

COOKING SKILLS

Cooking Skills: Pasta 2

Fresh egg pasta, hand-shaped pasta, coloured doughs, ravioli and filled shapes, gnocchi, and lasagne from scratch.

9 Chapters | Philip Osztromok | Generated with Claude

COOKING SKILLS: PASTA 2

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Cooking Skills: Pasta 2

Chapter 1 · Fresh Egg Pasta

SKILL GOAL

Make fresh egg pasta by hand, from flour and egg, and cut it into ribbons without any machine.

Shopping list for this chapter

The basics

This course assumes you have worked through **Cooking Skills: Pasta 1**: cooking in salted water, finishing in the pan, the tomato sauces, the ragù and the white sauce. Pasta 2 is about making the pasta itself.

Fresh egg pasta is made from just flour and egg. It is softer, silkier and richer than dried, cooks in two or three minutes, and soaks up sauce differently, which is why it suits delicate sauces. It is not better than dried pasta, just different: dried is the right choice for a tomato sauce, fresh for butter, cream or a ragù on ribbons.

STEP	WHAT TO DO	WHY
Make a well, add egg	Flour in a mound, egg in the middle	Lets you mix gradually without a mess
Knead 8 to 10 minutes	Push, fold, turn	Develops the gluten, so the dough stretches
Rest 30 minutes	Wrapped, at room temperature	Relaxes the gluten, so it rolls without shrinking
Roll thin	From the middle outwards, quarter turns	Even thickness, about 1 to 2 mm
Dust and dry for 5 minutes	Semolina, not flour	Stops strands sticking; semolina doesn't absorb into the dough
Cut and nest	Loose nests on a floured tray	Keeps the ribbons separate

STEP	WHAT TO DO	WHY
Boil 2 to 3 minutes	Plenty of salted water	Fresh pasta cooks very fast

What you need

- A **long, thin rolling pin** (a clean wooden dowel or broom handle works too).
- A big board or clean worktop, a **sharp knife**, and a bench scraper if you have one.
- A clean tea towel, cling film, and a tray dusted with semolina.
- Optional extras you do *not* need yet: a pasta machine (chapter 3), a fluted pasta wheel, a ravioli cutter.

Plain flour is the default in this course. Italian "00" flour is very finely milled and makes a smoother, silkier dough. Semolina (ground durum wheat) is for dusting. Both are easy to try in the experiments.

Try it

LEVEL 1 · START HERE

Basic egg dough

30 minutes plus resting | 1 generous portion (about 150 g dough) | the foundation of the course

Fresh pasta is only flour and egg. The skill is in the feel: kneading until the dough is smooth and elastic, and resting it so it rolls out without springing back. The ratio is about **100 g of flour to 1 medium egg**.

INGREDIENTS (1 PORTION)

100 g	plain flour (or Italian "00" flour)
1	Lion-marked medium egg
1 pinch	fine salt
2 tbsp	fine semolina (or extra flour), for dusting

1. Tip the flour onto a clean board or into a large bowl, add the salt and make a well in the middle. Crack the egg into the well.
2. Beat the egg with a fork, gradually pulling in flour from the sides, until it forms a shaggy mass. Then use your hands to bring it together into a rough ball.
3. **Knead** on a lightly floured board for **8 to 10 minutes**, pushing it away with the heel of your hand, folding it back and turning it a quarter turn. It starts rough and sticky and ends up smooth and springy, like an earlobe.
4. If it is crumbly, wet your hands and keep kneading (a few drops of water at a time). If it is sticky, dust with a little flour.
5. Wrap in cling film (or put under an upturned bowl) and **rest at room temperature for 30 minutes**. Resting lets the gluten relax, so the dough rolls out instead of fighting back.

> **RAW EGG AND RAW FLOUR**
>
> The dough contains raw egg and raw flour. The Food Standards Agency advises against eating or tasting uncooked flour or dough, because raw flour is not treated to kill bacteria such as E. coli. Don't taste the dough or any filling that contains raw egg, **wash your hands, the board and your tools** after handling raw dough, and use **Lion-marked eggs**. Cook fresh pasta

> thoroughly. Pregnant women, children under 5, people aged 65 and over, and anyone with a weakened immune system should be especially careful.

LEVEL 2 · THE EASIEST CUT

Maltagliati ("badly cut") with tomato sauce

30 minutes | 1 portion | no precision needed

The scraps shape: cut the rolled sheet into rough diamonds and triangles. They don't have to be even, and that's the charm.

INGREDIENTS (1 PORTION)

100 g	plain flour (or Italian "00" flour)
1	Lion-marked medium egg
1 pinch	fine salt
2 tbsp	fine semolina (or extra flour), for dusting
150 ml	tomato sauce from Cooking Skills: Pasta 1, chapter 3
15 g	parmesan, grated

1. Make and rest the dough as in the basic recipe. Roll it out:
2. Cut the rested dough in half if you wish and keep the rest wrapped. Dust the board and the dough lightly with flour or semolina.
3. With a long rolling pin, roll from the middle outwards, giving the dough a quarter turn after every few strokes, and stretching it as you go, until you have a sheet about **1 to 2 mm thick**: you should be able to see the pattern of the board, or your hand shadow, through it.
4. Lightly dust the sheet with semolina and let it dry for about 5 minutes, until it feels leathery but not brittle. This stops the cut strands sticking.
5. Cut the sheet into rough diamonds and triangles about **4 to 5 cm** across, with a knife or pizza wheel. Spread them out on a tray dusted with semolina.
6. Warm the tomato sauce in a wide pan. Boil the maltagliati in plenty of salted water for **2 to 3 minutes**: they are ready a minute or so after they float, tender but with a slight bite.
7. Scoop out a mugful of water, drain, and toss in the sauce with 2 tablespoons of the water for 30 seconds. Serve with the parmesan.

LEVEL 2 · RIBBONS

Hand-cut tagliatelle with butter and parmesan

35 minutes | 1 portion | the classic ribbon

Rolled up loosely and sliced like a Swiss roll, then shaken out into long ribbons.

INGREDIENTS (1 PORTION)

100 g	plain flour (or Italian "00" flour)
1	Lion-marked medium egg
1 pinch	fine salt
2 tbsp	fine semolina (or extra flour), for dusting
15 g	butter
15 g	parmesan, grated
1 pinch	black pepper

1. Make and rest the dough as in the basic recipe, then roll it out:
2. Cut the rested dough in half if you wish and keep the rest wrapped. Dust the board and the dough lightly with flour or semolina.
3. With a long rolling pin, roll from the middle outwards, giving the dough a quarter turn after every few strokes, and stretching it as you go, until you have a sheet about **1 to 2 mm thick**: you should be able to see the pattern of the board, or your hand shadow, through it.
4. Lightly dust the sheet with semolina and let it dry for about 5 minutes, until it feels leathery but not brittle. This stops the cut strands sticking.
5. Fold the sheet loosely into a flat roll about 8 cm wide. With a sharp knife, cut across into ribbons **6 to 8 mm wide**. Unroll them with your fingers, toss gently in semolina and gather into loose nests on a tray.
6. Boil in plenty of salted water for **2 to 3 minutes**. Scoop out a mugful of water, then drain.
7. Return to the pan with the butter, parmesan, pepper and 2 tablespoons of the water. Toss for 30 seconds until glossy.

LEVEL 3 · WIDE RIBBONS

Pappardelle with ragù

35 minutes | 1 portion | wide ribbons for a rich sauce

Pappardelle are wide, about 2 cm, and made to carry a chunky meat sauce. They are the easiest ribbon to cut, since there are fewer to do.

INGREDIENTS (1 PORTION)

100 g	plain flour (or Italian "00" flour)
1	Lion-marked medium egg
1 pinch	fine salt
2 tbsp	fine semolina (or extra flour), for dusting
150 ml	slow beef ragù from Cooking Skills: Pasta 1, chapter 6 (fresh or thawed)
15 g	parmesan, grated

1. Make and rest the dough as in the basic recipe, then roll it out:
2. Cut the rested dough in half if you wish and keep the rest wrapped. Dust the board and the dough lightly with flour or semolina.
3. With a long rolling pin, roll from the middle outwards, giving the dough a quarter turn after every few strokes, and stretching it as you go, until you have a sheet about **1 to 2 mm thick**: you should be able to see the pattern of the board, or your hand shadow, through it.
4. Lightly dust the sheet with semolina and let it dry for about 5 minutes, until it feels leathery but not brittle. This stops the cut strands sticking.
5. Cut the sheet into ribbons about **2 cm wide** (use a fluted pasta wheel for a rustic edge if you have one). Dust and nest them on a tray.
6. Warm the ragù in a wide pan with a splash of water until steaming hot.
7. Boil the pappardelle for **3 minutes**, scoop out a mugful of water, drain, and toss in the ragù with 2 tablespoons of water for 1 minute. Serve with the parmesan.

Experiments

EXPERIMENT

Plain flour, "00" flour or semolina

How much does the flour change the pasta?

1. Make three small batches of dough with 100 g of flour and 1 egg each: one with plain flour, one with "00", and one with 80 g plain flour and 20 g fine semolina.
2. Rest and roll each to the same thickness, cut into tagliatelle and cook for the same time. Taste with a little butter.

Look for: Plain flour makes a slightly firmer, more rustic pasta, "00" is silkier and more delicate, and the semolina version has more bite. Which do you want to buy again?

EXPERIMENT

Resting: none, 30 or 60 minutes

See what the rest does.

1. Make three identical doughs. Roll one at once, one after 30 minutes and one after 60 minutes.
2. Notice how hard each is to roll, and how much it springs back.

Look for: The unrested dough shrinks back and fights you. After 30 minutes it rolls easily, and an hour makes little extra difference.

EXPERIMENT

How thin

Find your best thickness.

1. Roll one batch of dough to 1 mm, another to 2 mm and a third to 3 mm (use a coin or ruler to check). Cut them all into tagliatelle.
2. Cook for 2, 3 and 4 minutes, and taste each with a little butter.

Look for: The thinnest cooks fastest and can be slippery or break, the thickest is chewy and starchy. Most people like about 1.5 mm.

EXPERIMENT

Extra yolk

Does a richer dough taste different?

1. Make one dough with 100 g of flour and 1 whole egg, and another with 100 g of flour, 1 whole egg and 1 extra yolk (add a few drops of water if it is dry).
2. Roll, cut and cook both, and compare colour and taste.

Look for: The extra yolk gives a deeper yellow, richer, silkier pasta. It's an easy upgrade for a special dish, or a way of using up spare yolks (Cooking Skills: Eggs 2, chapter 2).

Tasting notes

WHAT I TRIED	METHOD OR AMOUNT	WHAT I SAW	WHAT I THOUGHT	WILL I DO IT AGAIN?
Basic dough				
Maltagliati with tomato				
Tagliatelle with butter				
Pappardelle with ragù				
Plain vs 00 vs semolina				
Resting 0, 30, 60 minutes				
1, 2 and 3 mm				
Extra yolk				

Troubleshooting

PROBLEM	LIKELY CAUSE	WHAT TO DO
Dough crumbly and won't come together	Egg small or flour dry	Wet your hands and knead; add water a few drops at a time

PROBLEM	LIKELY CAUSE	WHAT TO DO
Dough sticky	Egg large or humid day	Knead in a little flour, a teaspoon at a time
Dough springs back when rolled	Not rested long enough	Cover and rest another 15 minutes
Dough tears when rolled	Too thin in one place, or too dry	Roll more gently; rest; patch with a wet finger
Ribbons stick together	Not dusted, or left to sit	Dust with semolina and nest loosely; cook soon
Pasta gluey after cooking	Overcooked, or too little water	Taste at 2 minutes; use a big pan of boiling water

FOOD SAFETY: FRESH PASTA

The dough contains raw egg and raw flour. The Food Standards Agency advises against eating or tasting uncooked flour or dough, because raw flour is not treated to kill bacteria such as E. coli. Don't taste the dough or any filling that contains raw egg, **wash your hands, the board and your tools** after handling raw dough, and use **Lion-marked eggs**. Cook fresh pasta thoroughly. Pregnant women, children under 5, people aged 65 and over, and anyone with a weakened immune system should be especially careful.

Uncooked fresh pasta, which contains raw egg, should be kept in the fridge (0 to 5°C) and cooked within **24 hours**, or frozen straight away. (There is no pasta-specific official guidance, so this is a cautious rule based on the Food Standards Agency's general advice on chilling and freezing homemade food.) Freeze it in a single layer on a tray, then bag it, and cook from frozen.

