



## Flour + Water: Pasta

*By Thomas McNaughton, Paolo Lucchesi*

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**An elevated guide to the craft of pasta-making by rising star chef Thomas McNaughton of San Francisco's hottest Italian restaurant, flour + water.**

From San Francisco's wildly popular Italian restaurant, flour + water, comes this complete primer on the craft of pasta making. Chef Thomas McNaughton shares his time-tested secrets to creating simple, delicious, and beautiful artisan pasta—from the best fresh doughs to shaping and cooking every type of pasta. A true celebration of Italy's pasta traditions, flour + water includes fifty seasonally influenced recipes for home cooks of every skill level. The recipes cover the flavor spectrum from well-loved classics to inventive combinations, such as Tagliatelle Bolognese; Pumpkin Tortelloni with Sage and Pumpkin Seeds; Tomato Farfalle with Chicken Polpettine, Roasted Peppers, and Basil; and Asparagus Caramelle with Brown Butter. With guidance from McNaughton and the secrets of flour + water's dough room, anyone can learn to make amazing pasta at home.

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## Editorial Review

### Review

“Without a doubt, Thomas represents the new American chef who is bringing pasta to the forefront of American cuisine. His passion is on display daily at flour + water and this book allows you to immerse yourself in the world of a truly talented chef.”

—Michael Tusk, chef/owner of Quince and Cotogna

“Pasta is my life. And for me, it is always such a rare and beautiful thing when someone else shares your passion and dedication to such a simple thing as a noodle. Thomas not only writes about pasta, but you get the sense when reading *flour + water* that it is his life too.”

—Marc Vetri, chef and author of *Rustic Italian Food*

“You might think that a comprehensive tutorial in pasta making would be dry, but you’d be wrong. I read *flour + water* in one sitting, fascinated by the lively story of one of San Francisco’s great restaurants and the smartly written, easy to follow recipes. This is an enchanting, inspiring book.”

—Daniel Patterson, chef and author of *Coi*

“There is a romantic, rustic, mysterious consonance about both Thomas and flour + water. It’s easy to lose yourself in each recipe’s seeming simplicity before—WHOOSH!—you’re consumed with complexity, wisdom, expertise, and sincerity you might have never expected. This is my favorite part about great chefs and their food.”

—Christina Tosi, chef/owner Momofuku Milk Bar

“*Flour + Water* is nothing short of brilliant. For anyone who adores great pasta and wants to truly understand the craft behind it, this gorgeous cookbook is a must-have. Thomas is creative, passionate, and has amazing energy; he also has the hands of a nonna—a rare thing for sure. I’m going to go make pasta!”

—Barbara Lynch, chef and restaurateur

### About the Author

**THOMAS MCNAUGHTON** is the executive chef and co-owner of flour + water, Central Kitchen, and Salumeria in San Francisco. He has worked at some of the most respected restaurants in San Francisco, including La Folie, Gary Danko, and Quince. He has twice been nominated for Rising Star Chef of the Year by the James Beard Foundation.

**PAOLO LUCCHESI** is a reporter and columnist for the *San Francisco Chronicle*. Born and raised in South San Francisco, he was the founding editor for *Eater San Francisco* and *Eater National*, and has written for *Food & Wine*, *Saveur*, and *McSweeney’s*, among others.

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Introduction:

From Bologna to San Francisco

Pasta is woven into the cultural fabric of Italy—it pretty much *is* culture in Italy—but it holds a particularly high place in the hierarchy in Bologna. It was there that I fell in love with pasta—and where I *really* learned

to make pasta.

