

Spaghetti with Coppa and Kale

The thing about Nonna is that she wastes nothing. The original food waste experts, Nonnas could be found for centuries using up the leftover bits and pieces of vegetables and turning nearly every heel of stale bread into delectable breadcrumbs, soups or confections, so much so that many traditional dishes are actually a valiant and genius effort to clean out the pantry. This dish takes on that spirit. Made with kale, it could easily be constructed with thinly sliced zucchini or the remains of half a cabbage or another cruciferous vegetable like broccoli. The addition of coppa at the very end is ours: a salty touch, with just the right amount of savory to add richness to the dish. So raid the crisper, find the odd ends that Nonna would save and make magic in the kitchen like she would.

Ingredients

3 tablespoons plus ½ teaspoon kosher salt, plus more to taste
¼ cup extra virgin olive oil
6 cloves garlic, sliced
1 bunch (about 7 ounces) Tuscan kale, sliced crosswise into thin strips
½ cup white wine
1 cup marinara sauce
3 ounces coppa, sliced in ⅓-inch ribbons
1 pound spaghetti
1¼ cup toasted fresh breadcrumbs from 3 ounces of crusty Italian loaf of bread (see Cook's Note), optional
½ cup freshly grated Parmigiano-Reggiano

Instructions

Bring 6 quarts of water and 3 tablespoons of kosher salt to a rolling boil.

In a deep saute pan, heat the olive oil over medium-high heat. When it shimmers, add the garlic and cook for 30 seconds. Add the kale, ½ teaspoon salt and a ladleful (about ½ cup) of the boiling salted water. Cook until wilted and slightly tender, about 5 minutes. Add wine, bring to a simmer and reduce. Add marinara sauce, bring to a simmer and remove from heat.

Add spaghetti to the salted water. Cook until one minute shy of al dente, according to the package instructions.

Reserve 1 cup pasta water. Drain the pasta.

Bring sauce back to a simmer. Add ½ cup of pasta water. Add pasta to sauce. Toss to coat and strew coppa over pasta so that it doesn't stick together. Toss to incorporate adding more pasta water as needed to coat and make a velvety sauce. Remove from heat and add the cheese.

Allow to melt slightly and toss together. Garnish with breadcrumbs (if using) and additional cheese.

Cook's Note: To make fresh breadcrumbs, cube roughly 3 ounces of a crusty loaf of bread into 1-inch pieces. Add to a food processor in two batches, if necessary. Pulse until coarse breadcrumbs are formed. The yield should be close to 1¼ cups. Spread the breadcrumbs out on a baking sheet to dry out slightly. Store or freeze in a tightly sealed container, or use as recipe indicates.

For the breadcrumbs: In a small saute pan, add the breadcrumbs, a drizzle of olive oil and a pinch of salt over medium high heat. When the crumbs start to toast, move them in the pan to toast evenly. They should be deep golden brown on the verge of burnt, 5 to 7 minutes. Transfer to a plate to cool.

total time: 25 minutes

active prep: 15 minutes

serves: 4

difficulty: easy