Cooked pasta is a starchy food, and like rice it can grow bacteria if it is left warm. There is no pasta-specific official guidance, so this course uses the cautious rule: **cool it quickly (within about an hour), put it in the fridge, and eat it within 24 hours**; freeze it if you won't. Reheat until steaming hot all the way through.

CHECKPOINT: CAN YOU DO THIS NOW?

☐ I can mix and knead an egg dough until it is smooth and elastic.

☐ I know why the dough needs resting.

☐ I can roll it to about 1.5 mm without a machine.

☐ I can cut tagliatelle and pappardelle by hand.

☐ I can handle raw dough safely.

NEXT CHAPTER

Cooking Skills: Pasta 2, chapter 2 is Hand-Shaped Pasta: orecchiette, cavatelli, pici and pinched farfalle, shaped with your fingers from simple semolina dough.

Cooking Skills: Pasta 2

Chapter 2 · Hand-Shaped Pasta

SKILL GOAL

Shape pasta by hand from a simple semolina and water dough, without any machine.

Shopping list for this chapter

The basics

In southern Italy, pasta is mostly made without eggs, from **semolina and water**, and shaped by hand. The dough is firmer than egg pasta and needs more kneading, but it gives you a chewy pasta that holds its shape, and requires no machine. Many shapes use the same dough and just a different movement of the hands.

SHAPE	HOW IT IS SHAPED	COOKS IN	BEST WITH
Orecchiette ("little ears")	Drag a piece under a knife so it curls, then turn it over your thumb	6 to 8 minutes	Greens, sausage, broccoli, cheese
Cavatelli	Press two fingers into a short piece and pull	6 to 8 minutes	Tomato, ricotta, beans
Pici	Roll strands under your palms	5 to 7 minutes	Garlic, breadcrumbs, ragù
Farfalle (bows)	Cut small rectangles of egg pasta and pinch the middle	About 3 minutes	Peas, light sauces

- **Semolina dough** is made with about **half its weight in warm water** (100 g of flour to 50 ml of water). Warm water makes it easier to knead.
- **Knead longer than for egg dough**, up to 10 minutes. It's tough at first, then becomes smooth.
- **Keep the dough you're not working with covered**, or it dries out in minutes and the shapes crack.

- **Dust with semolina,** not flour, and set the shapes apart on a tray.
- Hand-shaped pasta is thick, so it needs a **longer cook** than ribbons, and a big pan of well-salted water.

Try it

LEVEL 1 · START HERE

Orecchiette with broccoli

1 hour | 1 portion | "little ears" from Puglia

The classic hand-shaped pasta. The dough has no egg, only semolina and water, which makes it firm and chewy, with a bite that dried pasta can't match. Each little ear is a cup that holds the sauce.

INGREDIENTS (1 PORTION)

100 g	fine semolina flour (semola rimacinata), or 50 g plain flour and 50 g fine semolina
50 ml	warm water
1 pinch	fine salt
150 g	broccoli, in small florets
1 tbsp	olive oil
1	garlic clove, sliced
¼ tsp	dried chilli flakes
15 g	parmesan or pecorino, grated

1. Mix the semolina and salt in a bowl. Add the warm water gradually, mixing with a fork and then your hands, until it comes together. **Knead for 8 to 10 minutes** until smooth and firm, adding a few drops of water if it is crumbly. Wrap and rest for 30 minutes.
2. Roll the dough into a rope about 1 cm thick. Cut it into pieces about 1 cm long.
3. Press the point of a blunt knife on a piece and drag it towards you across the board so it curls into a shell. Turn it inside out over your thumb to make an ear with a thick rim and a thin middle. Dust a tray with semolina and set the ears on it.
4. Boil the orecchiette in plenty of salted water for **6 to 8 minutes**, adding the broccoli for the last 4. Meanwhile warm the oil, garlic and chilli in a wide pan.
5. Scoop out a mugful of water, then drain. Toss with the garlic oil and 4 tablespoons of water, crushing the broccoli into the sauce. Finish with the cheese.

> **THEY WON'T LOOK LIKE THE PICTURE**

> The first few will be uneven, and that's fine. Aim for similar thickness, not perfection. Uneven pieces give you pasta with a bit of variety in the bowl.

LEVEL 2 · PRESS

Cavatelli with tomato and ricotta

1 hour | 1 portion | pressed with two fingers

Cavatelli are small dumpling-like shells, made by pressing a short piece of dough with two fingers and pulling.

INGREDIENTS (1 PORTION)

100 g	fine semolina flour (semola rimacinata), or 50 g plain flour and 50 g fine semolina
50 ml	warm water
1 pinch	fine salt
150 ml	tomato sauce from Cooking Skills: Pasta 1, chapter 3
2 tbsp	ricotta
4	basil leaves, torn

1. Make and rest the semolina dough as for the orecchiette. Roll it into a rope about 1.5 cm thick and cut into 2 cm pieces.
2. Press two fingers (index and middle) onto a piece and drag it towards you so it curls into a small shell. Set it on a semolina-dusted tray.
3. Boil in plenty of salted water for **6 to 8 minutes**, until they float and are tender. Drain, keeping a mugful of the water.
4. Toss with the warm tomato sauce and 2 tablespoons of the water. Serve with dollops of ricotta and the basil.

LEVEL 2 · ROLLED STRANDS

Pici with garlic breadcrumbs

1 hour | 1 portion | thick hand-rolled spaghetti

Pici are thick, uneven strands rolled under the palms of your hands. A crisp, garlicky breadcrumb topping (*pangrattato*) is a classic cheap alternative to cheese.

INGREDIENTS (1 PORTION)

100 g	fine semolina flour (semola rimacinata), or 50 g plain flour and 50 g fine semolina
50 ml	warm water
1 pinch	fine salt
30 g	dried breadcrumbs or crumbled stale bread
2 tbsp	olive oil
2	garlic cloves, sliced
¼ tsp	dried chilli flakes
1 tbsp	chopped parsley

1. Make and rest the semolina dough as above. Cut off small pieces and roll them under your palms on the board into strands **4 to 5 mm** thick and about 20 cm long. They will vary in thickness. Dust with semolina.
2. For the topping: warm 1 tablespoon of the oil in a frying pan over a medium heat and toast the breadcrumbs for 3 to 4 minutes, stirring, until golden. Tip into a bowl.
3. In the same pan, warm the remaining oil with the garlic and chilli over a low heat for 2 minutes. Take off the heat.
4. Boil the pici for **5 to 7 minutes**, scoop out a mugful of water and drain. Toss in the garlic oil with 4 tablespoons of the water. Serve topped with the breadcrumbs and parsley.

LEVEL 3 · PINCHED

Farfalle from egg dough, with peas, lemon and ricotta

50 minutes | 1 portion | butterfly bows

Farfalle are made from rolled egg dough, not semolina dough, and shaped by pinching. They teach you to handle thin dough.

INGREDIENTS (1 PORTION)

100 g	plain flour (or Italian "00" flour)
1	Lion-marked medium egg
1 pinch	fine salt
2 tbsp	fine semolina (or extra flour), for dusting
80 g	frozen peas
½	lemon, zest and a squeeze of juice
40 g	ricotta
1 tbsp	olive oil
1 tbsp	chopped mint

1. Make, rest and roll the egg dough from chapter 1 to about 1.5 mm. Let it dry for 5 minutes.
2. Cut the sheet into rectangles about **3 × 2 cm** with a knife or fluted wheel. Pinch each across the middle, wetting your fingers if it won't stay, so that it fans out like a bow tie. Set them on a semolina-dusted tray.
3. Boil in salted water for **3 minutes**, adding the peas for the last 2 minutes. Scoop out a mugful of water and drain.
4. Toss with the lemon zest and juice, ricotta, oil, mint and 3 tablespoons of the water.

Experiments

EXPERIMENT

Semolina or plain flour

Does the dough need semolina?

1. Make two small batches of the orecchiette dough: one with fine semolina flour and one with plain flour (50 ml of water to 100 g of flour).
2. Shape, cook and taste both with a little olive oil.

Look for: The semolina pasta is firmer and chewier, the plain flour pasta is softer and more doughy. You can use plain flour in a pinch.

EXPERIMENT

Warm or cold water

Why does the recipe say warm?

1. Make two batches of dough, one with warm tap water and one with cold.
2. Knead each for the same time, and note how they feel.

Look for: Warm water makes the dough softer and quicker to come together. Cold water gives a stiffer dough that needs more kneading.

EXPERIMENT

Thin or thick

How much does thickness change the cooking?

1. Make orecchiette from pieces cut 3 mm thick and 6 mm thick.
2. Boil them together and take out one of each every minute from the 5-minute mark.

Look for: The thin ones are ready in about 5 minutes, the thick ones in 8 or more. When shapes are uneven, some are ready before others, which is why a bite or two of chewiness is normal.

EXPERIMENT

Cook now or dry first

Does leaving the shapes out change them?

1. Divide a batch of cavatelli into two. Cook one half at once. Leave the other on a tray for 2 hours, then cook.
2. Compare texture and cooking time.

Look for: The dried shapes keep their form better and are chewier, but they take longer to cook. Don't leave them much longer than a few hours.

Tasting notes

WHAT I TRIED	METHOD OR AMOUNT	WHAT I SAW	WHAT I THOUGHT	WILL I DO IT AGAIN?
Orecchiette with broccoli				
Cavatelli with tomato and ricotta				
Pici with breadcrumbs				
Farfalle with peas				
Semolina vs plain flour				
Warm vs cold water				
Thin vs thick				
Cook now vs dried				

Troubleshooting

PROBLEM	LIKELY CAUSE	WHAT TO DO
Dough cracks when shaped	Too dry	Knead in a few drops of water; keep the dough covered

PROBLEM	LIKELY CAUSE	WHAT TO DO
Dough sticky	Too much water	Knead in a little semolina
Shapes won't curl	Dough too dry or too soft	Adjust the water; a knife with a blunt edge helps
Raw middle after boiling	Shapes too thick	Boil longer; make the pieces smaller
Shapes stuck together	Left in a pile	Dust with semolina and spread them apart on a tray
Gluey outside	Not enough water in the pan	Use a big pan of boiling salted water

FOOD SAFETY: HAND-SHAPED PASTA

Semolina-and-water dough has no egg, but still contains raw flour, so wash your hands and don't taste the raw dough. Farfalle uses egg dough, so the raw egg rules from chapter 1 apply. Shapes can be frozen on a tray, then bagged, and cooked from frozen with a minute or two extra. Cooked pasta is a starchy food, and like rice it can grow bacteria if it is left warm. There is no pasta-specific official guidance, so this course uses the cautious rule: **cool it quickly (within about an hour), put it in the fridge, and eat it within 24 hours**; freeze it if you won't. Reheat until steaming hot all the way through.

CHECKPOINT: CAN YOU DO THIS NOW?

- ☐ I can make a semolina and water dough.
- ☐ I can shape orecchiette, cavatelli and pici.
- ☐ I know why these shapes cook longer than ribbons.
- ☐ I can shape farfalle from egg dough.
- ☐ I can freeze shaped pasta.

NEXT CHAPTER

Cooking Skills: Pasta 2, chapter 3 is Coloured Doughs and the Pasta Machine: spinach, tomato, wholewheat and black pepper doughs, and rolling thin by hand or by machine.

Cooking Skills: Pasta 2

Chapter 3 · Coloured Doughs and the Pasta Machine

SKILL GOAL

Flavour and colour fresh pasta dough, and roll it thin with or without a machine.

Shopping list for this chapter

The basics

A plain egg dough can take on other flavours and colours, as long as you remember that anything you add changes the amount of moisture. A dry addition (ground pepper) needs nothing else. A wet one (spinach, tomato purée) needs extra flour. A thirsty one (wholewheat flour) needs extra water and a longer rest.

DOUGH	WHAT TO ADD (PER 100 G OF FLOUR AND 1 EGG)	WHAT TO ADJUST	SUITS
Spinach	40 g cooked spinach, squeezed dry	Add flour if sticky	Lemon, butter, ricotta, cream
Tomato	1 tbsp tomato purée, plus 10 g flour	Add flour if sticky	Olive oil, garlic, seafood, basil
Wholewheat	60 g wholewheat flour in place of 60 g plain, plus 1 tbsp water	Rest 45 minutes	Mushrooms, beans, strong flavours
Black pepper	1½ tsp coarsely ground pepper	Nothing	Cheese, lemon, butter, ricotta

The colour fades with cooking, so don't expect the bright green of the raw dough. The flavour is subtle: these doughs are about variety on the plate more than a strong taste.

