

Bucatini all'Amatriciana

¼ cup extra-virgin olive oil
12 ounces thinly sliced guanciale, pancetta or very good bacon
1 sweet onion, cut lengthwise in half and then into ¼-inch half-moons
3 cloves sliced garlic
1 ½ teaspoons hot red pepper flakes
2 cups basic tomato sauce
1 pound bucatini
Freshly grated pecorino Romano

1. Bring 6 quarts of water to a boil in a large pot and add 2 tablespoons salt.
2. Meanwhile, in a 10- to 12-inch sauté pan, combine the olive oil, guanciale, onion, garlic and red pepper flakes; set over low heat and cook until the onion is softened and the guanciale has rendered much of its fat, about 12 minutes.
3. Drain all but ¼ cup of the fat from the pan. (Set this fat aside to cook your eggs for tomorrow's breakfast.) Add the tomato sauce and turn up the heat. Bring the mixture to a boil and then lower the heat to a simmer and allow to bubble for 6 to 7 more minutes.
4. While the sauce simmers, cook the bucatini in the boiling water for about a minute less than the package directions state, until still very firm; drain.
5. Add the pasta to the simmering sauce and toss for about 1 minute to coat. Divide the pasta among four heated bowls and serve immediately.
6. Top each bowl of pasta with freshly grated pecorino.

Yield: 4 servings

Basic Tomato Sauce

¼ cup extra-virgin olive oil
1 sweet onion, cut into ¼-inch dice
4 cloves garlic, thinly sliced
3 tablespoons chopped fresh thyme
½ medium carrot, finely shredded
Two 28-ounce cans of whole tomatoes
Salt

1. In a 3-quart saucepan, heat the olive oil over medium heat. Add the onion and garlic and cook until soft and light golden brown, about 8 to 10 minutes. Add the thyme and carrot and cook until the carrot is quite soft, about 5 more minutes.
2. Add the tomatoes, with their juice, and bring to a boil, stirring often. Lower the heat and simmer until the sauce is as thick as hot cereal, about 30 minutes. Season with salt. (You can puree the sauce at this point or leave it chunky.)
3. The sauce can be refrigerated for up to 1 week or frozen for 6 months.

Yield: 4 cups