

Spaghetti alla Carbonara

Serves 4 to 6

✓ WHY THIS RECIPE WORKS: Spaghetti draped in a velvety sauce of cheese and eggs and punctuated by bits of crispy bacon—is there anything more indulgent than carbonara? Though the method is pretty straightforward—make a raw sauce with eggs and cheese, cook the bacon, cook the pasta, then toss until all is creamy and combined—we had to nail down the details. First up, determining the right number of eggs: Three whole eggs gave our carbonara superior texture and richness. Next, the cheese: Opting for two kinds—Pecorino Romano and Parmesan—gave us creaminess with a sharp, tangy bite. For the bacon, we liked the standard domestic variety, which contributed the perfect crunch, a bit of sweetness, and some smoky flavor. Pouring the bacon and egg-and-cheese mixture (which also included minced raw garlic so our dish would retain some of its bite) over the hot pasta ensured evenly covered strands of spaghetti.

- ¼ cup extra-virgin olive oil
- 8 slices bacon, cut into ¼-inch pieces
- ½ cup dry white wine
- 3 large eggs
- 1½ ounces Parmesan cheese, grated (¾ cup)
- ¼ cup finely grated Pecorino Romano cheese
- 2 garlic cloves, minced
- 1 pound spaghetti
- Salt and pepper

1. Adjust oven rack to lower-middle position, set large oven-safe serving bowl on rack, and heat oven to 200 degrees.
2. Heat oil in 12-inch skillet over medium heat until shimmering. Add bacon and cook until crisp, about 8 minutes. Stir in wine, bring to simmer, and cook until slightly reduced, 6 to 8 minutes. Remove from heat and cover to keep warm. In separate bowl, whisk eggs, Parmesan, Pecorino, and garlic together.
3. Meanwhile, bring 4 quarts water to boil in large pot. Add pasta and 1 tablespoon salt and cook, stirring often, until al dente. Reserve ½ cup cooking water, then drain pasta and transfer it to warmed serving bowl.
4. Immediately pour bacon mixture and egg mixture over hot pasta and toss to combine. Season with salt and pepper to taste and add reserved cooking water as needed to adjust consistency. Serve immediately.

SMART SHOPPING BACON

Premium bacon can cost double, even triple, the price of ordinary bacon. Is it worth it? To find out, we bought six artisanal mail-order bacons and two high-end grocery store bacons. The results? We were amazed that two of the four highest-rated bacons were not premium mail-order bacons, but supermarket brands. **Applegate Farms Uncured Sunday Bacon** and **Farmland/Carando Apple Cider Cured Bacon, Applewood Smoked**, were a step up from the usual mass-produced bacon, straddling the gap between artisanal and more mainstream supermarket styles. Although these bacons didn't receive quite the raves of the two top-ranked premium bacons, tasters praised them both for good meaty flavor and mild smokiness.