Rolling by pin or by machine

A pasta machine rolls the dough to an even thickness faster than a pin and with less effort, and cuts it into ribbons. It's a good tool, but it isn't needed: everything in this course can be made

with a rolling pin. If you decide to buy one, a hand-crank machine costs a modest amount, and clamps onto the worktop. The steps are:

STEP	WHAT TO DO	WHY
1. Flatten	Press a rested piece of dough into a flat oval about 1 cm thick, dusted with flour	It must fit the rollers
2. Widest setting	Pass it through the widest setting, fold in three like a letter, and pass again. Repeat 3 or 4 times	Kneads the dough smooth and makes a neat rectangle
3. Narrow gradually	Go down one setting at a time, passing the sheet through once at each	Squeezing too fast tears the dough
4. Stop at about 1.5 mm	For most machines this is around setting 5 or 6 (of 7 to 9); check yours	Thin enough to cook in minutes but still strong
5. Dust and cut	Dust lightly, let it dry for 5 minutes, then use the cutter or cut by hand	Stops ribbons sticking
6. Clean it dry	Never wash it. Let leftover dough dry, then brush it out	Water makes the rollers rust and the dough stick

Try it

LEVEL 1 · START HERE

Spinach tagliatelle with lemon and parmesan

45 minutes plus resting | 1 portion | green pasta without the packet

Spinach adds colour and a mild, fresh taste. The one rule is that it must be **squeezed completely dry**, because wet spinach makes the dough sticky.

INGREDIENTS (1 PORTION)

100 g	plain flour (or "00")
1	Lion-marked medium egg
40 g	cooked spinach, squeezed completely dry (from about 120 g fresh leaves or 100 g thawed frozen)
1 pinch	fine salt
2 tbsp	fine semolina (or extra flour), for dusting
1 tbsp	olive oil
½	lemon, zest and a squeeze of juice
15 g	parmesan, grated

1. Wilt the spinach in a pan with a splash of water for 1 minute (or thaw frozen). Cool, then squeeze it in a clean tea towel, twisting hard, until no more green liquid comes out. Chop it very finely, or blitz it with the egg.
2. Beat the egg with the spinach until combined. Make a well in the flour and salt, pour in the green mixture and mix to a dough. **Knead for 8 to 10 minutes**. It will be stickier than plain dough: knead in extra flour, a teaspoon at a time, until smooth. Rest for 30 minutes.
3. Roll out to 1.5 mm, dry for 5 minutes, and cut into tagliatelle as in chapter 1.
4. Boil for **2 to 3 minutes**. Scoop out a mugful of water, drain, and toss with the oil, lemon zest and juice, parmesan and 2 tablespoons of the water.

LEVEL 2 · CONCENTRATED

Tomato tagliolini with garlic, basil and cherry tomatoes

45 minutes plus resting | 1 portion | orange-pink ribbons

Tomato purée is a strong flavour in a small amount, and adds moisture, so there's a little extra flour. The colour is pale orange-pink and the taste mild.

INGREDIENTS (1 PORTION)

110 g	plain flour (or "00")
1	Lion-marked medium egg
1 tbsp	tomato purée (about 15 g)
1 pinch	fine salt
2 tbsp	fine semolina (or extra flour), for dusting
1 tbsp	olive oil
1	garlic clove, finely sliced
6	cherry tomatoes, halved
4	basil leaves, torn
15 g	parmesan, grated

1. Beat the egg with the tomato purée. Make a well in the flour and salt, add the mixture and mix to a dough. Knead for 8 to 10 minutes, adding flour a teaspoon at a time if it is sticky. Rest for 30 minutes.
2. Roll to 1.5 mm, dry for 5 minutes and cut into thin ribbons **3 to 4 mm wide** (tagliolini). Dust with semolina.
3. Warm the oil with the garlic in a wide pan over a low heat for 1 minute. Add the tomatoes and cook for 3 minutes until they start to collapse.
4. Boil the pasta for 2 to 3 minutes. Scoop out a mugful of water, drain and toss in the pan with 3 tablespoons of the water for 1 minute. Add the basil and parmesan.

LEVEL 2 · HEALTHY

Wholewheat tagliatelle with mushrooms and thyme

50 minutes plus resting | 1 portion | nutty and high in fibre

Wholewheat flour soaks up more water and has a coarser texture, so the dough needs a little water and a longer rest. It suits earthy sauces.

INGREDIENTS (1 PORTION)

40 g	plain flour
60 g	wholewheat flour
1	Lion-marked medium egg
1 tbsp	water, plus a little more if needed
1 pinch	fine salt
2 tbsp	fine semolina (or extra flour), for dusting
150 g	mushrooms, sliced
1 tbsp	olive oil
1 tsp	butter
1	garlic clove, chopped
2	thyme sprigs, leaves only
1 tbsp	chopped parsley
15 g	parmesan, grated

1. Mix the flours and salt, make a well and add the egg and water. Mix and **knead for 10 minutes**. The dough should feel firm; add a few drops of water if it cracks. Rest for **45 minutes**.
2. Roll to 1.5 to 2 mm (wholewheat dough tears a little more easily, so be gentle), dry for 5 minutes and cut into tagliatelle.
3. Brown the mushrooms in the oil in a hot pan for 6 to 7 minutes. Add the butter, garlic and thyme for the last minute.

4. Boil the pasta for **3 to 4 minutes**. Scoop out a mugful of water, drain and toss with the mushrooms and 3 tablespoons of the water. Finish with the parsley and parmesan.

LEVEL 3 · SPICED

Black pepper tagliatelle with ricotta and lemon

45 minutes plus resting | 1 portion | pepper in the dough, not on top

Crushed pepper in the dough gives a gentle heat all the way through, and speckles the ribbons. Use whole peppercorns that you crush yourself.

INGREDIENTS (1 PORTION)

100 g	plain flour (or "00")
1	Lion-marked medium egg
1½ tsp	coarsely ground black pepper
1 pinch	fine salt
2 tbsp	fine semolina (or extra flour), for dusting
40 g	ricotta
½	lemon, zest and a squeeze of juice
1 tbsp	olive oil
15 g	parmesan or pecorino, grated

1. Mix the pepper into the flour and salt. Add the egg and make the dough as in chapter 1. Knead for 8 to 10 minutes and rest for 30 minutes.
2. Roll to 1.5 mm, dry for 5 minutes and cut into tagliatelle.
3. Boil for 2 to 3 minutes. Scoop out a mugful of water, then drain.
4. In the warm pan, mix the ricotta, lemon zest and juice, oil and 3 tablespoons of the water into a loose sauce. Add the pasta and toss for 30 seconds. Finish with the cheese.

Experiments

EXPERIMENT

Pin or machine

Is a machine worth buying?

1. If you have or can borrow a machine, roll two identical batches of plain egg dough: one with the pin and one with the machine, both to about 1.5 mm.
2. Time each and compare how even the sheets are. If you have no machine, roll two batches to 1.5 mm and 2.5 mm by hand instead and cook both.

Look for: The machine is faster and the sheet more even, but the difference in the cooked pasta is small. Many Italian cooks still roll by hand.

EXPERIMENT

Wet or dry spinach

Why squeeze it so hard?

1. Make two spinach doughs. Squeeze the spinach as dry as you can for one, and squeeze it only lightly for the other.
2. Compare how sticky each is to knead and roll.

Look for: The wet spinach dough is sticky and slack, and needs a lot of extra flour, which dulls the colour. The dry spinach dough is much easier.

EXPERIMENT

How much spinach

Find the right strength.

1. Make three small doughs (50 g of flour and ½ an egg each is enough, or make full batches) with 20 g, 40 g and 80 g of squeezed spinach, adjusting the flour as needed.
2. Cook each and compare colour and taste.

Look for: 20 g gives a pale green and almost no spinach taste, 80 g is deep green, slightly bitter and tricky to handle. About 40 g per 100 g flour is usually the sweet spot.

Tasting notes

WHAT I TRIED	METHOD OR AMOUNT	WHAT I SAW	WHAT I THOUGHT	WILL I DO IT AGAIN?
Spinach tagliatelle				
Tomato tagliolini				
Wholewheat tagliatelle				
Black pepper tagliatelle				
Pin vs machine				
Wet vs dry spinach				
20, 40 and 80 g spinach				

Troubleshooting

PROBLEM	LIKELY CAUSE	WHAT TO DO
Spinach dough sticky and slack	Spinach not squeezed dry	Knead in flour a teaspoon at a time; squeeze harder next time
Tomato dough dull	Too little purée	Use a concentrated purée; don't add water
Wholewheat dough cracks	Too dry, or not rested	Add water a few drops at a time; rest 45 minutes
Pepper dough bitter	Too much pepper, or pre-ground	Use 1½ tsp coarsely crushed pepper per 100 g flour
Machine tears the dough	Too thin too fast, or too wet	Go down one setting at a time; dust with flour
Colour fades	Normal	The flavour is the point; add a handful of herbs to the sauce

FOOD SAFETY: FLAVOURED DOUGHS AND MACHINES

The dough contains raw egg and raw flour. The Food Standards Agency advises against eating or tasting uncooked flour or dough, because raw flour is not treated to kill bacteria such as E. coli. Don't taste the dough or any filling that contains raw egg, **wash your hands, the board and your tools** after handling raw dough, and use **Lion-marked eggs**. Cook fresh pasta thoroughly. Pregnant women, children under 5, people aged 65 and over, and anyone with a weakened immune system should be especially careful.

Uncooked fresh pasta, which contains raw egg, should be kept in the fridge (0 to 5°C) and cooked within **24 hours**, or frozen straight away. (There is no pasta-specific official guidance, so this is a cautious rule based on the Food Standards Agency's general advice on chilling and freezing homemade food.) Freeze it in a single layer on a tray, then bag it, and cook from frozen.

Keep your pasta machine clean and dry: brush out dried dough instead of washing it, and wipe it after use. Cooked pasta is a starchy food, and like rice it can grow bacteria if it is left warm. There is no pasta-specific official guidance, so this course uses the cautious rule: **cool it quickly (within about an hour), put it in the fridge, and eat it within 24 hours**; freeze it if you won't. Reheat until steaming hot all the way through.

CHECKPOINT: CAN YOU DO THIS NOW?

- ☐ I know how to adjust a dough that has something wet added.
- ☐ I can squeeze spinach dry and make a green dough.
- ☐ I can make wholewheat, tomato and pepper doughs.
- ☐ I know how a pasta machine works, and that I don't need one.
- ☐ I know how to clean a pasta machine.

NEXT CHAPTER

Cooking Skills: Pasta 2, chapter 4 is Ravioli: making and sealing filled pasta, with spinach and ricotta, butternut squash, and pea and mint fillings.

Cooking Skills: Pasta 2

Chapter 4 · Ravioli

SKILL GOAL

Make, fill, seal and cook ravioli so they stay whole and taste of their filling.

Shopping list for this chapter

The basics

Ravioli are pillows of fresh pasta around a filling, the most satisfying thing to make from a sheet of dough. They look hard, but there are only four skills: **a dry filling**, **a thin, even sheet**, **a good seal** and **gentle cooking**.

PROBLEM TO AVOID	HOW	WHY
Soggy ravioli	Drain ricotta, squeeze vegetables dry, roast squash until dry, cool the filling completely	Wet filling leaks through the dough
Bursting ravioli	Press out every pocket of air, and don't overfill	Air expands in the hot water and splits the seams
Ravioli that open	Brush the dough with water or egg before sealing, and press firmly	Dry dough doesn't stick to dry dough
Thick, doughy edges	Roll thinly and trim well; press edges flat	Double thickness at the seam must still cook through
Torn, mangled ravioli	Simmer gently; lift out with a slotted spoon	A hard boil knocks them about

- **Teaspoons of filling.** It looks too little at first; the dough puffs round it. About 10 g per ravioli.
- **Keep the dough covered.** Dough you're not using dries out and won't seal.
- **Work on a floured, semolina-dusted board** and keep the finished ravioli apart on a tray.

- **The filling is cooked or ready to eat,** because the pasta cooks for only 3 or 4 minutes.

Try it

LEVEL 1 · START HERE

Spinach and ricotta ravioli

1 hour 15 minutes | makes about 24 ravioli (3 portions) | the classic filling

The best first filling: soft, mild and forgiving. The filling must be dry (the ricotta drained, the spinach squeezed), because wet filling makes soggy ravioli that burst.

