

COOKING WITH CARLA

COOKERY CLASSES IN ROME

Pasta all'uovo (Fresh egg pasta)

I would say that 1 egg per person of pasta is fine but then 2 eggs worth would feed 3. For every 107 gr of shell-off egg you need 200 gr of 00–plain flour. Maybe you will need to add a little cold water to achieve the correct consistency.

It is not worth it to prepare less than 2 eggs of pasta because it would be difficult to knead a very small amount of dough.

For pasta dough made with a mix of 00 flour and hard wheat (semola di grano duro rimacinata) proceedings are as above but maybe a touch more water because semola absorbs more liquid.

As a personal preference for ravioli and pappardelle I use the two–flour mix dough and for tagliatelle and maltagliati the 00– plain flour dough. Place flour in a medium sized bowl and make a hole in the middle.

Break the eggs and place them on the flour. Using a fork, pierce the yolks, then swirl the eggs and use the fork to start incorporating the flour into the eggs. Once the eggs are absorbed, use your hands to bring in the rest of the flour and to get a dough. Much kneading is involved if the dough is to be rolled out by hand using the traditional long and thin rolling pin. If using a hand cranked pasta machine all you have to do is to knead the dough till smooth and then the rollers – of the pasta machine – will do the rest (the hard work).

Once the dough is ready, it ought to be left to rest for a minimum of 30 minutes to prevent it from springing back when rolling it out.

Once the dough has rested it can be rolled out into sheets.

Clamp the pasta machine to a table and set the rollers to the widest setting. Split the dough into 4 pieces and cover the pieces you are not using.

Flatten the lump of dough and send it through the rollers. Then fold the strip of dough like an envelope and pass the dough again. Repeat 5/6 times (still folding till strip is very soft). Set the machine at two and pass the dough, but this time without folding. Increase the setting each time until you reach the last one and then repeat with all the other lumps of pasta. Remember to dust sheets of pasta with semola if they feel sticky. Lay strips of pasta on a worktop. If the day is warm, fill one strip at the time.

If you do not feel brave enough or the consistency of the dough will not allow you to go to the last you can stop at the penultimate setting. It is better like so, than the dough dragging through the rollers. Please never ever dust the rollers with flour or clean the pasta machine with a wet cloth. Always dust the pasta machine with a dry cloth and brush away crumbs or flour with a dry brush.

Ravioli di spinaci (o bieta) e ricotta

Spinach (Swiss Chard) and ricotta ravioli

Serves 4 approx.

300 gr cleaned spinach or Swiss Chard or a mix of leaves

300 gr cow's or sheep's milk ricotta, drained if on the wet side

80 gr grated Parmigiano

Nutmeg

To serve you can opt for the following:

Melted butter infused with whole or chopped sage leaves

Tomato and basil sauce – Light beef ragu', Saffron infused cream with chopped walnuts – Olive oil, chili and garlic with pecorino. Obviously, some sauces are more suited to the summer months than others.

Rinse the spinach, and then cook in a hot pan, covered, with just the water clinging to the leaves until it has wilted. Sturdier winter spinach could be lightly boiled in salted water.

Drain the spinach and once cooled down a bit squeeze out most of the water but not totally bone dry. Chop the spinach and then mix with the ricotta, Parmigiano and nutmeg. Taste for seasoning. Lay out the just rolled pasta sheet on a lightly dusted worktop.

Fold the strip of pasta in half (then unfold back) so you know what surface area is available for the filling.

Using a teaspoon place small mounds of the filling at 3.5 cm intervals – approx. – all along the strip.

Fold the pasta sheet over to cover the filling and press down around it to push out the air. Before doing this run your hand under the strip of pasta to make sure it is not stuck to the worktop. Use a wheeled cutter to seal the short and long side of the strip and then to cut the ravioli apart. Lay the ravioli on a tea towel dusted with semola rimacinata and make sure they do not touch each other or they will stick. Depending on the thickness of the pasta ravioli can be prepared some time in advance. On a hot day best not to or the pasta will crack.

Cook the ravioli in a large pan of gently boiling salted water. Depending on the thickness, ravioli take anything from 3 to 6 minutes to cook. Before dropping ravioli into the boiling water do a quick double check and re-seal any open ones. Split ravioli make a mess in the pan.

For the butter and sage: gently melt the butter on a low heat and then add the whole or chopped sage leaves. Leave to infuse for a little while. Spoon on top of the cooked ravioli and shower with Parmigiano.

Adapted from a recipe from the cookery book Five Quarters – recipes and notes from a kitchen in Rome by:

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