

Community

Pasta primer

Time to let mince tarts, candied yams and plum pudding become just a memory and get back to basic foods.

One of the more basic foods is pasta— easy to prepare, nutritious, relatively easy on the pocketbook and a recorded history that dates back more than 3,500 years.

The origins of pasta are fogged in the mists of time, but it seems to have been first eaten in the ancient civilizations in the river valleys of China, Babylon and Egypt. As long ago as 1700 B.C. the ancient Chinese were stuffing pasta (to-day's won ton or ravioli). There is popular belief that Marco Polo brought pasta to Italy after his 20 years' service as secretary of state to Kubla Khan.

Remains of pasta have been found in Etruscan tombs and one of the common suppers in Ancient Rome was leeks, chickpeas and lasagne — a favorite dinner of the poet and satirist Horace.

During the Renaissance the chief librarian at the Vatican, Bartolomeo Sacchi, wrote a popular cookbook that went into nine editions, with pasta-cooking instructions that told the novice to cook "no longer than it takes to say three Our Fathers."

In Mississauga there are purists (like Micheline Searle) who make their own pasta and hostesses (like Marilyn Pickford) who regularly give pasta parties at which the guests don aprons to prepare home-made pasta dinners. It's a great getting-to-know-you party ice-breaker.

PASTA POINTERS

Pasta is the generic word for macaroni, spaghetti, noodles — and all their variations.

Macaroni is hollow pasta tubes of various sizes, diameters, and lengths, made by rolling a wheat dough through dies in which a centre pin creates the hole.

Spaghetti is made the same way as macaroni except that the shape is rod-like, solid and generally of smaller diameter.

Noodles are strips, usually flat and made from rolled sheets of dough cut into ribbons, or, extruded dough pressed into shapes.

Durum is the premium grade of spring wheat used

in the making of quality pasta products. It is named from the Latin for 'hard' and is not only the hardest known variety of wheat but also has a higher level of protein than almost all other varieties of wheat.

The chief source of durum wheat, in Canada, is Saskatchewan. The grain is not only used in Canadian pasta products, but it is shipped around the world. Expert grain buyers compare the choosing and judging of durum grain to a wine maker's choice of grapes.

Semolina: While the grains of common wheat grind to powdery flour, durum wheat produces a substance with the consistency of sugar, and which looks like amber-colored crystals, and is called semolina. It is from this that quality pasta is made.

Al Dente is an Italian phrase that means 'to the tooth'. Al dente pasta is cooked so that there is still some body but no starchy flavor. Test pasta for doneness by pressing a strand with a fork against the side of the pot, or, by biting and tasting a strand. Some pasta lovers prefer the cooked pasta to have a tiny hard core. It's a matter of taste, but quality pasta made from durum wheat has a sweet nut-like flavor.