INGREDIENTS (3 PORTIONS)

200 g	plain flour (or "00")
2	Lion-marked medium eggs
1 pinch	fine salt
2 tbsp	fine semolina (or extra flour), for dusting
1	small egg or a little water, for sealing
200 g	ricotta, drained in a sieve for 30 minutes
60 g	cooked spinach, squeezed completely dry, finely chopped
30 g	parmesan, grated
1 pinch	nutmeg
½	lemon, zest only
¼ tsp	salt

1. Make the dough: mix the flour, salt and eggs, **knead for 8 to 10 minutes** and rest for 30 minutes (chapter 1). Meanwhile, make the filling (below).
2. Cut the dough in half and keep one half wrapped. Roll the other into a long sheet about **1 to 1.5 mm** thick and about 12 cm wide, trimming the edges straight.
3. **Filling:** mix the ricotta, spinach, parmesan, nutmeg, lemon zest and salt until smooth.
4. Place **level teaspoons of filling** (about 10 g) on one half of the sheet, in a row, about **4 cm apart**. Brush round them (and the long edge) with the beaten egg or water.
5. Fold the other half of the sheet over, and press the dough down round each mound with the sides of your fingers, **pushing out all the air**. Trapped air makes ravioli burst while cooking.

6. Cut between the mounds into squares with a knife or a fluted wheel, or use a round cutter. Press the edges with a fork if you like. Set on a semolina-dusted tray, not touching.
7. Cook in a large pan of **gently simmering** salted water for **3 to 4 minutes**, until they float and the edges are tender. Lift out with a slotted spoon. Serve with the lemon butter below.

> **HOW MANY TO COOK**
>
> Cook what you will eat now, and freeze the rest on a tray (see the food safety box). Six to eight ravioli is a main-meal portion.

LEVEL 2 · SWEET AND SAVOURY

Butternut squash ravioli

1 hour 30 minutes | makes about 24 ravioli (3 portions) | a drier filling to master

Roasted squash has a lovely sweetness, but it holds a lot of water. Roast it until dry and caramelised, and mash it with breadcrumbs to soak up what's left.

INGREDIENTS (3 PORTIONS)

200 g	plain flour (or "00")
2	Lion-marked medium eggs
1 pinch	fine salt
2 tbsp	fine semolina (or extra flour), for dusting
1	small egg or a little water, for sealing
400 g	butternut squash, peeled and cubed
1 tsp	olive oil
30 g	parmesan, grated
2 tbsp	dried breadcrumbs
1 pinch	nutmeg
1 pinch	salt and pepper
6	sage leaves, to serve
1 tbsp	butter, to serve

1. Make the dough: mix the flour, salt and eggs, **knead for 8 to 10 minutes** and rest for 30 minutes (chapter 1). Meanwhile, make the filling (below).
2. Cut the dough in half and keep one half wrapped. Roll the other into a long sheet about **1 to 1.5 mm** thick and about 12 cm wide, trimming the edges straight.
3. **Filling:** heat the oven to 200°C fan (220°C conventional, gas 7). Toss the squash with the oil, spread on a tray and roast for **25 to 30 minutes**, until soft and browned at the edges. Mash until smooth, mix in the parmesan, breadcrumbs, nutmeg and seasoning, and let it cool completely.

4. Fill, seal, cut and cook the ravioli exactly as in the spinach recipe, with level teaspoons of filling, all air pressed out, and a gentle simmer for **3 to 4 minutes**.
5. Meanwhile, melt the butter in a small pan and fry the sage leaves for 1 minute until crisp. Spoon over the ravioli.

LEVEL 2 · FRESH

Pea and mint ravioli

1 hour 15 minutes | makes about 24 ravioli (3 portions) | bright green and healthy

Peas make a fresh, sweet filling. Crush them coarsely, not to a purée, or the filling turns to paste.

INGREDIENTS (3 PORTIONS)

200 g	plain flour (or "00")
2	Lion-marked medium eggs
1 pinch	fine salt
2 tbsp	fine semolina (or extra flour), for dusting
1	small egg or a little water, for sealing
200 g	frozen peas
100 g	ricotta, drained
20 g	parmesan, grated
1 tbsp	chopped mint
½	lemon, zest only
1 pinch	salt and pepper
1 tbsp	extra-virgin olive oil, to serve

1. Make the dough: mix the flour, salt and eggs, **knead for 8 to 10 minutes** and rest for 30 minutes (chapter 1). Meanwhile, make the filling (below).
2. Cut the dough in half and keep one half wrapped. Roll the other into a long sheet about **1 to 1.5 mm** thick and about 12 cm wide, trimming the edges straight.
3. **Filling:** boil the peas for 3 minutes, drain very well and let them steam dry. Crush them coarsely with a fork, then mix in the ricotta, parmesan, mint, lemon zest and seasoning. The mixture should hold its shape on a spoon.
4. Fill, seal, cut and cook as in the spinach recipe for **3 to 4 minutes**.
5. Serve with the olive oil, a squeeze of lemon and more mint.

LEVEL 2 · SAUCE

Lemon butter (for any filled pasta)

5 minutes | 2 portions | the easiest finish

Fresh filled pasta doesn't need a heavy sauce. Butter and lemon make a light, glossy coating that lets the filling shine.

INGREDIENTS (2 PORTIONS)

40 g	butter
½	lemon, zest and 1 tsp juice
3 tbsp	cooking water from the ravioli
1 pinch	black pepper

1. Melt the butter in a wide pan over a low heat and add the lemon zest.
2. Add the cooking water and simmer for 20 seconds to make a creamy emulsion.
3. Add the cooked ravioli and roll them gently in the sauce. Add the lemon juice and pepper. Serve at once.

> **A LIGHTER VERSION**
>
> Use 20 g of butter and 1 tablespoon of extra-virgin olive oil, and a little more cooking water. Or skip the butter and use only olive oil, lemon and parmesan.

Experiments

EXPERIMENT

How much filling

Find the limit.

1. Make ravioli with 1 level teaspoon, 2 teaspoons and 1 tablespoon of filling each.
2. Cook them together and note which burst, and how they taste.

Look for: The small ones are mostly pasta, the large ones are likely to burst or leak at the seam. Between 1 and 2 teaspoons is the sweet spot.

EXPERIMENT

Water or egg wash

What do you seal with?

1. Seal three ravioli with a brush of water and three with beaten egg. Press them identically.
2. Cook them gently and check which ones open.

Look for: Both work for fresh dough. Egg is stickier, and better for dough that has dried slightly. If your dough is fresh and damp, water is fine.

EXPERIMENT

Thick or thin sheet

How thin should it be?

1. Roll one lot of dough to 1 mm and another to 2 mm. Make and cook ravioli from each for the same time.
2. Compare the eating.

Look for: The 2 mm ravioli are chewy and doughy at the seams, the 1 mm ones are delicate. Too thin and they tear, too thick and the filling is lost.

EXPERIMENT

Cutter or knife

Does the shape matter?

1. Cut some ravioli with a round cutter and some into squares with a knife or fluted wheel.
2. Cook and compare how many scraps are left, and how well the edges seal.

Look for: A round cutter gives neat shapes but wastes dough, squares waste none. Reroll the scraps once to make a few more.

Tasting notes

WHAT I TRIED	METHOD OR AMOUNT	WHAT I SAW	WHAT I THOUGHT	WILL I DO IT AGAIN?
Spinach and ricotta ravioli				
Squash ravioli				
Pea and mint ravioli				
Lemon butter				
Filling amount				
Water vs egg seal				
1 mm vs 2 mm				
Cutter vs knife				

Troubleshooting

PROBLEM	LIKELY CAUSE	WHAT TO DO
Ravioli burst while cooking	Trapped air, overfilled, or boiled hard	Press out the air, use less filling, simmer gently

PROBLEM	LIKELY CAUSE	WHAT TO DO
Ravioli open at the seams	Dough too dry, or not pressed	Brush with water or egg and press firmly
Soggy bottoms	Wet filling, or left on a damp board	Dry the filling; dust the tray with semolina and cook soon
Doughy seams	Dough too thick at the edge	Roll thinner and press the dough flat round the filling
Ravioli stuck to the tray	Left too long or not dusted	Dust with semolina; freeze on the tray
Filling bland	Not seasoned	Season the filling; taste a cooked spoonful of it only if it contains no raw egg

FOOD SAFETY: RAVIOLI

The dough contains raw egg and raw flour. The Food Standards Agency advises against eating or tasting uncooked flour or dough, because raw flour is not treated to kill bacteria such as E. coli. Don't taste the dough or any filling that contains raw egg, **wash your hands, the board and your tools** after handling raw dough, and use **Lion-marked eggs**. Cook fresh pasta thoroughly. Pregnant women, children under 5, people aged 65 and over, and anyone with a weakened immune system should be especially careful.

The fillings here are all cooked or ready to eat (the ricotta is pasteurised, the squash and peas are cooked, the spinach is cooked), and the ravioli simmer for 3 to 4 minutes. Don't put raw meat or raw egg in a filling. If you fill with anything else, make sure it is cooked.

Uncooked fresh pasta, which contains raw egg, should be kept in the fridge (0 to 5°C) and cooked within **24 hours**, or frozen straight away. (There is no pasta-specific official guidance, so this is a cautious rule based on the Food Standards Agency's general advice on chilling and freezing homemade food.) Freeze it in a single layer on a tray, then bag it, and cook from frozen. Cook frozen ravioli straight from the freezer for 5 to 6 minutes, never thawed, which makes them stick and burst.

Cooked pasta is a starchy food, and like rice it can grow bacteria if it is left warm. There is no pasta-specific official guidance, so this course uses the cautious rule: **cool it quickly (within about an hour), put it in the fridge, and eat it within 24 hours**; freeze it if you won't. Reheat until steaming hot all the way through.

CHECKPOINT: CAN YOU DO THIS NOW?

☐ I can make a filling that is dry enough.

☐ I can roll a sheet thin enough, and fill and seal ravioli.

☐ I know why air must be pressed out.

☐ I can simmer ravioli without bursting them.

☐ I can freeze ravioli and cook them from frozen.

NEXT CHAPTER

Cooking Skills: Pasta 2, chapter 5 is Tortellini and Other Filled Shapes: folding tortelloni, tortellini in broth, agnolotti and cannelloni.

Cooking Skills: Pasta 2

Chapter 5 · Tortellini and Other Filled Shapes

SKILL GOAL

Fold, seal and cook filled pasta shapes from squares, strips and rectangles.

Shopping list for this chapter

The basics

Filled pasta shapes all follow the rules of chapter 4: a **dry filling**, a **thin sheet**, a **good seal** with **no trapped air** and **gentle cooking**. What changes is how you fold the dough.

SHAPE	CUT	FOLD	DIFFICULTY
Ravioli	Squares or circles from a double sheet	Two layers pressed together	Easy
Tortelloni	7 cm squares	Corner to corner, then wrap the corners round a finger	Easy to medium
Tortellini	4 cm squares	The same, but smaller	Medium: small and fiddly
Agnolotti	Strip of dough	Fold over a row of filling, pinch between	Medium
Cannelloni	Rectangles	Rolled round filling, then baked	Easy to medium

- **Work with one square at a time** and keep the rest covered. Dough that dries out won't seal.
- **Smaller is harder.** A tortellino takes about 20 seconds once you've got it, but the first ten will be wonky. That's part of the learning.
- **The filling must be cooked or cooked through.** Meat fillings use cooked meat only here, and filled pasta that contains raw egg in the filling must be simmered until the filling is hot all the way through.

Try it

LEVEL 1 · START HERE

Tortelloni (big folded squares)

1 hour 15 minutes | about 20 tortelloni (2 to 3 portions) | the easiest folded shape

Tortelloni are large tortellini. Because you fold a square instead of twisting a small circle, they are quick to learn. Use the spinach and ricotta filling from chapter 4.

