

Discover Regional Pastas—They’re a Hot Trend



Patrons love pasta. And they love discovering new pastas. So keep up with adventurous palates and serve some of Italy’s lesser-known regional pastas and sauces.

Spaghetti, ravioli, strozzapreti? Marinara, Alfredo, alla Norma?

One of the great fascinations of Italian food is its huge variety of pasta shapes, sauces, and traditional recipes. And like other global cuisines, as the food of Italy works its way into the hearts of more and more Americans, chefs and operators are taking a deeper dive into regional pasta favorites.

The Shape of Things

There are literally hundreds of different shapes and sizes of pasta, from delicate angel hair and hefty rigatoni to a pantheon of stuffed pastas and quirky one-of-a-kinds that are specifically designed to cradle a different type of sauce or herald a different region. Here are some to think about:

- Orecchiette – These disc-shaped, thickened “little ears” from Puglia are often served with sausage and broccoli rabe, a pleasantly bitter member of the brassica family
- Tortellini – This ring-shaped pasta hailing from Bologna in the Emilia region can be stuffed with anything from cheese to pork and prosciutto to vegetables. Though traditionally served in broth or topped with meaty Bolognese sauce, they lend themselves to dozens of satisfying variations
- Pappardelle – Long and flat but not quite as wide as lasagna, these Tuscan noodles seem tailor-made for rich meaty and clingy sauces

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- Strozzapreti – The twisty, elongated “priest chokers” of Central Italy may have been named to dissuade gluttonous clergy from visiting at dinnertime, but they’re a versatile shape that can be cloaked with meat or sausage ragu, or with seafood
 - Bucatini – This straw-like pasta from Rome is shaped like thick spaghetti with a hollow center and sturdy texture that invites tomato-based sauces
 - Gnocchi – A boon to thrifty Italian cooks, these small, soft dumplings can be made with semolina, potatoes, cheese, spinach, cornmeal, saffron, herbs, or even breadcrumbs, depending on their region of origin. They are usually served simply, with butter and cheese or a light sauce
 - Fregola – Originally from Sardinia, these small toasted balls of pasta are similar to couscous, but larger and more irregular in size. They are often served with a light, tomato-tinged clam sauce

Tomato Variations

Tomato-based sauces such as marinara or meat sauce are among the most popular, but that doesn’t mean they have to be boring or predictable.

- Puttanesca – The “harlot’s” sauce can be quickly whipped up into a zippy, alluringly aromatic blend of tomatoes, garlic, anchovies, olives, capers, and hot pepper tossed with spaghetti
- Amatriciana – Often served with bucatini, this simple sauce is made with high-quality tomatoes, onion, chili, basil, pecorino cheese, and a meat such as bacon or pancetta
- Arrabbiata – Its “angry” disposition comes from a punchy blend of garlic, tomatoes, and dried red chiles cooked in olive oil; it’s traditionally served over penne

Trending Specialties

Mix a particular pasta with a specific sauce, and you get a signature dish.

Lasagna – The Nonna of all Italian pasta specialties, lasagna is traditionally made with wide, flat noodles, baked in layers with cheese, and meat or tomato sauce, but the idea can inspire countless variations with different meats, vegetables, and sauces.

Pasta alla Norma – Beloved by vegetarians, this Sicilian recipe named after a famed opera is made with eggplant, salt, ricotta salata cheese, tomatoes, and basil, served with penne, rigatoni, or another tubular pasta.

Cacio e pepe – Perfect ingredients characterize this simple Roman dish: spaghetti, pecorino or Parmesan cheese, and cracked black pepper, emulsified with a bit of pasta water.

Scoglia – A Sicilian seafood classic, made with spaghetti, clams, mussels, shrimp (stock from the shells can be used to enrich the flavor), and squid, dressed with cherry tomatoes, red pepper, olive oil, garlic, basil, and parsley.

Pesto alla Genovese – This specialty from the Ligurian Coast and Genoa is traditionally made with trenette (a long, flat pasta) or the short, spiraled trofie, plus cooked potatoes and string beans bathed in a suave sauce made with fresh basil olive oil, pine nuts, garlic, and Parmigiano Reggiano cheese

Carbonara – Another simple classic, this time made by adding hot, freshly drained spaghetti to beaten eggs, cheese, and crumbled cooked pancetta, prosciutto, or bacon.

The information provided is based on a general industry overview, and is not specific to your business operation. Each business is unique and decisions related to your business should be made after consultation with appropriate experts.

GET STARTED

Nestlé Professional has a number of sauces, as well as prepared pasta specialties, that make for easy menu favorites, including:

- *Minor's*[®] GreenLeaf™ Pesto
- *Stouffer's*[®] Classic Lasagna with Bolognese Sauce
- *Stouffer's* Tuscan-Style Vegetable Lasagna
- *Minor's* Classical Reductions
- *Stouffer's* Alfredo