wrapped around a sausage of filling and baked. It is possible to buy dried tubes of pasta to blanch and stuff, but to my mind these should really be called *manicotti* (page 168). Their name derives from *canna* (cane), thus *cannelloni* means ‘large reeds’ – the same stem as *cannella* (cinnamon – ‘little reed’). The idea of stuffing a soft pastry with a savoury filling isn’t new in Europe – *crêpes* have been around for ever, and references to *macheroni ripieni* date back to around 1770 – but *cannelloni* were first mentioned in print at the beginning of the 20th century, likely the time they were invented. Their popularity took off and went global after the Second World War, for the dual reasons of their ease of advance preparation (they can be made ready to go in the oven even the day before), and being the symbol of domestic bliss – the housewife at her gleaming white enamel oven. The pasta can be replaced with a *crêpe* in all recipes, if that seems easier or better to you; in both forms, *cannelloni* are equally popular in Italy, the UK, the USA and Spain, Catalonia in particular.



VEAL AND SPINACH CANNELLONI

Serves 5 as a main course

FILLING

2 cloves garlic

4 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil

1 smallish onion, diced

1 stick celery, finely diced

300g minced veal

1 teaspoon finely chopped fresh rosemary

1 tablespoon finely chopped fresh sage or oregano

250ml white wine

250g fresh spinach

150g fresh ricotta

80g grated Parmesan

1 egg

nutmeg

40g proper breadcrumbs (if required)

BÉCHAMEL

100g butter

1 bay leaf

100g flour

1 litre milk

nutmeg

THE DISH

300g egg pasta (plain or enriched, page 13)

100ml light tomato sauce (page 15, optional)

80g grated Parmesan

The following recipe is an Americanised one – it has everything inside (meat, cheese, vegetable), where an Italian recipe might be simpler (you could use the spinach and ricotta filling (page 210) from *ravioli* to great effect. This recipe is also delicious though.

To make the filling, break the garlic cloves to release the flavour and fry in a wide pan in the oil until starting to brown. Remove and discard the garlic, adding the onion and celery along with a good pinch of salt. Fry together until tender (5–10 minutes), then add the meat. Fry over a high heat, stirring and breaking up with a spoon for the first 5 minutes, then as little as possible to give the meat a chance to brown. Add the herbs, closely followed by the wine, which you should allow to bubble away to almost nothing (you really want it quite dry) before taking the pan from the heat to cool.

Blanch the spinach in boiling salted water until just tender, drain, refresh under cold water, drain again and squeeze dry with all your might. Chop as finely as you can by hand, then stir vigorously with the ricotta, Parmesan and egg to make a smooth paste. Mix this paste with the cooked veal and season with a good grating of nutmeg, salt and black pepper. Add some breadcrumbs if the mixture looks a little damp. Refrigerate until ready to use.

To make the béchamel, melt the butter over a medium heat, add the bay leaf and flour and stir until incorporated and bubbling. Add the milk – the daring add it all at once and whisk, the cautious bit-by-bit, beating with a wooden spoon with each addition of milk until the mixture is smooth and returns to the boil. Season with salt, pepper and nutmeg and make sure the sauce comes to a boil when all the milk is added, at which point it can be taken from the heat.

Also good with these fillings
veal and pork (page 18);
Genovese meat, chicken and ricotta (page 60); ricotta and spinach (page 210)

To make the dish, roll the pasta just under 1mm thick and cut into rough 15cm squares – you'll get about 15 of them. Blanch these for 30 seconds in boiling, salted water and refresh in cold water.

Take one square at a time and lay a sausage of filling (about 2cm wide – as wide as a sausage) along one edge. Roll up like a carpet, and repeat for the remaining squares. Spread one third of the béchamel on the base of a baking tin – a large one, big enough to accommodate the *cannelloni* without crowding them. Lay the *cannelloni* on top, cover evenly with the remaining béchamel, drizzle with the tomato sauce and sprinkle with the Parmesan. Bake for 45 minutes in a preheated oven (220°C fan oven, 240°C conventional), until browned on top. They will be lethally hot fresh from the oven – best to wait ten minutes before serving.

CAPELLI D'ANGELO

Dimensions

Length: 260mm

Diameter: 1mm

Synonyms

capelvenere, *ramicia*, or in Calabria *capiddi d'angilu*, *vriviciddi*

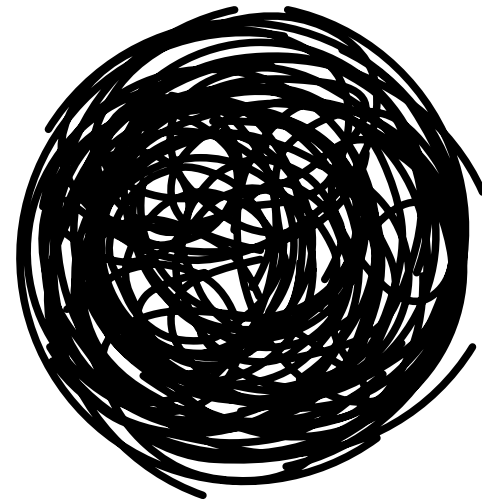
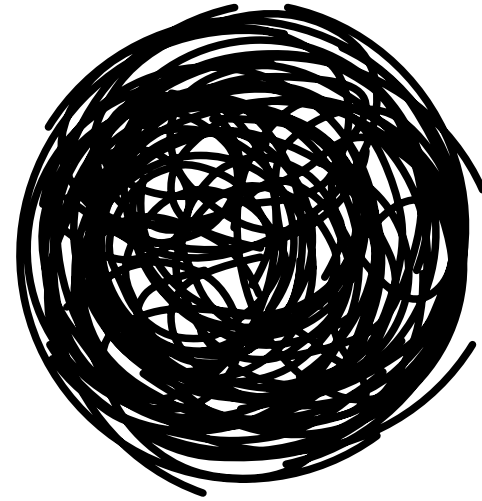
Similar forms