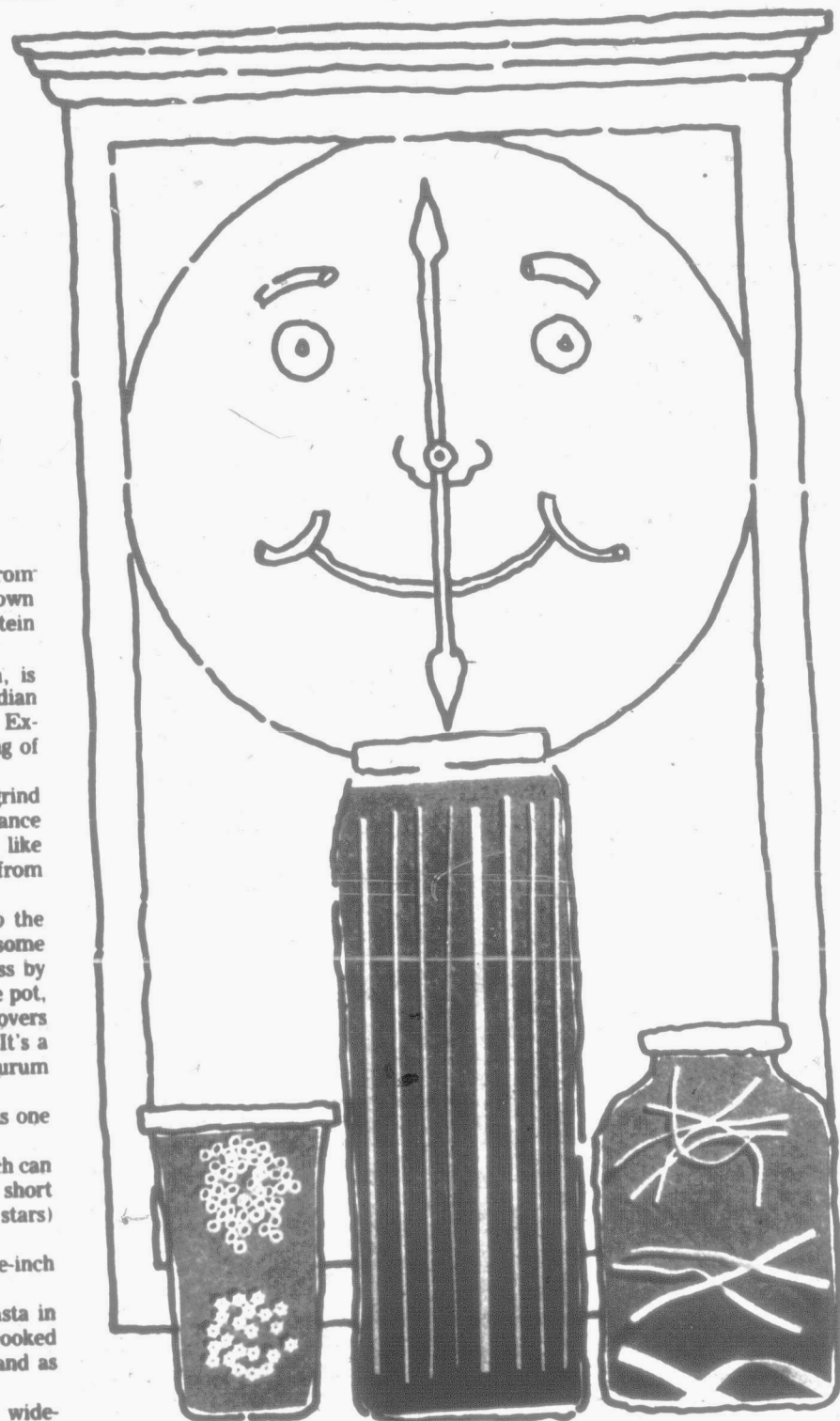
Calories: Two ounces of uncooked pasta equals one cup cooked and represents less than 200 calories.

Shapes: There are over 100 shapes of pasta which can be classified in five groups — long (spaghetti), short (macaroni), noodles, soup base (alphabet, oats, stars) and fancy (shells, bows, lasagne).

Freeze left-over sauces, leaving at least one-inch headroom. Use within two months.

Freeze left-over spaghetti. Pack unsauced pasta in plastic bag and seal. Reheat by placing the frozen cooked pasta in saucepan of rapidly boiling water. Stir and as soon as separated drain and serve.

For lunches, pack spaghetti and sauce in a wide-necked Thermos.



Pasta and Burger

- 1/3 cup chopped green pepper
- 1/4 cup sliced ripe olives
- 2 tablespoons chopped onion
- 1 tablespoon butter or margarine
- 1 can tomatoes (1 pound, 3 ounces)
- 1 bay leaf
- 1/4 teaspoon celery salt
- 1/4 teaspoon oregano
- 1/4 teaspoon basil leaves
- 1 clove garlic (optional)
- 8 ounces spaghetti, cooked
- 3 tablespoons grated Parmesan Cheese

Cook pepper, olives and onion in butter for three minutes. Add tomatoes, seasonings. Cover and simmer 30 minutes. Pour over spaghetti and top with cheese.

Serve with a broiled beef patty, celery stalks and radishes.

Serves four.

Stuffed Macaroni Peppers

- 4 large or 6 medium-sized green peppers
- 3 tbsp. chopped onion
- 2 tbsp. butter
- 1/2 lb. ground pork
- 1 cup ready-cut macaroni, cooked and drained
- 1 egg slightly beaten
- Salt and pepper
- 1 tsp. chopped parsley
- 1/4 cup buttered breadcrumbs
- 1 cup tomato juice

Cut small slice from stem end of each pepper. Remove core and seeds. Cook in boiling water eight to 10 minutes and drain. Cook onion in butter until tender. Add meat and stir until lightly browned. Remove from

heat. Add cooked macaroni, egg, seasonings and parsley. Stuff peppers with mixture. Top with breadcrumbs. Place in pan with the tomato juice. Bake in moderate oven, 350 degrees F., 40 minutes.

Serves four to six.