INGREDIENTS (3 PORTIONS)

200 g	plain flour (or "00")
2	Lion-marked medium eggs
1 pinch	fine salt
2 tbsp	fine semolina (or extra flour), for dusting
1	small egg or a little water, for sealing
200 g	ricotta, drained in a sieve for 30 minutes
60 g	cooked spinach, squeezed completely dry, finely chopped
30 g	parmesan, grated
1 pinch	nutmeg
¼ tsp	salt
20 g	butter, to serve
4	sage leaves, to serve

1. Make the dough: mix the flour, salt and eggs, **knead for 8 to 10 minutes** and rest for 30 minutes (chapter 1). Meanwhile, make the filling.
2. **Filling:** mix the ricotta, spinach, parmesan, nutmeg and salt until smooth. The mixture must be dry enough to hold its shape on a spoon.
3. Roll the dough to 1 to 1.5 mm and cut it into **7 cm squares**. Keep the squares you aren't using under a cloth.
4. Put a level teaspoon of filling in the centre of a square. Brush the edges with the beaten egg or water, and fold it corner to corner into a triangle. Press out the air from the filling outwards, and seal the edges firmly.

5. Hold the long edge of the triangle, and bring its two bottom corners together round your fingertip. Overlap them, press to seal, and fold the pointed tip down. Set on a semolina-dusted tray, not touching.
6. Simmer gently in plenty of salted water for **4 to 5 minutes**, until they float and the edges are tender. Lift out with a slotted spoon.
7. Melt the butter in a pan with the sage for 1 to 2 minutes. Roll the tortelloni in it and serve.

> **SIMPLER STILL**
>
> If the ring shape is fiddly, leave them as triangles (agnolotti-style half-moons are next in this chapter). They taste the same.

LEVEL 2 · CLASSIC

Tortellini in broth

1 hour 30 minutes | about 30 tortellini (3 portions) | no wine, as in the old Bolognese recipe

A tortellino is a small ring of pasta around a savoury filling, and the traditional way to eat it is in a clear broth. The filling is cooked chicken and ham, never raw meat, so it is safe once the pasta is simmered.

INGREDIENTS (3 PORTIONS)

200 g	plain flour (or "00")
2	Lion-marked medium eggs
1 pinch	fine salt
2 tbsp	fine semolina (or extra flour), for dusting
1	small egg or a little water, for sealing
100 g	cooked chicken breast, finely minced or blitzed
50 g	cooked ham, finely chopped
30 g	parmesan, grated
1 pinch	nutmeg
1	egg yolk, from a Lion-marked egg (for the filling), cooked in the pasta
600 ml	chicken stock (made with a stock cube), for the broth
1 tbsp	chopped parsley

1. Make the dough: mix the flour, salt and eggs, **knead for 8 to 10 minutes** and rest for 30 minutes (chapter 1). Meanwhile, make the filling.
2. **Filling:** mix the chicken, ham, parmesan, nutmeg and egg yolk into a stiff paste. Don't taste it, because it contains raw egg yolk. It will cook inside the pasta.
3. Roll the dough to 1 mm and cut **4 cm squares**. Put **half a teaspoon** of filling on each, brush the edges, fold into a triangle, press out the air and seal.
4. Wrap each triangle round your fingertip as in the tortelloni recipe, overlapping the two corners and pressing to seal. Set on a semolina-dusted tray.

5. Heat the stock to a gentle simmer. Add the tortellini and cook for **4 to 5 minutes**, until they float and the filling is steaming hot all the way through (cut one open to check).
6. Ladle into bowls and add the parsley and a little more parmesan.

> **COOK THE FILLING THROUGH**
>
> The yolk in the filling is raw until the tortellini simmer. Cut one open: the filling must be hot all the way through, with no cold or pink spot. Use a probe if you have one (70°C for 2 minutes).

LEVEL 2 · PINCHED

Agnolotti (pinched half-moons)

1 hour 30 minutes | about 30 agnolotti (3 portions) | the quickest filled shape to make

Agnolotti are made by folding a strip of dough over a row of filling and pinching between each mound, a bit like ravioli with a rounded edge. Instead of cutting, you pinch, which seals and divides at once.

INGREDIENTS (3 PORTIONS)

200 g	plain flour (or "00")
2	Lion-marked medium eggs
1 pinch	fine salt
2 tbsp	fine semolina (or extra flour), for dusting
1	small egg or a little water, for sealing
150 g	ricotta, drained
100 g	cooked leeks (from 1 large leek, sliced and softened in butter), cooled
30 g	parmesan, grated
1 pinch	salt and pepper
20 g	butter, to serve
1 tbsp	chopped chives

1. Make the dough: mix the flour, salt and eggs, **knead for 8 to 10 minutes** and rest for 30 minutes (chapter 1). Meanwhile, make the filling.
2. **Filling:** mix the ricotta, cooled leeks, parmesan and seasoning. The leeks must be cooked and cool so they don't melt the ricotta.
3. Roll the dough into strips 8 cm wide and 1 mm thick. Pipe or spoon **half-teaspoon mounds** in a row down the strip, about 3 cm apart, 2 cm from the edge nearest you.
4. Brush the edges with egg or water. Fold the edge nearest you over the filling, and press down between each mound with your finger and thumb, pinching it into a pillow.
5. Run a fluted wheel or knife along the long edge, and cut between the pinched points. Dust with semolina.

6. Simmer for **3 to 4 minutes**. Meanwhile, melt the butter in a pan. Toss the agnolotti in it with the chives.

LEVEL 3 · BAKED

Cannelloni with ricotta and spinach

1 hour 30 minutes | makes 8 tubes (4 portions) | a baked filled pasta

Cannelloni are rolled sheets of fresh pasta around a filling, covered in sauce and baked. Fresh sheets don't need pre-cooking when they are covered in plenty of sauce.

INGREDIENTS (4 PORTIONS)

200 g	plain flour (or "00")
2	Lion-marked medium eggs
1 pinch	fine salt
250 g	ricotta, drained
100 g	frozen spinach, thawed and squeezed completely dry
30 g	parmesan, grated
1 pinch	nutmeg, salt and pepper
1 tin	chopped tomatoes (400 g)
1	garlic clove, sliced
1 tbsp	olive oil
4	basil leaves
40 g	mozzarella, torn or grated

1. Make the dough as in chapter 1 (200 g flour, 2 eggs, a pinch of salt), rest for 30 minutes, and roll it to **1.5 mm**. Cut into **8 rectangles, about 10 x 12 cm**.
2. Drop the rectangles into boiling salted water for **1 minute**, lift out and lay them flat on an oiled tray or damp cloth, so they don't stick together.
3. **Filling:** mix the ricotta, spinach, parmesan and seasoning. Spoon a line of filling along one long edge of each rectangle and roll up.
4. **Sauce:** warm the oil with the garlic over a low heat for 1 minute. Add the tomatoes, a pinch of salt and the basil, and simmer for 15 minutes.
5. Heat the oven to 190°C fan (210°C conventional, gas 6 to 7). Spread a third of the sauce in a baking dish, lay the tubes seam-side down on top, cover with the rest of the sauce

and scatter over the mozzarella.

6. Cover with foil and bake for **20 minutes**. Remove the foil and bake for 10 to 15 minutes until golden and bubbling. It must be **steaming hot all the way through**.

> **WITHOUT PRE-BOILING**
>
> Thinner fresh sheets (1 mm) can go in raw if they are completely covered in sauce and the dish is covered with foil for the first 25 minutes. Try it as an experiment in chapter 7.

Experiments

EXPERIMENT

Folding methods

Which fold do you like?

1. Make ten tortelloni, folding five by wrapping round your finger and five by leaving as triangles.
2. Cook them together and compare how they look and eat.

Look for: The ring shape holds more sauce, the triangle is quicker. The taste is the same.

EXPERIMENT

Filling dryness

How dry is dry enough?

1. Make a batch of ricotta filling. Drain half of it in a sieve for 30 minutes and use the other half straight from the tub.
2. Fill and cook the same number of tortelloni from each.

Look for: The undrained ricotta is runny and the pasta bursts or tastes of boiled dough. The drained one stays inside.

EXPERIMENT

Boil or simmer

How hard should the water bubble?

1. Cook five filled pasta in a hard rolling boil and five in a gentle simmer for the same time.
2. Compare how many burst or split.

Look for: The boiled ones are more likely to split. Gentle is the rule for filled pasta.

EXPERIMENT

Fresh or frozen

Does freezing change them?

1. Freeze half of the tortelloni on a tray, then bag them. After a day, cook them from frozen for 5 to 6 minutes, and cook the fresh ones.
2. Compare the texture.

Look for: Frozen ones need about a minute longer, and are almost as good as fresh. Don't thaw them first.

Tasting notes

WHAT I TRIED	METHOD OR AMOUNT	WHAT I SAW	WHAT I THOUGHT	WILL I DO IT AGAIN?
Tortelloni				
Tortellini in broth				
Agnolotti				
Cannelloni				
Fold method				
Drained vs undrained				
Boil vs simmer				

WHAT I TRIED	METHOD OR AMOUNT	WHAT I SAW	WHAT I THOUGHT	WILL I DO IT AGAIN?
Fresh vs frozen				

Troubleshooting

PROBLEM	LIKELY CAUSE	WHAT TO DO
Shapes come undone	Dough dried out, or not enough water or egg	Keep dough covered and brush the edges
Pasta bursts	Air trapped, overfilled, or boiled hard	Press out the air, fill less, simmer gently
Filling leaks into the water	Too wet	Drain the ricotta, dry the vegetables
Tough, doughy tips	The folded corners are double thickness	Roll thinner and press the corners flat
Cannelloni stick together	Pre-boiled sheets not laid out	Lay flat on oiled tray or damp cloth
Cannelloni dry on top	Not enough sauce	Cover the tubes completely with sauce and foil

FOOD SAFETY: FILLED PASTA

The dough contains raw egg and raw flour. The Food Standards Agency advises against eating or tasting uncooked flour or dough, because raw flour is not treated to kill bacteria such as E. coli. Don't taste the dough or any filling that contains raw egg, **wash your hands, the board and your tools** after handling raw dough, and use **Lion-marked eggs**. Cook fresh pasta thoroughly. Pregnant women, children under 5, people aged 65 and over, and anyone with a weakened immune system should be especially careful.

Fillings in this chapter use only cooked meat, cooked vegetables and pasteurised cheese. The tortellini filling also contains a raw egg yolk, so those tortellini must simmer until the filling is hot all the way through (70°C for 2 minutes, or steaming hot when you cut one open). Baked cannelloni must be steaming hot throughout.

Uncooked fresh pasta, which contains raw egg, should be kept in the fridge (0 to 5°C) and cooked within **24 hours**, or frozen straight away. (There is no pasta-specific official guidance, so this is a cautious rule based on the Food Standards Agency's general advice on chilling and freezing homemade food.) Freeze it in a single layer on a tray, then bag it, and cook from frozen. Cook frozen

filled pasta straight from the freezer, never thawed.

Cooked pasta is a starchy food, and like rice it can grow bacteria if it is left warm. There is no pasta-specific official guidance, so this course uses the cautious rule: **cool it quickly (within about an hour), put it in the fridge, and eat it within 24 hours**; freeze it if you won't. Reheat until steaming hot all the way through.

CHECKPOINT: CAN YOU DO THIS NOW?

- ☐ I can fold tortelloni and tortellini from squares.
- ☐ I can pinch agnolotti from a strip.
- ☐ I can roll and bake cannelloni.
- ☐ I know why filled pasta is simmered, not boiled.
- ☐ I can freeze filled pasta and cook it from frozen.

NEXT CHAPTER

Cooking Skills: Pasta 2, chapter 6 is Gnocchi: light potato, ricotta, pumpkin and semolina dumplings.

Cooking Skills: Pasta 2

Chapter 6 · Gnocchi

SKILL GOAL

Make light gnocchi and know why baking the potatoes matters.

Shopping list for this chapter

The basics

Gnocchi are small dumplings: a mix of potato (or ricotta, pumpkin or semolina) with a little flour, cut into pieces and simmered. They have few ingredients, so the technique is everything. The aim is **the least flour that holds them together**.

RULE	WHY
Bake or steam the potatoes, don't boil them	Boiled potatoes soak up water, so the dough needs far more flour, and that makes heavy gnocchi
Use floury (mealy) potatoes	Waxy ones are sticky and wet
Mash or rice while hot	Lumps stay lumps; cold potato goes gluey
Let the steam escape	Dry mash needs less flour
Mix lightly and briefly	Kneading develops gluten and makes tough gnocchi
Cook one as a test	Adjust flour before you cook the lot
Simmer, don't boil	A hard boil breaks them up

Try it

LEVEL 1 · START HERE

Potato gnocchi with tomatoes and basil

1 hour 30 minutes | 3 portions | the main skill: keep them light

The rule of gnocchi: **dry potatoes need less flour, and less flour means lighter gnocchi**. That is why the potatoes are baked, not boiled.

