



Sarah's Spaghetti with Hot and Garlicky Baby Tomato Sauce is a fresh and quick way to showcase the best of your garden tomato harvest. Sarah Nasello / The Forum

Spaghetti with Hot and Garlicky Baby Tomato Sauce

Serves: 2 to 4

Ingredients:

½ pound spaghetti
3 cloves garlic, peeled and halved lengthwise
1 hot pepper, seeded and halved lengthwise
½ cup extra-virgin olive oil
1 pint cherry tomatoes or a medley of small varieties
½ teaspoon kosher salt
¼ teaspoon ground pepper
15 to 20 small basil leaves (or torn pieces from larger leaves)
Pecorino Romano cheese, freshly grated

Directions:

Cook the spaghetti until just al dente, according to the directions on the package, about 8 to 9 minutes in boiling hot water. When the pasta is ready, remove the pot from the burner and do not drain.

As the pasta cooks, heat olive oil in a large saucepan over medium heat. Once hot, add garlic and pepper halves and reduce heat to medium-low. Cook for 5 minutes, stirring occasionally. Dip a piece of bread or a spoon into the oil and taste — if the flavor is to your liking, remove the garlic and pepper now, or leave them in and remove before adding the pasta.

Add cherry tomatoes and increase to medium heat. Cook, stirring occasionally, until tomatoes just start to pop and release their juices, about 3 minutes. Reduce heat to low and simmer gently until a thin sauce starts to form, about 3 to 4 minutes. If still remaining, remove garlic and hot pepper now and discard.

Use tongs or a spaghetti server/fork to lift the noodles from the hot water into the tomato sauce. Add $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of pasta water and the basil leaves; gently toss to combine. Cook over low heat until noodles are evenly coated, about a minute.

Transfer pasta and sauce to a platter or serving dishes and garnish with a generous sprinkling of freshly grated pecorino Romano cheese. Serve immediately.

If doubling the recipe:

- When ready, reserve $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of water from the pasta pot and drain the noodles in a colander. Put the noodles back into the pot and toss with 1 tablespoon of olive oil until evenly coated (to prevent sticking).
- Add the pasta water to the sauce (along with the basil) and cook for 1 more minute. Pour the sauce over the hot noodles in the pot and gently toss to combine.

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"Home with the Lost Italian" is a weekly column written by Sarah Nasello featuring recipes by her husband, Tony Nasello. The couple owned Sarello's in Moorhead and lives in Fargo with their son, Giovanni. Readers can reach them at sarahnasello@gmail.com.