

Spaghetti with Pecorino Romano and Black Pepper (Cacio e Pepe)

From the episode: *Simply Italian*

Serves 4 to 6

High-quality ingredients are essential in this dish, most importantly, imported Pecorino Romano—not the bland domestic cheese labeled “Romano.” Use the small holes on a box grater to grate the cheese finely and the large holes to grate it coarsely. Alternatively, a food processor may be used to grate it finely: Cut the Pecorino into 2-inch pieces and process until finely ground, about 45 seconds. For a slightly less rich dish, substitute half-and-half for the heavy cream. Do not adjust the amount of water for cooking the pasta. Stir the pasta frequently while cooking so that it doesn’t stick to the pot. Letting the dish rest briefly before serving allows the flavors to develop and the sauce to thicken.

INGREDIENTS

- 6** ounces Pecorino Romano cheese , 4 ounces finely grated (about 2 cups) and 2 ounces coarsely grated (about 1 cup) (see note)
- 1** pound spaghetti
- Table salt
- 2** tablespoons heavy cream (see note)
- 2** teaspoons extra-virgin olive oil
- 1 1/2** teaspoons finely ground black pepper

INSTRUCTIONS

- 1.** Place finely grated Pecorino in medium bowl. Set colander in large bowl.
- 2.** Bring 2 quarts water to boil in large Dutch oven. Add pasta and 1½ teaspoons salt; cook, stirring frequently, until al dente. Drain pasta into colander set in bowl, reserving cooking water. Pour 1½ cups cooking water into liquid measuring cup and discard remainder; return pasta to now-empty bowl.

3. Slowly whisk 1 cup reserved pasta cooking water into finely grated Pecorino until smooth. Whisk in cream, oil, and black pepper. Gradually pour cheese mixture over pasta, tossing to coat. Let pasta rest 1 to 2 minutes, tossing frequently, adjusting consistency with remaining ½ cup reserved pasta water. Serve, passing coarsely grated Pecorino separately.

TECHNIQUE

FOR AUTHENTIC TASTE, CHOOSE AUTHENTIC CHEESE

Imported Pecorino Romano is a hard, aged sheep's milk cheese with a distinctively pungent, salty flavor that bears almost no resemblance to domestic cheeses simply labeled "Romano." (These waxy stand-ins are made with cow's milk and lack the punch of the real deal.) When you pick out your cheese, check the label carefully to be sure what you are getting is the real deal.

PECORINO ROMANO

This name-controlled import is worth seeking out.



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