



The best sardine pasta.

This is a wonderfully simple spring pasta—quick comfort food after a long day. It's all about the dance between the pasta pot and the saucepan, adding little dashes of liquid from the pot to the pan as needed, everything cooking at once, and everything ready at the same time. It's so quick, so tasty and now a staple in our kitchen. Our friend Bug (Geri) said this pasta conquered her fear of sardines. She said, 'I didn't think I liked sardines, but now I'm like, that could have done with more sardines!' We can't make this without thinking of her and laughing a little! —Matt

Cook the pasta (or pasta alternative) in boiling salted water (salty enough to remind you of the sea!) for the recommended time (snake beans will take 4–5 minutes until just tender). Drain, rinse briefly under cold water and set aside.

Meanwhile, add a generous splash of oil to a medium, heavy-based frying pan over medium heat. Add the onion and sauté for 3–4 minutes until beginning to soften. Add the garlic and rosemary and sauté until the garlic is beginning to turn golden. Reduce the heat a little and add the asparagus, passata, paprika and pepper, stir through and simmer, uncovered, for 10 minutes. Don't let your sauce dry out—add a ladle of the pasta water to the pan every now and then as needed.

After 10 minutes, add the sardines to the pan, breaking them up with a wooden spoon or the back of a fork. Squeeze over the lemon and add the cheese, breaking it up so that it melts throughout. Stir until the sauce is creamy. Turn off the heat and add the drained pasta (or pasta alternative). Gently stir through so that the pasta is nicely coated with the sauce.

Serve the pasta in bowls topped with the parsley and oregano and a swirl of oil.

RECIPE NOTE.

This recipe would work fantastically with all kinds of fish, fresh or preserved. Check out our guide to preserving sardines (page 166), or if you'd like to jar/can your own tuna, check out our first book.

FIELD NOTES.

On snake beans. Snake beans have always been pitched as an Asian-style ingredient to us. Well, our minds were blown in Italy, where they were readily available in the markets and a huge part of the cuisine. They are best when young, super soft and creamy tasting. Like this, they make a fantastic vegetable alternative to pasta (see image on page 13). So, the next time you see snake beans in the market, especially the thin baby ones, get on board—you don't even need a zoodler! We now grow our own every year, and if you'd like to give them a go too, see our bean growing tips on page 61.

400 g dried pasta of your choice (or 500–600 g gnocchi, page 128, or 600–700 g snake beans, see field notes)

extra-virgin olive oil

2 large red onions, diced

9 garlic cloves, finely chopped

4 large rosemary sprigs, leaves stripped and finely chopped

600 g asparagus (about 3½ bunches), cut into 1–3 cm pieces

250 ml (1 cup) passata

3 teaspoons sweet paprika

1½ teaspoons freshly ground black pepper

150 g can sustainably fished sardines in spring water or sardines under oil (page 166), drained (or 300 g fresh sardines, cleaned and filleted) (see note)

1 lemon

200 g soft goat's cheese (chèvre style) or fresh cheese (page 144)

¾ cup flat-leaf parsley and oregano leaves, finely chopped