INGREDIENTS (3 PORTIONS)

500 g	floury potatoes (e.g. Maris Piper or King Edward), unpeeled
120 g	plain flour, plus more for dusting
1	Lion-marked egg yolk
½ tsp	salt
1 pinch	nutmeg
1 tbsp	olive oil
1	garlic clove, sliced
100 g	cherry tomatoes, halved
4	basil leaves
15 g	parmesan, grated

1. Heat the oven to 200°C fan (220°C conventional, gas 7). Prick the potatoes with a fork and bake on a tray for **60 minutes**, until soft right through.
2. Cut them in half and scoop out the flesh while hot. Put it through a ricer or mash it very smooth on the board. Spread it out and let the steam escape for 5 minutes.
3. Sprinkle over the flour, salt and nutmeg, and add the yolk. **Mix lightly with a fork and then your hands, only until it comes together.** Overworking makes gnocchi tough. It should be soft and slightly tacky.
4. Cut the dough into 4 pieces. Roll each into a rope about 2 cm thick on a floured board, and cut into **2 cm pieces**. Dust with flour. (Roll each against the back of a fork if you want ridges.)
5. Warm the oil with the garlic in a wide pan for 1 minute. Add the tomatoes and cook for 4 to 5 minutes until they collapse. Add the basil.

6. Cook the gnocchi in a large pan of simmering salted water, in 2 or 3 batches. They are ready **about 30 seconds after they float**. Lift out with a slotted spoon straight into the sauce, toss gently and finish with the parmesan.

> **THE TEST DUMPLING**
>
> Cook one gnocco first. If it falls apart, mix a spoonful more flour into the dough. If it is stodgy, you have used too much.

LEVEL 2 · QUICK

Ricotta gnocchi with lemon butter

35 minutes plus draining | 2 to 3 portions | no potatoes to bake

Ricotta gnocchi take about 20 minutes to make and are very soft. The ricotta has to be properly drained, or the dough is wet and needs too much flour.

INGREDIENTS (3 PORTIONS)

250 g	ricotta, drained for at least 1 hour
1	Lion-marked egg
50 g	parmesan, grated
80 g	plain flour, plus more for dusting
1 pinch	nutmeg, salt and pepper
20 g	butter
1 tbsp	chopped parsley
½	lemon, zest only

1. Mix the ricotta, egg, parmesan and seasoning. Fold in the flour gently until you have a soft, sticky dough. **Don't taste it, because it contains raw egg and flour.** Chill for 20 minutes.
2. On a well-floured board, roll the dough into ropes about 2 cm thick, and cut into 2 cm pieces. Dust with flour.
3. Simmer in salted water for 2 to 3 minutes, until they float, then lift out. Be gentle: they are fragile.
4. Melt the butter in a pan with the lemon zest, toss the gnocchi in it for 30 seconds and finish with the parsley.

LEVEL 2 · SWEET

Pumpkin gnocchi with sage butter

1 hour 15 minutes | 3 portions | orange gnocchi that need roasting dry

Pumpkin is mostly water, so like the potatoes it has to be roasted and mashed dry before any flour is added. The ricotta helps bind it.

INGREDIENTS (3 PORTIONS)

300 g	pumpkin or butternut squash, peeled and cubed
1 tsp	olive oil
100 g	ricotta, drained
100 g	plain flour, plus more for dusting
30 g	parmesan, grated
1	Lion-marked egg yolk
1 pinch	nutmeg, salt and pepper
20 g	butter
6	sage leaves

1. Heat the oven to 200°C fan (220°C conventional, gas 7). Toss the pumpkin with the oil and roast for **30 minutes**, until soft and dry at the edges. Mash until smooth and let it steam dry and cool.
2. Mix in the ricotta, parmesan, yolk and seasoning, then fold in the flour. The dough will be soft and sticky: add flour a tablespoon at a time. Don't taste it, because it contains raw egg and flour.
3. Flour the board well. Roll into ropes, cut into 2 cm pieces and dust with flour.
4. Simmer for 2 to 3 minutes, until they float and are firm.
5. Melt the butter with the sage in a pan for 1 to 2 minutes. Toss in the gnocchi.

LEVEL 3 · BAKED

Gnocchi alla romana (baked semolina gnocchi)

1 hour plus chilling | 3 to 4 portions | different: set like a disc, then baked

These aren't dough dumplings at all. Semolina is cooked in milk, set firm, cut into discs and baked with butter and cheese. Cheap and surprisingly good.

INGREDIENTS (4 PORTIONS)

500 ml	milk
125 g	semolina (not fine semolina flour)
60 g	parmesan, grated
1	Lion-marked egg yolk
40 g	butter, plus more for the dish
1 pinch	nutmeg, salt and pepper

1. Heat the milk with the nutmeg, salt and pepper until nearly simmering. **Rain in the semolina in a thin stream, whisking** to prevent lumps. Cook on a low heat, stirring, for about 8 minutes, until very thick.
2. Off the heat, stir in half the parmesan, half the butter and the yolk. Spread 1 cm thick on a wet tray and let it cool. Chill for at least **1 hour** until firm.
3. Heat the oven to 200°C fan (220°C conventional, gas 7). Cut out discs with a 5 cm cutter and overlap them in a buttered dish.
4. Dot with the remaining butter and sprinkle with the rest of the parmesan. Bake for **20 to 25 minutes**, until golden and crisp at the edges.

> **COOK THE YOLK**
>
> The yolk is stirred into hot semolina and then baked for 20 minutes, so the dish is cooked through. Don't eat the mixture before baking.

Experiments

EXPERIMENT

Boiled or baked potatoes

The big test.

1. Cook 250 g of potatoes by baking and 250 g by boiling whole in their skins. Mash each and add flour a spoonful at a time until a dough forms. Weigh how much flour each took.
2. Cook both and compare texture.

Look for: The boiled potatoes need noticeably more flour, and the gnocchi are firmer and denser.

EXPERIMENT

Flour amount

How much is too much?

1. Make three small test batches of potato dough with 20%, 25% and 35% of the potato weight in flour.
2. Cook one gnocco from each.

Look for: The first may fall apart, the last is stodgy. About 25% flour is where most potatoes are right.

EXPERIMENT

Cutting thickness

Big or small?

1. Cut some pieces 1 cm long and some 3 cm long from the same rope.
2. Cook them and compare how they cook through and how they eat.

Look for: The big ones take longer and can be doughy in the middle, the small ones can be fiddly and tough. About 2 cm is a good middle.

EXPERIMENT

Boiled or pan-fried

Boiled then browned.

1. Boil half the gnocchi, and boil the other half and then fry them in butter for 2 minutes a side.
2. Compare.

Look for: The fried ones have a crisp golden crust and a soft middle. Many people prefer them.

Tasting notes

WHAT I TRIED	METHOD OR AMOUNT	WHAT I SAW	WHAT I THOUGHT	WILL I DO IT AGAIN?
Potato gnocchi				
Ricotta gnocchi				
Pumpkin gnocchi				
Gnocchi alla romana				
Boiled vs baked potato				
Flour amount				
Cut size				
Boiled vs fried				

Troubleshooting

PROBLEM	LIKELY CAUSE	WHAT TO DO
Gnocchi fall apart in the water	Not enough flour, or water boiling hard	Do a test dumpling; add flour; simmer gently

PROBLEM	LIKELY CAUSE	WHAT TO DO
Heavy and stodgy	Too much flour, or overworked	Use baked potatoes and mix briefly
Sticky dough	Wet potatoes, pumpkin or ricotta	Dry them out first; flour the board
Gluey texture	Potato was mashed cold or over-mixed	Mash hot and mix lightly
Grey colour	Potatoes left to stand after mashing	Work quickly
Semolina disc sticks	Not chilled long enough, or tray not wet	Chill longer; wet the tray and the cutter

FOOD SAFETY: GNOCCHI

The potato, ricotta and pumpkin doughs contain raw flour and (except the semolina) raw egg. The dough contains raw egg and raw flour. The Food Standards Agency advises against eating or tasting uncooked flour or dough, because raw flour is not treated to kill bacteria such as E. coli. Don't taste the dough or any filling that contains raw egg, **wash your hands, the board and your tools** after handling raw dough, and use **Lion-marked eggs**. Cook fresh pasta thoroughly. Pregnant women, children under 5, people aged 65 and over, and anyone with a weakened immune system should be especially careful.

Gnocchi are simmered until they float and firm up, which cooks them. Uncooked gnocchi are best frozen straight away on a floured tray, then bagged and cooked from frozen (about 1 minute longer). Fridge storage of the raw dough is not recommended: it goes grey and sticky. Cooked pasta is a starchy food, and like rice it can grow bacteria if it is left warm. There is no pasta-specific official guidance, so this course uses the cautious rule: **cool it quickly (within about an hour), put it in the fridge, and eat it within 24 hours**; freeze it if you won't. Reheat until steaming hot all the way through.

Cooked potatoes also need to be cooled and chilled promptly, so the potato must be baked and handled on the same day.

CHECKPOINT: CAN YOU DO THIS NOW?

☐ I know why the potatoes are baked, not boiled.

☐ I can mix gnocchi dough lightly, and test it with one dumpling.

☐ I can make ricotta and pumpkin gnocchi.

☐ I can make and bake semolina gnocchi alla romana.

☐ I can freeze raw gnocchi and cook them from frozen.

NEXT CHAPTER

Cooking Skills: Pasta 2, chapter 7 is Lasagne from Scratch: fresh sheets, ragù and white sauce, and a spinach lasagne verde.

Cooking Skills: Pasta 2

Chapter 7 · Lasagne from Scratch

SKILL GOAL

Build a lasagne from fresh sheets, a thick ragù and a white sauce.

Shopping list for this chapter

The basics

Lasagne is an assembly job. If the three components (**pasta, a rich sauce, and a white sauce**) are each right, the dish will be. The pasta is the egg dough from chapter 1; the ragù and the white sauce are from Cooking Skills: Pasta 1.

RULE	WHY
Thin sheets (1 to 1.5 mm)	They swell and soften in the oven and get thick if rolled thickly
A thick ragù, a pourable white sauce	A runny ragù makes the dish soupy, a stiff white sauce doesn't soak the sheets
Cover the sheets with sauce	Any exposed pasta dries out and goes crisp
Cover with foil first, then uncover	Steams the pasta, then browns the top
Rest for 15 minutes	Lets it set so the layers don't slide apart
Steaming hot in the middle	Meat and egg dishes must be cooked through

Try it

LEVEL 1 · START HERE

Fresh lasagne sheets

45 minutes plus resting | enough for a 20 x 25 cm dish (4 layers) | the base of everything in this chapter

Fresh sheets are the egg dough from chapter 1, rolled thin and cut to the shape of your dish. They are softer and silkier than dried, and they cook in the oven without any pre-boiling if the sauce is generous.

INGREDIENTS (4 PORTIONS)

200 g	plain flour (or "00")
2	Lion-marked medium eggs
1 pinch	fine salt
2 tbsp	fine semolina (or extra flour), for dusting

1. Make the dough as in chapter 1: flour, salt and eggs, **knead 8 to 10 minutes**, rest for 30 minutes.
2. Cut into 4 pieces and roll each to **1 to 1.5 mm** (setting 6 on a machine; on a board, so thin you can see your hand through it).
3. Cut into rectangles about the width of your dish and 12 to 15 cm long. Dust with semolina and lay out in a single layer, or interleave with baking paper.
4. To pre-boil (optional, see experiments): drop into salted boiling water for 1 minute, lift out into cold water and lay flat on a damp cloth.

> **TRIM TO FIT**
>
> Overlap the sheets by 1 cm, and trim to fit the corners. Odd offcuts are fine in the middle layers.

LEVEL 2 · CLASSIC

Lasagne al forno

1 hour 30 minutes plus resting | 6 portions | ragù, white sauce and fresh sheets

Build it in layers: sauce, pasta, sauce, pasta. It needs the ragù and white sauce from Cooking Skills: Pasta 1, both made ahead. The ragù should be fairly thick, not runny, or the lasagne is soupy.