capellini (slightly thicker), *vermicelli* (slightly thicker still)

Also good with this pasta

fideuà, *frittata*, lokshen pudding

These thin, thin strands of pasta ('angel's hair' or 'little worms') can be a challenge in the modern kitchen: they cook very fast, overcook easily, and their fine texture can become porridgy if served in a thick sauce – they have no backbone to hold it up. It was a different challenge that led them to be so highly esteemed during the Renaissance. So difficult to make by hand as to be nigh-on impossible, they were the height of refinement. Specialist nuns would make them in their convents, particularly to feed to new mothers, as the pasta was believed to help their milk to 'drop'. Their exceeding fragility means they are always dried in *nidi* (nests), as they are too delicate to hang up to dry, or to transport otherwise.



CAPELLI D'ANGELO AL BURRO E LIMONE

Butter and lemon

*Serves 4 as a starter
or 2 as a main*

200g capelli d'angelo
75g butter
grated zest of 1 lemon
a grating of nutmeg
a few drops of lemon juice
**a little grated Parmesan, to
serve**
a few basil leaves (optional)

Also good in this dish
tagliatelle, tagliolini

This dish, fine-textured and subtle, is somewhat ethereal. You might call it bland, but not in a pejorative sense.

While the *capelli d'angelo* are cooking, pour about 100ml of their water into a pan and boil, swirling in the butter to make a *beurre fondu*. Add the lemon zest, nutmeg, and a little pepper and salt if needed. Allow to reduce to the consistency of single cream (add water if it goes too far), then add the pasta (drained and, as ever, slightly on the undercooked side). Stir in and add a very few drops of lemon juice to taste.

Serve with a little Parmesan. A few basil leaves, stirred in at the same time as the lemon juice, are a pleasant addition.

PASTA FRITTA ALLA SIRACUSANA

Fried in nests

*Serves 4 as a starter
or 2 as a main*

160g capelli d'angelo
25g butter
**50g grated pecorino or
caciocavallo cheese**
2 large eggs
**2 tablespoons proper
breadcrumbs**
4 tablespoons olive oil

Also good in this dish
*spaghetti, spaghettiini,
tagliolini*

This dish of fried nests of pasta is just like a freeform *frittata*, and originates from Syracuse.

Cook the pasta *al dente*, (you will need 200g of *spaghetti* or *spaghettiini*, if using), drain and toss in the butter. Beat the cheese into the eggs along with the breadcrumbs, then stir in the hot pasta. Heat the oil over a medium heat in a wide pan. Use a fork and twisting action to make individual pasta nests (as you would when eating the pasta, only make the nests as big as you can), dropping them into the oil as you go. Flatten each nest slightly and fry for 2–3 minutes on each side until golden. Serve piping hot.

PASTA SOUFFLÉ

Serves 4

**50g butter, plus about 25g
to butter the dishes**
**150g finely grated
Parmesan**
80g capelli d'angelo
3 tablespoons plain flour
a little nutmeg
a bay leaf if you like
200ml milk
4 eggs, separated

Also good in this dish
tagliolini, vermicellini

This recipe comes from my grandmother, who remembers the dish from Rome in the 1950s. We have had some interesting times cooking it together, since the original recipe went missing a few years ago. Here at last is a new working version, to avoid the dramas of impossibly thick béchamel and collapsed dreams.

You will need four 400ml soufflé ramekins, or one larger one. Butter the dishes generously. Add a handful of Parmesan to one and coat the sides by turning the ramekin in a rolling motion. Tip the remaining cheese into the next, and continue until you return the excess to your heap of grated cheese.

Crush the nests of pasta into boiling, salted water and cook for half the stated time – it should be very *al dente*. Drain and cool under cold running water.

Melt the 50g butter over a medium heat, then add the flour, quite a few grates of nutmeg, the bay leaf and plenty of pepper. Fry for a minute, then gradually add the milk, beating ferociously with a wooden spoon. Patience with the milk will yield a smooth sauce. Season well with salt.

Combine the pasta with the béchamel, egg yolks and remaining cheese in a large bowl. Beat the egg whites with a small pinch of salt until stiff, but not dry. Mix a third of the whites into the pasta mixture to slacken it a little, then very gently fold in the rest with a metal spoon. Divide between the ramekins (it should come about 1cm below the rim) and bake in a preheated oven (200°C fan oven, 220°C conventional) for 20 minutes or until risen, browned and firm. Serve immediately.

A single, larger soufflé will need up to twice as long at a slightly cooler temperature.