

Pincinelle Marchigiane: Traditional Pasta From Marche Made With Bread Dough

Pincinelle, a unique pasta of the Marche region, are said to date to the late third century. Unlike the traditional homemade pasta of central Italy made with flour, water and eggs, pincinelle are made with just flour, water, salt and yeast — the same dough used for baking bread. Local legend has it that, on baking days in times gone by, home cooks would simply set aside a bit of bread dough and transform it into a delicious first course.

Bread Dough Pasta of Le Marche

Pincinelle Marchigiane

By Francine Segan

Primo

Difficulty Level

Medium

Cooking Time

1 hour

Cost

Medium

According to legend this unique pasta of le Marche dates to the late 3rd century. Unlike traditional homemade pasta of central Italy made with flour, water and eggs, *pincinelle* are made with just flour, water, salt, and yeast—the same dough used for baking bread. On baking day in the past, women would simply set aside a bit of bread dough and transform it into a delicious first course.

The traditional shape is made by rolling out the dough and cutting it by hand into thick, square-edged strips—like tagliatelle, but chunkier—that gives them a wonderfully chewy texture. Because the dough is leavened, the pieces need to be small to begin with, as they expand while resting and during cooking.

This unique pasta is served with many different types of sauces in Marche. I enjoyed this delicious pork and zucchini version at the Marchese del Grillo <https://www.marchesedelgrillo.com/en/> a stunning hotel and spa, which won the prestigious "Best Wine List in Italy" award. It's near the charming town of Fabriano, renowned for its papermaking and where the watermark was first invented back in the 13th c. The city has a must-visit Paper and Watermark Museum <https://www.museodellacarta.com/it/index.html> that traces the craft of handmade paper back to Medieval times.

Serves 4

Ingredients

For the pasta

Dry yeast

½ packet

Flour

2 cups semolina or all-purpose flour, plus more as needed

Salt

½ teaspoon, plus more as needed

For the sauce

Zucchini

2 small, with flowers, if available

Olive oil

2 tablespoons

Butter

3 tablespoons

Garlic

2-3 cloves, finely minced

Ground pork or chicken

1 pound

Pork or chicken broth

½ cup, warmed

Salt and pepper

To taste

Pancetta, guanciale or bacon

2 ounces, shredded and cooked until crisp

Aged cheese, such as pecorino Marchigiano, Grana Padano or Parmigiano Reggiano

To taste

Preparation

For the pasta

Dissolve the yeast in ½ cup lukewarm water. Combine the flour and salt in a bowl or on a work surface. Make a well in the center of the flour. Gradually add the yeast water into the well, mixing with a fork to combine. If dry, add a few drops of water at a time. If too wet, sprinkle a bit of flour into the mixture.

Knead the dough until smooth, about 5 minutes. Form into a ball. Cover the dough with a kitchen cloth or plastic wrap and let rest for 30 minutes. Meantime, make the sauce.

For the sauce

Cut the zucchini in half and scrap out the seeds. Discard. Slice the zucchini into very thin strips. Set aside.

Put the olive oil, butter and garlic into a wide saucepan and cook on low until the garlic is translucent. Add the ground pork or chicken and the broth and sauté until opaque, about 2 minutes. Season to taste with salt and pepper

To finish

Knead the dough again and roll out either using a pasta machine or rolling pin on a lightly floured work surface. Cut the pasta into long fettucine like strands or cut with a pasta machine.

Bring a large pot of salted water to a boil. Add the pasta and cook until al dente, depending on the shape you've made that can be for 3 to 6 or 7 minutes. Drain the pasta and toss into the pot with the sauce.

Serve topped with the crisp pancetta and grated cheese on the side.