INGREDIENTS (6 PORTIONS)

1 batch	batch of fresh lasagne sheets (above)
500 g	ragù (the beef ragù from Cooking Skills: Pasta 1, chapter 8, or a good shop-bought jar)
600 ml	white sauce (Cooking Skills: Pasta 1: 50 g butter, 50 g flour, 600 ml milk)
50 g	parmesan, grated
1 pinch	nutmeg
1 tsp	butter, for the dish

1. Heat the oven to 190°C fan (210°C conventional, gas 6 to 7). Butter a 20 x 25 cm dish. Make the white sauce, season with nutmeg and a little of the parmesan, and keep it loose enough to pour.
2. Spread a thin layer of ragù on the bottom, cover with a layer of sheets, then ragù, a layer of white sauce and a sprinkle of parmesan. Repeat for 4 layers of pasta.
3. End with a layer of pasta, a generous layer of white sauce and the rest of the parmesan.
4. Cover with foil and bake for **25 minutes**. Remove the foil and bake for 20 to 25 minutes, until golden and bubbling at the edges.
5. Check it is **steaming hot in the middle** (70°C for 2 minutes with a probe). Rest for 15 minutes before cutting, so it holds its layers.

> **NO PRE-BOILING**
>
> With plenty of sauce, 1 mm fresh sheets cook in the oven. If your sheets are thicker, pre-boil for 1 minute.

LEVEL 2 · VEGETARIAN

Lasagne verde (spinach lasagne)

1 hour 45 minutes plus resting | 6 portions | green sheets with a spinach and ricotta filling

A meat-free lasagne. The sheets are spinach dough from chapter 3, and the spinach and ricotta filling replaces the ragù.

INGREDIENTS (6 PORTIONS)

200 g	plain flour (or "00")
2	Lion-marked medium eggs
80 g	cooked spinach, squeezed completely dry, finely chopped
1 pinch	fine salt
2 tbsp	fine semolina (or extra flour), for dusting
500 g	ricotta, drained
300 g	frozen spinach, thawed and squeezed completely dry
600 ml	white sauce
80 g	parmesan, grated
1 pinch	nutmeg, salt and pepper

1. Make the spinach dough as in chapter 3 (the egg beaten with the squeezed spinach). Rest for 30 minutes, roll to 1.5 mm and cut into sheets.
2. Mix the ricotta, 300 g spinach, half the parmesan and the seasoning for the filling. The filling itself contains no raw egg.
3. Heat the oven to 190°C fan (210°C conventional, gas 6 to 7). Layer the sheets, filling and white sauce in a buttered dish as in the lasagne al forno, ending with white sauce and parmesan.
4. Cover with foil and bake for 25 minutes. Uncover and bake for 20 minutes until golden and bubbling. Rest for 15 minutes.

LEVEL 3 · ROAST

Roast vegetable lasagne

1 hour 45 minutes | 6 portions | healthier, with plenty of vegetables

Roasting the vegetables first drives off their water and concentrates the flavour. Skipping this step makes a watery lasagne.

INGREDIENTS (6 PORTIONS)

1 batch	batch of fresh lasagne sheets
2	courgettes, sliced
2	red peppers, deseeded and chopped
1	aubergine, cubed
2 tbsp	olive oil
1 tin	chopped tomatoes (400 g)
2	garlic cloves
600 ml	white sauce
60 g	parmesan, grated
1 handful	basil leaves

1. Heat the oven to 200°C fan (220°C conventional, gas 7). Toss the courgettes, peppers and aubergine with the oil and salt, spread over 2 trays and roast for **30 minutes** until soft and browned.
2. Warm the garlic in a pan for 1 minute, add the tomatoes and simmer for 10 minutes. Stir in the roasted vegetables and basil.
3. Lower the oven to 190°C fan (210°C conventional, gas 6 to 7). Layer the sheets, vegetable sauce and white sauce in a buttered dish, ending with white sauce and parmesan.
4. Cover with foil and bake for 25 minutes, uncover and bake for 20 minutes more. Rest for 15 minutes.

Experiments

EXPERIMENT

Fresh or dried sheets

Is the effort worth it?

1. Make two small lasagnes in loaf tins, one with fresh sheets and one with dried (no-pre-cook) sheets, using the same sauces.
2. Bake them together.

Look for: The fresh sheets are silkier and more tender; the dried ones are chewier but still good. Fresh is nicer but not necessary.

EXPERIMENT

Pre-boiled or not

Do the sheets need a pre-boil?

1. Pre-boil half the fresh sheets for 1 minute. Layer two small lasagnes, one with each.
2. Bake for the same time.

Look for: With 1 mm sheets and plenty of sauce, there is little difference. With thicker sheets, the unboiled ones stay firm.

EXPERIMENT

Layer thickness

How many layers?

1. Make one lasagne with 3 thick layers of pasta and one with 5 thin layers.
2. Compare the cut slices.

Look for: More thin layers hold together better and give a better ratio of pasta to sauce.

EXPERIMENT

Resting

Cut now or wait?

1. Cut one slice straight out of the oven, and one after 15 minutes.

Look for: The rested slice holds its shape. The hot one slumps and is easily burnt on the tongue.

Tasting notes

WHAT I TRIED	METHOD OR AMOUNT	WHAT I SAW	WHAT I THOUGHT	WILL I DO IT AGAIN?
Fresh sheets				
Lasagne al forno				
Lasagne verde				
Roast vegetable lasagne				
Fresh vs dried				
Pre-boiled or not				
3 vs 5 layers				
Rested vs not				

Troubleshooting

PROBLEM	LIKELY CAUSE	WHAT TO DO
Watery lasagne	Runny ragù or wet vegetables	Simmer the ragù thicker; roast the vegetables
Dry, crisp edges	Pasta not covered with sauce, or no foil	Cover with sauce, then foil

PROBLEM	LIKELY CAUSE	WHAT TO DO
Lasagne slumps	Not rested	Rest for 15 minutes
Hard sheets in the middle	Sheets too thick, or not enough liquid	Roll thinner or pre-boil for 1 minute
Cold middle	Dish too deep, or oven too cool	Bake longer under foil; check with a probe
Burnt top	Oven too hot or too high	Lower the shelf and cover with foil

FOOD SAFETY: LASAGNE

Lasagne contains minced meat, eggs and dairy, so it must be **steaming hot all the way through** (70°C for 2 minutes with a probe) before serving. The dough contains raw egg and raw flour. The Food Standards Agency advises against eating or tasting uncooked flour or dough, because raw flour is not treated to kill bacteria such as E. coli. Don't taste the dough or any filling that contains raw egg, **wash your hands, the board and your tools** after handling raw dough, and use **Lion-marked eggs**. Cook fresh pasta thoroughly. Pregnant women, children under 5, people aged 65 and over, and anyone with a weakened immune system should be especially careful.

Cool leftovers quickly (cut into portions so they cool faster), chill within 1 hour and eat within 24 hours, or freeze portions. Reheat until steaming hot throughout, and only once.

Uncooked fresh pasta, which contains raw egg, should be kept in the fridge (0 to 5°C) and cooked within **24 hours**, or frozen straight away. (There is no pasta-specific official guidance, so this is a cautious rule based on the Food Standards Agency's general advice on chilling and freezing homemade food.) Freeze it in a single layer on a tray, then bag it, and cook from frozen.

Cooked pasta is a starchy food, and like rice it can grow bacteria if it is left warm. There is no pasta-specific official guidance, so this course uses the cautious rule: **cool it quickly (within about an hour), put it in the fridge, and eat it within 24 hours**; freeze it if you won't. Reheat until steaming hot all the way through.

CHECKPOINT: CAN YOU DO THIS NOW?

☐ I can roll and cut fresh lasagne sheets.

☐ I can assemble lasagne with a thick ragù and a pourable white sauce.

☐ I can make a vegetarian lasagne.

☐ I know to rest it for 15 minutes.

☐ I know how to check it is hot all the way through.

NEXT CHAPTER

Cooking Skills: Pasta 2, chapter 8 is Sauces for Fresh Pasta: brown butter and sage, pesto from scratch, walnut sauce and a light tomato sauce.

Cooking Skills: Pasta 2

Chapter 8 · Sauces for Fresh Pasta

> **SKILL GOAL**
>
> Make a light sauce that suits delicate fresh pasta.

Shopping list for this chapter

The basics

Fresh pasta is soft, tender and delicate, and a heavy sauce hides it. The best sauces are **light, simple and don't need hours**: butter, a fresh herb paste, or a quick tomato sauce. They should coat the pasta, not drown it.

SAUCE STYLE	WHY IT SUITS FRESH PASTA	EXAMPLES
Butter-based	Coats the soft surface evenly	Butter and sage, lemon butter (chapter 4)
Raw paste	Fresh and bright; just warmed by the pasta	Pesto, walnut sauce
Quick tomato	Light, not stewed	Cherry tomatoes and basil
Slow ragù	Rich and thick; needs a wide ribbon like pappardelle	Chapter 1, lasagne in chapter 7

- **Always finish in the pan** with a splash of the starchy pasta water, as in Cooking Skills: Pasta 1.
- **Make the sauce first** (or while the water heats). Fresh pasta cooks in 2 or 3 minutes.
- **Less sauce than you think.** Fresh pasta soaks some up.

Try it

LEVEL 1 · START HERE

Butter and sage

10 minutes | 1 portion | the classic, and a treat

Three ingredients and the right timing. Butter turns golden, then nutty, then burnt, in about a minute, so watch it.

INGREDIENTS (1 PORTION)

100 g	fresh tagliatelle (the 1-egg dough from chapter 1) or 125 g shop-bought fresh pasta
40 g	butter
6	sage leaves
15 g	parmesan, grated
1 pinch	black pepper

1. Bring a large pan of salted water to the boil. Put the pasta in, 2 to 3 minutes.
2. Meanwhile melt the butter over a medium-low heat. Add the sage and cook, swirling, for **2 to 3 minutes**, until the butter smells nutty and turns light golden brown, and the sage leaves are crisp.
3. Scoop out a mugful of pasta water. Drain, add the pasta to the butter with 2 tablespoons of the water, and toss for 30 seconds.
4. Finish with the parmesan and pepper.

> **A LIGHTER VERSION**
>
> Use 15 g of butter and 1 tablespoon of olive oil, with 3 tablespoons of pasta water. It is less rich and still glossy.

LEVEL 2 · FRESH

Pesto from scratch in a mortar

20 minutes | 2 portions | contains nuts and cheese

Pesto means 'pounded'. A mortar crushes the leaves instead of chopping them, which gives a creamier, less bitter sauce than a blender.

INGREDIENTS (2 PORTIONS)

30 g	basil leaves
1	small garlic clove
20 g	pine nuts
30 g	parmesan, finely grated
60 ml	extra-virgin olive oil
1 pinch	coarse sea salt
100 g	fresh tagliatelle (the 1-egg dough from chapter 1) or 125 g shop-bought fresh pasta

1. Put the garlic and salt in the mortar and pound to a paste. Add the pine nuts and pound to a rough paste.
2. Add the basil a few leaves at a time, grinding against the side with a circular motion until you have a green paste.
3. Stir in the cheese and then the oil, a little at a time.
4. Boil the pasta for 2 to 3 minutes. Scoop out a mugful of water, drain, and toss with 2 tablespoons of pesto and 2 tablespoons of the water, off the heat, so the basil stays green. Keep the rest of the pesto, covered in oil, in the fridge for up to 3 days.

> **ALLERGY NOTE**
>
> Pesto contains nuts (pine nuts, and walnuts in the next recipe), milk and, for the bought kind, sometimes other allergens. If you're cooking for someone else, tell them.

LEVEL 2 · CREAMY

Walnut sauce

15 minutes | 2 portions | a Ligurian sauce

Walnuts and soaked bread give a creamy sauce without any cream. Soaking the walnuts in hot water for a few minutes and peeling the thin skin makes it less bitter.

INGREDIENTS (2 PORTIONS)

60 g	walnut halves
1 slice	white bread, crusts off, soaked in 3 tbsp milk
1	small garlic clove
30 g	parmesan, grated
3 tbsp	olive oil
1 pinch	salt and pepper
100 g	fresh tagliatelle (the 1-egg dough from chapter 1) or 125 g shop-bought fresh pasta

1. Cover the walnuts with boiling water for 3 minutes, drain and rub off as much of the skin as you can.
2. Blend or pound the walnuts, squeezed bread, garlic, parmesan and oil into a rough paste, loosening with a spoonful of milk if too thick. Season.
3. Boil the pasta for 2 to 3 minutes, scoop out a mugful of water and drain. Toss with the sauce and 3 tablespoons of water until creamy.