The dominance of pasta in Bologna is evident within minutes of walking around the city. Just like taquerias inhabit every corner of the Mission in San Francisco, and the neon signs of pizza-by-the-slice joints light up Manhattan neighborhoods, so does fresh pasta rule the windows of Bologna markets. Sold by weight or by the bundle, fresh pasta is inescapable there. It comes in a rainbow of dough colors, and in all sizes, though you can be assured every shop proudly displays the requisite pasta signature of Bologna: nickel-sized tortellini. You might even see old ladies in the window, rolling out fresh pasta for tourist passersby. But as someone once told me, Italy is “under the table.” In other words, to really, truly understand the essence of anything in Italy, you have to look a little harder, immerse yourself, and start to peel back the layers. Look past the Disneyland-like gloss of touristy restaurants in the city center with the overpriced microwaved tagliatelle Bolognese. Instead, seek out the under-the-radar olive grove in the countryside that has quietly been making oil in the same way for decades, or the hobbyist miller who taught himself how to produce the best flour in the area. Or see it in the pair of young brothers at Zavoli Farms who are single-handedly maintaining tradition by raising indigenous heritage breed pigs in the easternmost, sun-kissed hills of Emilia-Romagna while pushing forward by experimenting with new techniques for making salumi.

As it happens, my “under the table” moment in Bologna actually took place above its streets. Having found myself in Italy looking for a change of pace from the fine dining kitchens of San Francisco, France, and Germany, I met a gregarious Bolognese native named Marcello via John Pauley, a chef I met while working at La Folie in San Francisco. Marcello had an available room in Bologna. Once he found out I was a cook looking to learn about Italian cuisine, he wasted no time in referring me to a place that would change the course of my career: Bruno e Franco la Salumeria.

The salumeria itself is glorious, its shelves stocked with jars of vibrant green olives, giant wheels of pungent cheese, and myriad cured pork products, all procured from the best in the region. Across the street is a little second-story room overlooking the salumeria. The street-level entrance is completely unmarked save for a hidden little buzzer. You wouldn't find it if you weren't looking for it; it cryptically reads “*Laboratorio*.”

Up a narrow flight of stairs lies the salumeria's pasta “laboratory”—a small workshop consisting of a few tables and little else. It's where all the fresh pasta sold in the salumeria is made. In old-school Bologna, the *laboratorio* and the salumeria have a symbiotic relationship; one exclusively makes the product and the other exclusively sells it. Compared to the splendor of the salumeria, the pasta lab room is incredibly bare bones, and despite the name, there's nothing scientific or laboratory-like about the place. It is more like a glimpse into the past.

Inside, there are a dozen Italian ladies of all ages dressed in pastel pink chef coats, making fresh pasta in the same way they did the day before, and the day before that, and the day before that. They only make a handful of pasta types: Bologna's sacred tortellini are the most prolific output of the room. Rounding out the day's work are batches of tagliatelle, passatelli, paglia e fieno (straw and hay), Roman-style gnocchi, and finally, depending on the day, maybe a few orders of ready-to-bake cannelloni. The entire day's production will sell out downstairs in the salumeria, and it will be restocked the next day.

Spanning several generations, the women themselves are the tableau of Bologna, and of Italy. Some of them come from an older generation, the generation that grew up in the war-ravaged years of the 1940s and 1950s, when food was scarce. They speak softly with an air of authority, often drifting off into dialect, basically acting like the Italian *nonna* you always imagined, telling winding anecdotes and politely answering your dumb question in that old, Italian matter-of-fact way that makes the question seem even dumber. Other ladies are younger. Some came from other careers; some have known nothing but pasta making. Some are natives

of Bologna; some moved here from elsewhere in Italy. The ones from the south, for example, spark arguments about which region's cuisine is better. Whatever their origins, they all tell bawdy jokes, they gossip about town, they smoke in the bathroom during breaks. Many are mothers, since a job making pasta is amenable to family life. Their workday starts at dawn, allowing them to leave in time to pick up the children from school.

They are all wonderful and charismatic characters in a marvelous play.

Varying personalities aside, the women are all united through their work at the pasta *laboratorio*, where they work as a single, perfectly functioning unit. One rocks back and forth as she rolls out sheet after sheet of fresh handmade pasta dough with her *mattarello*, a long wooden Bolognese rolling pin. The women use *matarelli* made especially for the *laboratorio* by a blind woodworker down the block; mechanical pasta machines are frowned upon, to say the least. Another woman is mixing gnocchi dough by hand in the corner, while a third, working at the window, wields a weathered knife to precisely slice pasta dough into the uniform shreds of tagliatelle.

