

# SEASONED

## NEWSLETTER



Welcome to Seasoned Newsletter #10. (If you missed the most recent one, it's [here](#).)

Summer is in full swing, so most of us try to avoid turning on the oven. With just a few minutes of stovetop cooking, though, you can make yourself some pasta, which is surely among the most satisfying dinners around. In this issue we give you two easy pastas. One of them is by Mark Bittman, one of America's best-known food writers. He also gives us some super-useful pasta techniques.

Of course this issue also has a kitchen trick, a balance exercise, and an ergonomic tool to make cooking easier. As a bonus, you get an uber-summery watermelon drink.

**Let's get started!**



# Creamy Lemon Pasta with Peas

Whole-wheat pasta works fine here, but it will take a little longer to cook. This recipe was adapted from Mark Bittman's book *How to Cook Everything Vegetarian*.

HANDS-ON TIME: 20 MINUTES TOTAL TIME: 30 MINUTES MAKES: 2 SERVINGS

## INGREDIENTS

- 2 teaspoons kosher salt, plus more for sprinkling
- ½ pound dried pasta, any shape
- ½ cup full-fat Greek yogurt
- 1 cup fresh or frozen peas
- Grated zest and juice of ½ lemon
- 2 tablespoons chopped fresh chives (or substitute finely chopped scallions or 1 tablespoon dried chives)
- ¼ teaspoon black pepper
- Grated Parmesan cheese, for garnish

## INSTRUCTIONS

1. Bring a medium-sized pot of water to a boil and add the salt. Add the pasta, stir occasionally, and start tasting the pasta after 5 minutes.
2. When the pasta is tender but not mushy, dip a ladle or a measuring cup into the pot and take out about ½ cup of the cooking water. Set aside, then turn off the stove and drain the pasta in a colander set in the sink.
3. Return the pasta to the now-empty pot and stir in the yogurt. Mix in the reserved cooking water a bit at a time (you probably won't need all of it) until the dish is smooth but not runny. Turn the heat to low and cook, stirring often, until thickened, about 5 minutes.
4. Add the peas, lemon zest and juice, and chives and mix well. Sprinkle with salt and pepper and garnish with grated Parmesan. Serve right away.



## Or You Could

Substitute 1 pound of spinach, chopped, for the peas.

# Mark Bittman on Cooking Pasta



Mark Bittman is a best-selling cookbook author and former *New York Times* food columnist.

"The first thing I do when I get home is put a pot of water on the stove to boil." That bit of wisdom comes from Mark Bittman, best-selling author of the *How to Cook Everything* cookbook series, former *New York Times* columnist, and widely published writer and speaker on the politics of food.

"The reason is simple," he continues. "Boiling water is the most time-consuming part of making many pasta dishes."

Bittman does know a thing or two about making simple but delicious dishes—his weekly "Minimalist" column ran in the *New York Times* Dining section for 13 years. Here are some of his other tips for making quick, easy pasta dishes.

- **Dried pasta comes in many shapes.** Sometimes it's best to use one particular shape—in soups, for example, a shape small enough to fit in a spoon works best; for chunky sauces, a shape like shells that will catch the chunks is nice. But by all means eat the shape of pasta you like best, even if it's not

the exact kind called for in the recipe.

- **Always salt the water you boil pasta in.** If you don't, the pasta will be stickier and taste bland.
- **To keep pasta from sticking together** as it cooks, stir it frequently.
- **Don't pay too much attention to the cooking times on the package;** they are just a general guideline. When the pasta starts to soften, start tasting it. It's done when it retains a little bite but is no longer chalky.
- It's a good idea to **ladle out a cup or so of the pasta cooking water** before draining and set it aside in case you need to thin out the sauce.
- **Toss the pasta quickly with the sauce,** since it's at its best when it's still hot.
- To keep the pasta hot longer, **prewarm your dishes** by filling them with hot water, then pouring it out just before you serve the pasta.

# Roman Pasta

This is our version of a classic Italian *pasta all'arrabbiata*, which translates to “angry pasta,” thanks to the addition of the spicy red pepper flakes. You can, of course, omit them if spicy is not your thing. You can also double all the amounts here, if you’d like to have more leftovers; the sauced pasta will keep up to 3 days.