LEVEL 1 · LIGHT

Light tomato and basil

15 minutes | 2 portions | fresh and healthy

Fresh pasta doesn't need a heavy sauce. Ripe cherry tomatoes cooked for only a few minutes give a bright, light coating.

INGREDIENTS (2 PORTIONS)

1 tbsp	olive oil
1	garlic clove, sliced
250 g	ripe cherry tomatoes, halved
1 pinch	salt
5	basil leaves
100 g	fresh tagliatelle (the 1-egg dough from chapter 1) or 125 g shop-bought fresh pasta

1. Warm the oil with the garlic in a wide pan for 1 minute. Add the tomatoes and salt, and cook for 5 to 6 minutes until they burst and make a juicy sauce.
2. Boil the pasta for 2 to 3 minutes, scoop out a mugful of water and drain.
3. Toss the pasta in the sauce with 2 tablespoons of the water for 30 seconds. Tear in the basil.

Experiments

EXPERIMENT

Brown butter stages

When is it right?

1. Melt three small knobs of butter. Take one off the heat when just melted, one when golden and nutty (about 3 minutes) and one when dark brown (about 5).
2. Taste each on a piece of bread.

Look for: The first is mild, the second is the best (sweet and nutty), the last tastes bitter and burnt. The window is short.

EXPERIMENT

Mortar or blender

Pounded or blitzed?

1. Make pesto in a mortar and again in a small blender, using the same ingredients.
2. Taste both on pasta.

Look for: The blender gives a smoother, sometimes hotter and slightly bitter pesto. The mortar is creamier but takes longer. A pulse blender with ice-cold ingredients gets close.

EXPERIMENT

Pasta water

How much?

1. Toss the same pesto and pasta with no water, 2 tablespoons and 5 tablespoons of the cooking water.
2. Compare the texture.

Look for: No water: clumpy and dry. Two tablespoons: glossy and coating. Five: thin and runny.

EXPERIMENT

Sauce amount

How much is enough?

1. Dress 100 g of fresh pasta with 1, 2 and 4 tablespoons of sauce.

Look for: The first is under-dressed, the last drowns the pasta. A coating that clings without pooling is right.

Tasting notes

WHAT I TRIED	METHOD OR AMOUNT	WHAT I SAW	WHAT I THOUGHT	WILL I DO IT AGAIN?
Butter and sage				
Pesto				
Walnut sauce				
Tomato and basil				
Butter stages				
Mortar vs blender				
Pasta water				
Sauce amount				

Troubleshooting

PROBLEM	LIKELY CAUSE	WHAT TO DO
Butter burnt	Heat too high, or left too long	Use a medium-low heat and watch it; start again
Pesto bitter	Over-blended, or old oil	Pound, or pulse briefly; use fresh olive oil
Pesto dark	Heated, or air	Toss off the heat; cover with oil
Walnut sauce bitter	Skins left on, or stale nuts	Peel the walnuts; use fresh

PROBLEM	LIKELY CAUSE	WHAT TO DO
Sauce clumpy	No pasta water	Add water a spoonful at a time
Pasta stuck together	Left to stand after draining	Go straight into the sauce

FOOD SAFETY: RAW AND FRESH SAUCES

Pesto and walnut sauce are uncooked, so use fresh basil, wash the leaves, and keep leftovers covered in the fridge for up to 3 days. Fresh garlic in oil can be a botulism risk if kept at room temperature, so don't store garlic-in-oil outside the fridge. The dough contains raw egg and raw flour. The Food Standards Agency advises against eating or tasting uncooked flour or dough, because raw flour is not treated to kill bacteria such as E. coli. Don't taste the dough or any filling that contains raw egg, **wash your hands, the board and your tools** after handling raw dough, and use **Lion-marked eggs**. Cook fresh pasta thoroughly. Pregnant women, children under 5, people aged 65 and over, and anyone with a weakened immune system should be especially careful.

Cooked pasta is a starchy food, and like rice it can grow bacteria if it is left warm. There is no pasta-specific official guidance, so this course uses the cautious rule: **cool it quickly (within about an hour), put it in the fridge, and eat it within 24 hours**; freeze it if you won't. Reheat until steaming hot all the way through.

CHECKPOINT: CAN YOU DO THIS NOW?

- ☐ I can make brown butter without burning it.
- ☐ I can make pesto in a mortar.
- ☐ I can make a walnut sauce.
- ☐ I know why fresh pasta suits a light sauce.
- ☐ I always finish pasta in the pan with its water.

NEXT CHAPTER

Cooking Skills: Pasta 2, chapter 9 is Putting It Together: a pasta-making afternoon, a make-ahead dinner, freezing and drying, and your skills table.

Cooking Skills: Pasta 2

Chapter 9 · Putting It Together

SKILL GOAL

Plan a pasta session and a make-ahead dinner, and record your own skills and recipes.

Shopping list for this chapter

The basics

Making pasta by hand takes time, and the way to enjoy it is to **make a lot at once and freeze most of it**. This chapter ties together the dough, the shapes, the fillings and the sauces into a session, then a dinner for guests. Then you write your own table of skills and house recipes.

Freezing and drying

METHOD	HOW	KEEP FOR	NOTES
Freeze, shaped and filled pasta	Single layer on a floured or semolina tray, freeze solid, then bag	Up to 3 months for best quality	Cook from frozen, never thaw
Freeze, cut ribbons	Loosely nest on a tray, freeze solid, then bag	Up to 3 months	Drop in boiling water from frozen, separating gently
Freeze, gnocchi	Same as filled pasta	Up to 3 months	Cook from frozen
Fridge	Covered, on a tray	Cook within 24 hours	Fresh pasta contains raw egg
Dry (limited)	Hang or lay out in a warm, airy place until brittle, which can take a day or more	A few days, in an airtight container	Under-dried pasta can go mouldy: when in doubt, freeze instead

Try it

LEVEL 1 · PROJECT

A pasta afternoon (3 meals from one session)

2 hours 30 minutes | 3 meals for 2 (1 fresh, 2 frozen) | dough once, two shapes, one filling

The skill here is planning: one batch of dough, divided by shape, and a filling made while the dough rests. You eat one meal, and freeze the rest.

INGREDIENTS (6 PORTIONS)

300 g	plain flour (or "00")
3	Lion-marked medium eggs
1 pinch	fine salt
4 tbsp	fine semolina, for dusting
200 g	ricotta, drained
60 g	cooked spinach, squeezed completely dry
40 g	parmesan, grated
1 pinch	nutmeg, salt and pepper

1. **0:00:** make the dough (300 g flour, 3 eggs, salt), knead for 8 to 10 minutes, wrap and rest for 30 minutes. Wash your hands and the board.
2. **0:15:** make the filling: mix the ricotta, spinach, parmesan and seasoning. Drain well.
3. **0:40:** cut the dough into 3. Roll one piece and cut tagliatelle for 2 portions. Nest it and dust with semolina.
4. **1:00:** roll the other two pieces. Make about 24 ravioli as in chapter 4 and put them on a semolina-dusted tray.
5. **1:40:** freeze the ravioli and half of the tagliatelle on trays, uncovered, for 1 to 2 hours, then bag, label with the date and put back in the freezer.
6. **2:00:** cook the remaining fresh tagliatelle for dinner with a sauce from chapter 8.
7. **2:20:** wash up. Check the board, tools and your hands are clean.

A make-ahead dinner for four

A starter and a main, both prepared ahead, so you spend the evening with your guests. The menu: **pea and mint ravioli with lemon butter** (chapter 4), followed by **lasagne verde** (chapter 7) with a green salad. Fruit to finish.

WHEN	WHAT TO DO
Day before	Make the ragù and white sauce (chapter 7). Roll and cut the lasagne sheets, freeze or refrigerate (cook within 24 hours). Assemble the lasagne verde, cover and chill.
Morning	Make the pea and mint filling and fill the ravioli (chapter 4). Freeze on a tray.
2 hours before	Take the lasagne out of the fridge. Heat the oven. Make the lemon butter base and the salad.
1 hour before	Bake the lasagne (covered, then uncovered). It takes 45 to 50 minutes.
20 minutes before serving	Cook the ravioli from frozen (5 to 6 minutes), toss in lemon butter and serve as a starter.
After the starter	Rest the lasagne for 15 minutes, check it is steaming hot in the middle, and serve with a green salad.

Scale: one batch of ravioli (200 g flour, 2 eggs) makes about 24, or 6 each for four people. The lasagne verde makes 6 portions.

Experiments

EXPERIMENT

Fresh or frozen filled pasta

The final check.

1. Cook some ravioli straight after making them, and some after 2 weeks frozen, both for the right time.
2. Taste them side by side.

Look for: The frozen ones are very close, and need about a minute longer. If they are good, you have a freezer full of dinners.

EXPERIMENT

A timed session

How long does it really take?

1. Do the pasta afternoon and write down the real times against the plan.
2. Note where you were slower than expected.

Look for: The first time, shaping takes much longer than planned. By the third session you will be faster.

EXPERIMENT

Your own filling

Invent one.

1. Choose a cooked filling (for example roast mushroom and ricotta, or leftover roast vegetables with cheese). Make sure it is dry and fully cooked.
2. Fill and cook six ravioli and write down the recipe.

Look for: A good filling is dry, seasoned, and holds its shape on a spoon.

Your skills table

SKILL	CAN DO IT	STILL PRACTISING	NOTES
Making and kneading an egg dough			
Rolling by hand to 1.5 mm			
Hand-shaped pasta			
Coloured doughs			
Ravioli			
Tortellini and other shapes			
Gnocchi			
Lasagne from scratch			

SKILL	CAN DO IT	STILL PRACTISING	NOTES
A light sauce for fresh pasta			
Freezing pasta			

Your house recipes

RECIPE	DOUGH	FILLING OR SAUCE	NOTES
Everyday pasta			
Weekend filled pasta			
Dinner party dish			
Freezer favourite			

Tasting notes

WHAT I TRIED	METHOD OR AMOUNT	WHAT I SAW	WHAT I THOUGHT	WILL I DO IT AGAIN?
Pasta afternoon: tagliatelle				
Pasta afternoon: ravioli				
Dinner party starter				
Dinner party lasagne				
Fresh vs frozen				
Your own filling				

Troubleshooting

PROBLEM	LIKELY CAUSE	WHAT TO DO
Ran out of time	Tried to do everything	Make just the dough and one shape; freeze the rest
Dough dried out while waiting	Left uncovered	Wrap it in cling film or a bowl, always
Frozen pasta stuck together	Frozen in a clump	Freeze on a tray first, then bag
Dried pasta mouldy	Not dry enough	Throw it away; freeze next time
Dinner party too stressful	Too much to cook at the end	Do everything possible the day before

FOOD SAFETY: THE WHOLE SESSION

The dough contains raw egg and raw flour. The Food Standards Agency advises against eating or tasting uncooked flour or dough, because raw flour is not treated to kill bacteria such as E. coli. Don't taste the dough or any filling that contains raw egg, **wash your hands, the board and your tools** after handling raw dough, and use **Lion-marked eggs**. Cook fresh pasta thoroughly. Pregnant women, children under 5, people aged 65 and over, and anyone with a weakened immune system should be especially careful.

Uncooked fresh pasta, which contains raw egg, should be kept in the fridge (0 to 5°C) and cooked within **24 hours**, or frozen straight away. (There is no pasta-specific official guidance, so this is a cautious rule based on the Food Standards Agency's general advice on chilling and freezing homemade food.) Freeze it in a single layer on a tray, then bag it, and cook from frozen.

Label everything in the freezer with the date. Dry pasta only as a limited trick: it must be completely brittle and kept for only a few days. Lasagne and filled pasta must be steaming hot throughout when served.

Cooked pasta is a starchy food, and like rice it can grow bacteria if it is left warm. There is no pasta-specific official guidance, so this course uses the cautious rule: **cool it quickly (within about an hour), put it in the fridge, and eat it within 24 hours**; freeze it if you won't. Reheat until steaming hot all the way through.

CHECKPOINT: CAN YOU DO THIS NOW?

- ☐ I can plan a pasta-making session so nothing is wasted.
- ☐ I can freeze fresh pasta safely and cook it from frozen.
- ☐ I can prepare a dinner for guests ahead of time.
- ☐ I have my own skills table and house recipes.
- ☐ I can make egg pasta, filled pasta, gnocchi and lasagne from scratch.

NEXT CHAPTER

That finishes **Cooking Skills: Pasta 2**. The next course in the series is Potatoes: boiled, mashed, roast, chips, baked and gratins.