The rest of the ladies hover around a table near the entrance, methodically forming the day's worth of tortellini to be sold downstairs. While they twist the circular shapes, their constant chatter fills the room. The pasta lab is a time capsule—a fully functioning preservation of Bolognese culture and tradition.

It is true craftsmanship. There are no assigned jobs, but each woman floats from one table to the next. Maybe the youngest one—or the one who came to work late that day—will get stuck making the cannelloni; forming the filled pasta is the messy, labor-intensive job that no one else wants to do. The voices of the ladies barely overshadow the rhythmic, dull sounds of the rolling pin slowly doing its dance, stretching the pasta dough over the wooden table, forming their *sfoglia*—the sheet of fresh pasta dough. When the dough is completely flattened into a massive, imprecise four-foot-wide sheet, it is slid over to another table, where the tortellini are formed by other ladies.

Every hour or so, the teenage kid from the downstairs salumeria arrives to take a few trays of pasta down to the salumeria, looking at me and gently sighing how glad he is that he didn't have to be the only guy upstairs in the lab anymore. He confesses, in his broken English, that he felt uncomfortable when the ladies would discuss, as he put it, "feminine topics." He smiles and takes the trays of pasta downstairs to the display case.

I found myself in the pasta lab by chance, and I stayed for months. The ladies became family, though I'm pretty sure they made fun of my Italian language skills (or lack thereof). After working as a fine dining soldier for years, I felt myself yearning for a change, for something more soulful, more personal. I found it in the unlikeliest of laboratories, along with a new pasta passion.

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### Eggplant Mezzalune with Cherry Tomatoes

Growing up in New Jersey, I was subjected to bastardized versions of Italian food throughout my childhood, much of which involved massive amounts of coagulated cheese and cloyingly sweet tomato sauce. One of the pillars of East Coast Italian-American cuisine is, of course, eggplant Parmesan—fried slices of breaded eggplant, buried in an avalanche of red sauce and melted cheese.

Many of our dishes at Flour + Water have roots in familiar flavor combinations, and this is my Northern California take on those eggplant Parmesan flavors—tomatoes, eggplant, melted cheese—with a key twist of

smokiness from the treccione scamorza, a smoked mozzarella cheese. (If you can't find treccione scamorza, use another smoky soft cheese, like smoked mozzarella; in a pinch, any good mozzarella will suffice as well.)

Eggplant always lends itself beautifully to smoky flavors, and it's a common flavor pairing in southern Italy, where smoked soft cheeses are abundant. If you ask a southerner—like Angela Moncada, one of the ladies in the pasta *laboratorio* whose family came from Sicily to Bologna—about the best home-cooked southern dishes, *melanzane alla parmigiana* is invariably at the top of the list. What's *not* so common in southern Italy are stuffed pastas. But here, we incorporate those southern flavors in a stuffed pasta shape named mezzalune (half moons).

Mezzalune are probably the most basic stuffed pasta shape in this book—just one fold of a circle—and a great way to get your feet wet in the stuffed pasta realm.

Serves 4

### **Equipment**

Blender + Baking sheets + Pasta machine

Rolling pin + 2½-inch ring mold or cookie cutter

Piping bag (optional) + Spray bottle

### **Store-bought option**

Any fresh, cheese-stuffed pasta

### **Eggplant Filling**

2 large globe eggplants, halved lengthwise (700 grams)

Olive oil

Kosher salt

¾ cup treccione scamorza cheese, finely diced (131 grams)

¼ cup grated Parmigiano-Reggiano cheese

Grated zest and juice of 1 lemon

Freshly ground black pepper

### **Tomato Sauce**

3 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil

1 medium clove garlic, very thinly sliced

1 cup cherry tomatoes, stemmed (150 grams)

Freshly squeezed lemon juice (optional)

### **Mezzalune**

1 recipe Rav Dough (page 7)

1½ tablespoons Aleppo pepper

### **Marinated Cherry Tomatoes**

1 cup cherry tomatoes, halved (200 grams)

Sea salt

Cracked black pepper

1 tablespoon extra-virgin olive oil

### **To Finish**

2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil

Kosher salt

1¼ cups loosely packed whole fresh basil leaves

Freshly grated Parmigiano-Reggiano cheese, for finishing

Preheat the oven to 325°F.