Macaroni Fruit Salad

- 7-oz. package macaroni (2 cups uncooked)
- 1 can (13 1/4-oz.) pineapple tidbits, drain and reserve liquid
- 1 can (11-oz.) mandarin oranges, drained
- 1 can (8-oz.) seedless green grapes, drained
- 1 cup celery, finely chopped
- 1 cup miniature marshmallows
- 1 apple, diced and dipped in lemon juice
- 1/2 cup dairy sour cream
- 1/2 cup mayonnaise
- 2 tbsp. reserved pineapple juice
- Lettuce
- 1/2 cup chopped nuts

Prepare macaroni according to package directions for salad use. Drain. Combine macaroni, pineapple, oranges, grapes, celery, marshmallows and apple. Blend sour cream, mayonnaise and pineapple juice until smooth. Toss macaroni mixture with sour cream dressing. Chill. Serve in lettuce lined bowl. Garnish with nuts.

Serves six to eight.

Egg Noodles and Kebabs

- 8 ounces medium egg noodles (about 4 cups)
- 1 tablespoon salt
- 3 quarts boiling water

- 2 tablespoons butter or margarine
- 1/4 cup finely chopped onion
- 1 teaspoon paprika
- 2 tablespoons chopped chives or green onions
- 1/2 pound wieners, cut in quarters
- 1/2 medium green pepper, cut in 4 pieces

8 small white onions, cooked, or 8 chunks of zucchini
2 medium tomatoes, cut in quarters
Gradually add noodles and salt to rapidly boiling water. Cook uncovered, stirring occasionally, until tender. Drain.

Melt butter, add chopped onion and cook until tender. Stir in paprika. Spoon over the noodles and toss lightly. Turn into shallow baking pan; sprinkle with chives. Arrange remaining ingredients on skewers. Place on noodle mixture. Place dish 3-inches from element and boil for five minutes. Turn skewers; broil three minutes more.

Parsley Noodles

- 1 clove garlic
- 4 tablespoons butter or margarine
- 1/2 cup chopped parsley
- 6 tablespoons grated Parmesan cheese
- 8 ounces broad noodles, cooked according to directions
- Sauté garlic in butter until lightly browned. Discard. Add parsley, and cheese to butter; heat through. Pour parsley sauce over broad noodles. Toss before serving.

Serves four.

Macaroni Oriental

- 8 ounces (2 cups) elbow macaroni
- 1 10-ounce package fresh or frozen

- leaf spinach
- 1 4-ounce can whole mushrooms
- 2 beef bouillon cubes
- 1 pound thinly sliced beef sirloin, cut in strips
- 2 tablespoons butter
- 1 small onion, sliced
- 6 green onions, cut in 1-inch pieces
- 2 cups diagonally sliced celery
- 1 5-ounce can water chestnuts, drained and sliced
- 1 tablespoon cornstarch
- 1/4 cup soy sauce

Prepare fresh spinach for cooking, or defrost frozen spinach in hot water. Measure liquid from mushrooms. Add enough water to make one cup. Heat to boiling and stir in bouillon cubes. Start cooking macaroni as directed on package. Drain. Meanwhile, in a large skillet, sauté beef in butter until lightly browned. Add drained spinach, mushrooms, onions, celery, water chestnuts and bouillon. Cook covered three minutes. Blend cornstarch with soy sauce. Stir into skillet and boil 1 minute. Serve over hot macaroni with additional soy sauce, if desired.

Serves six.

Turkey Cheese Noodles

- 1/4 cup butter
- 1/4 cup flour
- 1 tsp. dry mustard
- 2 cups milk
- 1 1/2 cups grated Cheddar cheese
- 1-1/2 cups diced, cooked turkey
- Salt and pepper to taste
- 10-oz. package frozen broccoli
- 8-oz. broad noodles

Melt butter over low heat; add flour and mustard and blend. Gradually add milk and cook until thickened and smooth, stirring constantly. Add cheese and stir until melted. Add turkey and salt and pepper to taste. Meanwhile, cook broccoli according to package directions. Cook noodles as directed and drain well. Arrange drained broccoli on top of noodles. Pour turkey-cheese sauce over all.

Serves four to six.

Pork Noodle Casserole

- 1/2 cup chopped onion
- 1/2 cup chopped celery
- 1 clove garlic, crushed
- 2 tablespoons butter
- 2 tablespoons flour
- 1/2 teaspoon dry mustard
- 1 teaspoon salt
- Dash pepper
- 2 cups tomato juice
- 2 teaspoons Worcestershire sauce
- 2 cups diced cooked pork
- 1 12-ounce package frozen mixed vegetables
- 2 cups cooked noodles (4 cups uncooked)
- 2 tablespoons buttered bread crumbs

Sauté onion, celery and garlic in butter until onion is transparent. Stir in flour, and seasonings. Gradually add tomato juice and cook, stirring constantly, until thickened. Add Worcestershire sauce, pork, vegetables and noodles. Turn into greased baking dish. Sprinkle with crumbs and bake at 350 degrees F until heated through (about 25 minutes).

Serves six.