



Pasta, Pasta, Pasta. It's Everything You Ever Wanted to Know About that Italian Treat--PASTA!



So you think you might know all you need to know about pasta? You probably do but we're going to test you to find out just what you do know. This is the first of the "Pasta in a Nutshell" series. We'll cover where it really came from (do **NOT** say China!), how it's made, how to cook it (with a recipe you can try), how to store it, and more. There will be a special video about how to grow spaghetti and cook it (that's not in this message; you'll have to wait in anticipation).

So get out your pasta pot with hot water and some salt and stand by...

The Origins

The Chinese were eating pasta in 5,000 BC. The story is that Marco Polo

brought pasta back from China. **Wrong.** The first reference to pasta, in a book, was in 1154, 17 years before Marco Polo even returned from China. Etruscans made pasta in 400BC. In a cave, 30 miles north of Rome, there are carvings showing utensils such as a rolling-out table, a pastry wheel and a flour bin. Hmm...isn't that what you need to make pasta?

In 1740, in the city of Venice, Paolo Adami, was granted the license to open the first pasta factory.

October is National Pasta Month. Christopher Columbus was a pasta nut; it must be because he was born in October.

January 4 is National Spaghetti Day. Since spaghetti is the most popular pasta in the USA, it gets its own day!

Thomas Jefferson is credited with introducing macaroni to the United States. It seems that he fell in love with a dish he sampled in Naples.

The first American pasta factory was opened in Brooklyn in 1848, by a Frenchman (French!!?) named Antoine Zerega. He managed his entire factory with just one horse in his basement to power the machinery. To dry his spaghetti, he placed strands of the pasta on the roof to dry in the sunshine.

Plant-based foods (fruits, vegetables, legumes, and grains) have less environmental impact than animal-based foods, because they require less land, energy, and water to produce. That makes dried pasta (made from just flour and water) a better choice for the environment than many other foods. (Doesn't this make you feel more responsible when you sit down to a bowl of spaghetti?)



Little swimmers are not a good sign!

Making it

Uncooked dry pasta can be kept for up to a year. But be careful because there are microscopic weevil eggs in grain products such as pasta and if you leave it in your cupboard for too long they will hatch. You don't want to dump your pasta into boiling water only to see little bugs—yuk!—doing the backstroke in your pasta water. Of course, the salt would probably do them in anyway.

Egg noodles contain egg; almost all other pasta shapes do not. So, without egg, a noodle really isn't a noodle.

Before machinery, pasta was kneaded by foot. Because pasta dough is so tough, workers would walk over large batches of dough to knead it; a single batch would take "a full day's walking" to make. Thank goodness machines were invented to take over this chore! Who knows if they washed their feet beforehand!

There are more than 600 pasta shapes. Some names are not particularly appetizing: vermicelli are small worms, linguine are little tongues, orecchiette are small ears, and ravioli are little turnips. Bugs and body parts; who thinks up these names?

Top quality pasta is made from Durum wheat, most of it grown in the U.S. It's actually considered the best in the world (how did we beat Italy on this one?). Where is this good stuff grown? North Dakota. (That's probably why Consumer Reports thinks the best pasta is made here.)

This is the end of our first installment. We hope you learned something and had a chuckle or two along the way. Installment two is on the way next week.

And remember: Like unrinsed spaghetti, good friends stick together.



NAME THIS PASTA

If you can name this pasta, we'll give you a bag of it. It's best served with a hearty sauce (dump some sausage in the sauce, too). The sauce can worm its way into the hole in the center or cozy up in the ruffles at the top. (Go ahead, use the internet if you must.)

It will only go to the first person who sends in the correct **Italian** name by 6 pm TODAY. Send your guess to bobzkarenz@att.net (Karen's email). If you win a bag once, you won't be able to cart home another bag from a future message (there are 4 of them). You can still guess, though!



By the way...

We've added a recipe to our La Cucina tab on the Club's website. Here's a photo of Frazzelle submitted by member Debbie Schryver. They are similar to a bagel and have an interesting history. Check out the recipe/history (www.lhitalianclub.org).

If you have a favorite recipe from your mom, aunt, grandmother, etc., that you're really fond of, send it to us and we'll post it to La Cucina for others to try. If you go to the La Cucina tab on the website, you'll see an option to "Submit New Recipe." That's all there is to it!

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