HANDS-ON TIME: 30 MINUTES TOTAL TIME: 30 MINUTES MAKES: 2–3 SERVINGS

## INGREDIENTS

- ½ pound whole-grain penne (or another pasta shape)
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- ¼ cup tomato paste
- ½ teaspoon or more crushed red pepper (optional)
- 1 teaspoon dried basil or ½ cup chopped fresh basil or parsley leaves
- 1 (14-ounce) can crushed or diced tomatoes, including the liquid
- ¼ cup freshly grated Parmesan cheese

## INSTRUCTIONS

1. Cook the penne according to the instructions on the package. When the pasta is tender but not mushy, dip a measuring cup into the pot and take out ¾ cup of the cooking water. Set aside, then turn off the stove and drain the pasta in a colander set in the sink.
2. Put a large skillet on the stove, set the heat to medium, and add the oil. When the oil is hot, add the tomato paste, dried basil (if using), and crushed red pepper (if using) and cook 5 minutes, stirring from time to time.
3. Add the tomatoes with their juices and reserved pasta water and stir well.
4. Add the cooked penne, Parmesan cheese, and fresh parsley or basil leaves (if using) and stir well. Serve right away.



## Or You Could

- Before you add the tomato paste, add 2 garlic cloves and 2 anchovies, both minced, and/or 1 cup thinly sliced fresh mushrooms, and cook 2 minutes.
- When you add the pasta, add 1 (6-ounce) can clams, drained; or 2 cups baby spinach or torn kale or arugula; or 1 (15-ounce) can white beans, drained and rinsed—or go wild, and add them all.

## Tip

If you open a small (6-ounce) can of tomato paste to make this recipe, you won't use all of it. Spoon tablespoons of tomato paste onto a plastic container lid (this makes them easy to pop off), then freeze until solid. Store the frozen spoonfuls of tomato paste in a resealable plastic bag in the freezer. Whenever you need just a tablespoon or two of tomato paste, it will be there ready to add or thaw.

# Watermelon Juice with Lime

Because there's so much water in watermelon, you can blend it up to make a perfectly quenching drink. In this version, a pinch of salt and the zest and juice of a lime balance out the sweetness of the fruit.

HANDS-ON TIME: 15 MINUTES TOTAL TIME: 15 MINUTES MAKES: 4 SERVINGS

## INGREDIENTS

6 cups watermelon cubes  
Pinch kosher salt  
1 lime, scrubbed  
Ice cubes

## INSTRUCTIONS

1. Put the watermelon cubes and salt in a blender. Using a grater or zester, scrape the lime peel into the blender, then cut the lime in half and squeeze in the juice.
2. Blend until smooth.
3. Fill 4 glasses with ice, and divide the mixture between the 4 glasses.

## Or You Could

Make it easier: Just cut the lime into quarters and squeeze one quarter into each glass of watermelon juice after you have poured it into the glass.



# A Trick, a Tool, an Exercise



## Chair Squats

1. Stand with your back to a chair with your feet hip-width apart.
2. Bend your knees while keeping your chest and shoulders upright and your arms outstretched.
3. Lower your bottom so you sit down; then, pushing through the heels, return to a standing position.
4. Repeat five to ten times.



## Firm Up Mozzarella

It is cheaper to buy a block of mozzarella and grate it yourself, rather than buying pre-grated, plus you get fresher-tasting cheese. However, it can be a bit difficult because the cheese is often too soft to easily grate. The solution? Put the mozzarella in the freezer for 30 minutes to firm it up before you grate it.



## Ergonomic Pepper Grinder

If you are using pre-ground black pepper from a jar, switching to grinding your own peppercorns is a fast way to improve the flavor of almost everything you cook. But for anyone with joint pain, many pepper grinders are hard to fill and turn. That's why we like the OXO Good Grips Radial Pepper Mill. It has an oversized nonslip crank that is easy to grip and turn, plus the large door on the side—which is clear so that you can see when you are running low on peppercorns—opens wide for easy refilling.