

Spaghetti Carbonara

By Mark Fairbanks

Don't let my last name fool you. My father Charlie Fairbanks was an extremely smart man who married Mary DeLorenzo. I grew up surrounded by funny, crazy Sicilians and all the amazing food that comes as part of the package. In 1971, my mom, sister, and Nonna visited Rome and brought back a recipe for Spaghetti Carbonara. I was suspicious at first, but eventually came to my senses and this incredible dish has been part of my recipe rotation for the last 40 years.

In Spring of 2021, I eagerly watched *Stanley Tucci: Searching for Italy*, as he traveled across the country to discover the secrets of the various regional cuisines. In Season 1, Episode 2 he visits Rome and is served an luxuriously creamy carbonara, after which I immediately became obsessed with replicating. I researched different recipes, watched videos on YouTube, and now present you with one of my favorite dishes to make.

Serves: 4

Approximate Time: 25 minutes

Ingredients

3 large eggs, room temperature

1/2 packed cup of grated Romano

1/2 packed cup of grated Parmesan

1 teaspoon ground black pepper

1 tablespoon olive oil

5 slices of Nueske's bacon sliced into pieces about 1/3 inch wide. You can also use 5 ounces of slab guanciale or pancetta if you prefer

17.6 ounces spaghetti

A word about ingredients

I do much of my shopping at Milwaukee's East Side gem, Glorioso's on Brady. The quality and variety of ingredients is unmatched if you're preparing any type of Italian food. Great Italian cooking is based on simple ingredients found close to home. I am very particular about the ingredients I use because it's critical to the meal. I only buy Yuppie Hill Farm organic eggs. A women-owned business located in Burlington, Wisconsin, the egg yolks are a beautiful golden, nearly orange color. You'll definitely want that for your carbonara. Glorioso's has a wonderful assortment of imported Italian cheese, in fact you can buy a bag

of grated Parmesan/Romano that will make this recipe that much simpler. If we were in Italy, we'd definitely be going to the market for guanciale or pancetta, but we're in Wisconsin. So I recommend using Nueske's bacon, because an Italian would buy local. If you're shopping at Glorioso's, yes, you can buy a \$2.99 box of De Cecco spaghetti, but consider splurging on a \$5.99 package of Rustichella D'Abruzzo or Giuseppe Cocco imported pastas. You won't regret it.

Preparation

Step 1

Place a large pot of lightly salted water (no more than 1 tablespoon salt) over high heat, and bring to a boil.

Step 2

In a mixing bowl, whisk together the eggs, Romano, and Parmesan. Don't fret, it should have the color and texture of golden porridge. Add a teaspoon of ground black pepper.

Step 3

In a large skillet or deep frying pan over medium-low heat, add the sliced bacon and sauté until the fat just renders, on the edge of crispness but not hard. (About 10 minutes)
Remove from heat and set aside.

Step 4

Add pasta to the water and boil until a bit firmer than al dente—generally a minute LESS than recommended cooking time. A couple of minutes before the pasta is done cooking, reheat the bacon in the skillet, if needed.

Step 5

Remove the pasta from the water with large tongs and add directly to the skillet. (I never drain pasta, it always goes directly from the hot water into the pan with sauce, or in this instance bacon and grease). Stir the pasta for a minute or so over low heat, making sure the bacon and grease is distributed evenly throughout the pasta. Turn the burner off, and add two full soup ladles of hot, starchy water from the pot over the pasta. Stir the egg/cheese mixture into the pasta—the hot water will combine with the mixture to create a creamy sauce. You may want to add some additional reserved pasta water as the ultimate goal is luxurious creaminess.

Plate-serve the spaghetti immediately, topping it off with more freshly ground pepper and romano, or freshly grated Parmigiana Reggiano cheese if you have it handy.