

Pasta alla Gricia

Ingredients

Kosher salt

1 pound spaghetti or other long, thin pasta

2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil

¼ pound thinly sliced guanciale, sliced into ½-strips

1 cup finely grated Pecorino Romano, plus more for serving

1 tablespoon coarsely ground black pepper, or more as desired

Directions

Bring a large pot of salted water to a boil and cook the pasta about a minute short of package directions.

Meanwhile, put the olive oil and guanciale in a large skillet. Set the skillet over medium heat and cook until the has rendered and the guanciale is softened. Splash in a little water from the pasta cooking pot to keep the guanciale cooking slowly. Do not let it brown. You want the meat to be soft and translucent and the fat and starchy water to form a sauce. Swirl in splashes of water as needed to keep the guanciale moist.

When the pasta is cooked al dente, use tongs to lift it out of the water, leaving some water clinging to it, and drop into the skillet. Increase the heat to high. Vigorously toss and stir the pasta with the pork fat, slowly adding more pasta water as you go, until the pasta is coated in a silky sauce. You may need to use as much as a cup of water, added a little at a time so it incorporates into the sauce.

Remove the skillet from the heat and sprinkle the cheese in one layer over the hot pasta. Pause for a moment to let it begin to melt (it will begin to deflate from the steam beneath), then toss everything together until the cheese becomes part of the sauce. Grind black pepper over the pasta – be generous with the pepper. Serve with more grated cheese.

total time: 25 minutes

active prep: 25 minutes

serves: 4

difficulty: *easy*