To make the filling, with a knife, score a shallow crosshatch pattern in the flesh of the eggplant to allow steam to penetrate while cooking. Lightly season the eggplant flesh with olive oil and a pinch of salt. Place the eggplant halves, face down, on a baking sheet. Roast in the oven until the flesh is soft and fully tender when pierced with a knife, about 25 minutes. Scoop out the flesh and add to the jar of a blender. Puree until smooth.

Quickly transfer the eggplant puree to a mixing bowl while still hot, and, with a wooden spoon, stir in the treccione scamorza and Parmigiano-Reggiano. Mix until the cheeses are melted and well incorporated. Add the lemon zest and juice and season with salt and pepper. Refrigerate the filling until ready to use. The filling can be refrigerated up to 3 days.

To make the sauce, add the olive oil and garlic to a cold sauté pan and cook over medium-high heat until the garlic starts to brown, 2 to 3 minutes. Add the whole cherry tomatoes and cook until they start to blister and their skin just starts to break. Don't overcook—you want a fresh tomato sauce, not a concentrate. Transfer the tomato mixture to the jar of a blender and puree until smooth. Season to taste; if your tomatoes aren't very acidic, add a squeeze of lemon juice. Set aside.

Dust 2 baking sheets with semolina flour and set aside. To make the pasta, follow the instructions for the Rav Dough (page 7), incorporating the Aleppo pepper with the dry ingredients. Using a pasta machine, roll out the dough until the sheet is just translucent (see page 10). Cut a 2-foot section of the dough sheet and cover the rest of the dough with plastic wrap.

Using a 2½-inch-diameter ring mold or round cookie cutter, cut out rounds of dough.

Using a piping bag or a spoon, place a teaspoon of filling in the middle of a dough round, leaving ¼ inch of dough bare around the edge. Fold the circle in half to create a half-moon shape. Use a spritz of water from a spray bottle to help seal it if necessary. Start the seal at the top crest of the half-moon (12 o'clock): gently but firmly seal the dough, removing the air pocket by moving your fingers down the edges on both sides simultaneously, caressing the filling to create a tight, airless pillow.

Put the mezzalune on a flat surface and crimp the edges with a fork. Working quickly, place the mezzalune, slightly apart, on the prepared baking sheet. Don't let the mezzalune touch each other or they may stick together. Repeat until you run out of dough or filling. You should get about 45 to 50 pieces. Let them sit uncovered while you make the marinated tomatoes. The tomatoes should be made no more than 30 minutes before using them or they will start to break down.

To prepare the marinated tomatoes, season the tomatoes generously with salt, pepper, and the olive oil. Allow to marinate for 20 minutes before plating.

To finish, bring a large pot of seasoned water to a boil (see page 18). Add the 2 tablespoons olive oil and ½ cup pasta water to a cold 12-inch sauté pan. Place the pan over high heat and bring to a simmer.

Drop the filled mezzalune in the large pot of boiling water. Once the pasta is cooked 80 percent through, until almost al dente, 2 to 3 minutes, transfer to the sauté pan using a hand-held strainer and stir to incorporate. Reserve the pasta water. Add the tomato sauce to the pan and season with salt. Bring the sauce

back up to a simmer and cook until the sauce coats the back of a spoon and the pasta is tender, 2 to 3 minutes. Remove from the heat.

To serve, divide the pasta and sauce between four plates. Garnish each serving with fresh basil, marinated cherry tomatoes, and freshly grated Parmigiano-Reggiano.

## **Users Review**

### **From reader reviews:**

#### **Carol McElroy:**

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#### **Daniel Campbell:**

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