

Penne all'Amatriciana

This is a classic from the mountainous area of Amatrice in the Lazio region of Italy. It's typically made with a thick, hollow, spaghetti-like pasta called *bucatini*. Here, penne is called for. Pancetta is in the recipe because it's easy to find but if you have access to *guanciale*—cured pig's jowl—you'll put yourself right into the old country! An aged sheep's milk cheese for grating like pecorino Romano is typical. If you ever find yourself in or near Amatrice you may be able to find one of the local pecorino cheeses to bring home. Another great one to use is a southern Italian aged sheep and goat milk cheese called *canestrato*.

Makes 4 servings

The amount given with a "QB" ingredient is a suggestion. "QB" stands for "quanto basta." It basically means in Italian "how much is needed." It's up to you how much or how little to use. The amount may also change due to the quality of the ingredient or how old it is.

- *2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil (for cooking)*
- *4 ounces pancetta cut into 1/4-inch size pieces QB*
- *2 large garlic cloves, lightly crushed QB*
- *1/4 teaspoon red pepper flakes or 1 pepperoncino QB*
- *2 1/2 cups tomato passato, whole peeled (pureed), or ciliegine (canned cherry tomatoes)*
- *14 ounces penne pasta*
- *Fine sea salt*
- *Pecorino Romano cheese for grating QB*

Heat the oil with the pancetta over medium low heat. When the pancetta starts to sizzle turn the heat to low.

Cook stirring from time to time until the pancetta starts to brown and a lot of fat has rendered into the oil.

Add the garlic cloves and pepper flakes.

Cook until the garlic starts to brown.

Add the tomato.

Increase the heat to medium low and simmer the sauce for five minutes.

Keep warm over very low heat while cooking the pasta.

Add a little pasta water to the sauce from time to time if it starts to get too thick.

Season the sauce with salt if necessary.

Cook the pasta to *al dente* * then add it to the sauce. **

Combine the pasta with the sauce over medium heat.

Add pasta water, a little at a time, to maintain a sauce consistency and finish cooking the pasta.



...taste it!

Transfer the pasta to a shallow serving bowl or individual plates.

Spoon any residual sauce on the pasta.

Grate a generous amount of cheese on top.

** This will vary from brand to brand but remove the pasta from the water two minutes or so less than the recommended cooking time on the package. You will finish cooking it in the sauce.*

*** Instead of pouring the cooked pasta through a colander in the sink use a skimmer (or tongs for long pastas) to remove the pasta and transfer to the sauce. This is much easier and allows having pasta water readily available to work into the sauce.*