

Gnocchi, Ravioli and Homemade Pasta

by Victor Rallo

Homemade pasta is like a fluffy white cloud: light, soft, tender and delicious. Good pasta makes the sauce come to life and if done correctly, forms a beautiful harmony like a great Beatles tune. About 10 years ago during a visit to Italy, I stopped at the Bottene factory in Vincenza then at Molino Caputo in Napoli. After seeing the facilities with my own eyes, I knew I could make homemade pasta, gnocchi and ravioli with the same ingredients and machines used in Italy.

I was told by all the pundits it could not be done but I would prove them wrong and succeed in making the best homemade pasta, ravioli and gnocchi in New Jersey, and possibly the entire East coast.

Pasta has been made by hand “fatto a mano” for many, many centuries with one simple recipe: flour, water, salt, and eggs if desired. But its simplicity has inherent complexities. What type of flour? Why that flour? How much water? Eggs or no eggs? Then comes the choice of machine, of which there are plenty to choose from, but only a few that process the dough with hand-like movements.

So I am going to reveal some of my own research to help pasta lovers around the world.



1. Use Caputo flour. I use Caputo “00” pasta fresca e gnocchi flour mixed with Caputo semolina flour. Based on your water, mixer, etc. you will have to judge what’s best for you. Caputo has many flours, with different millings and protein contents.
2. The machine: clearly doing it by hand with grandma’s Imperia hand crank machine is the preferred method, but when you are making pasta for busy restaurants you need something automatic. I love the Bottene machines (we own 6) because they are made very well and priced very fairly, but maybe not so well priced right now with the euro at 1.48 at the time of this writing. Bottene machines are work horses and they have a 100 different dies. The magic here is the dies (the piece that the pasta extrudes from) are all brass, a very soft metal that dings and dents and gives the pasta its identity, and more importantly makes the pasta rough so the sauce sticks to it, yummy. Buy Bottene the machines, they are worth every penny.
3. Always use sea salt.
4. Don’t be shy, an egg or two makes great pasta better.
5. Leave the dough wet, it is hard to handle and work with but makes lighter pasta.
6. When making gnocchi use *impastata* ricotta. It is drier than regular ricotta, so you need less flour, and use less flour for lighter gnocchi. My trick: use 1 egg per 3 pounds of cheese. Please only use Caputo gnocchi flour.

The sauce choices are unlimited: pesto, pomodoro, puttanesca, bolognese, marina, alfredo, carbonara, norma Sit down and decide to do it right! Bring some wholesome goodness to your family and friends. Make some homemade pasta with your favorite sauce, open a bottle of wine and float up to pasta heaven.

The Personalities of Pasta dishes

Italian pasta dishes are as flexible and diverse as they are delicious. Pasta fagioli may not be the recipe you want to try when it's 110 degrees out, and pomodoro fresco may not hit the spot on a cold, rainy day in December. Different dishes suit different places, people, and times, but they all call for fresh, seasonal ingredients to really reach their potential.

Wine with Food, and Food with Wine

On the Italian table, the wine you drink with a pasta dish is almost as important as the sauce you use. The flavors and textures of different wine compliment and complete different dishes in a way that is truly Italian. When putting together your pasta recipes, keep which wine you want to drink with it in the back of your head.

[Watch the latest wine reviews from Vic and Verdoni](#)

Always Use Local and Seasonal Ingredients

As I traveled across the 20 regions of Italy, I was amazed at the spectrum and regional differences in food. The food in Italy is truly unique because in each region they stick closely to local and seasonal ingredients when deciding what to cook. When making a pasta dish in your own kitchen, you should follow this the eat local rule by using fresh local ingredients; there's nothing better in the Summer than a fresh pomodoro sauce made from Jersey tomatoes. For the little extra effort it takes to pick up fresh ingredients from your local farmers market, you can make a good pasta dish great.

Use Recipes As Guides, Not Rulebooks

Recipes are great, but don't be afraid to make them your own. Italian cooking is just like wine, it's all about what **you like**. In my recipes, you'll rarely hear me say "use 2 table spoons of this," or "1 and $\frac{3}{4}$ cups of that." I cook by taste, and recipes should be used as a guideline but let your own taste and creativity be the final judge.

Link to our videos:

[Rigatoni Bolognese](#)
[Rigatoni Melanzanne](#)
[Pomodoro Fresco](#)
[Homemade Gnocchi](#)
[Pasta Fagioli](#)
[Fresh Bruschetta](#)

Why Video Recipes?

I've been making and perfecting these recipes for over 25 years. People come in and want to know the recipe so they can try and re-create their favorite dish at home. It may not turn out exactly the same; our dishes are made with ovens that burn hotter, by expert chefs who have been making them for years. But I think videos recipes are great for business. Some people think I'm crazy to give away the recipe for our most popular dishes on the internet. I think people will still come in for our Pasta Fagioli, even if they see our YouTube video on how to make it at home. It's good to connect with customers in this way. It gets people to stick their hands (literally) into Italian food and embrace it. To have people take this experience and culture of the Italian table from my restaurant, into their homes sharing these recipes with their families and friends is a wonderful thing.