



## Did You Know??

Considered a staple food of traditional Italian cuisine, pasta is now a popular favourite all around the world. Pasta is such an important aspect to the Italian culture that the way it is made is actually mandated by Italian law.

Whilst there are literally hundreds of different shapes of pasta, it can be categorised into two basic styles:



**Fresh pasta** is generally produced at home or in restaurants, as it only keeps for a few days at a time whilst refrigerated. For this reason, fresh pasta is just not as readily available in retail outlets.

**Dried pasta** is the most prevalent of styles ranging from the mass produced industrial variety through to the artisan and hand-made types. Under Italian law, dried pasta can only be made from durum wheat flour/semolina, which has a yellow tinge in colour.

Beyond the standard dried pasta, there is now a growing demand for pasta made from different types of wheat flour. These types of pasta have different levels of gluten and protein content, depending on the variety of grain used. Such wheat flour includes: wholemeal, organic (bio), spelt (farro), and kamut.

To transform the pasta into the many different shapes and varieties, the pasta dough must pass through a die. There are two dies that are generally used:

**Bronze dies** - the traditional way that Italians have been producing pasta for centuries. The dies are very expensive and the process is relatively slow, but the artisanal extrusion of the pasta through the bronze dies creates a rough surface that allows the sauce to “cling” to the pasta. The level of roughness is actually controlled by the amount of water in the pasta dough (the less water used, means the higher the pressure during extrusion, thus producing a rougher surface on the pasta)

*Pasta produced in this way can be identified by a rough surface, steep ridges, and a light dusting of flour.*

**Teflon dies** - typically associated with mass produced industrial pasta. The dies are more economical to purchase and replace, but the resulting pasta has a smooth sheen on the surface preventing any sauce to “adhere”.

*Pasta produced in this way appears brittle, lightweight, slick and shiny.*

Once the pasta dough has passed through the die, it is crucial the pasta then goes through a slow drying process. This generally ranges from 24-72hrs, depending on the type of wheat flour used and the shape of pasta.

Now that the pasta has been produced, dried and packaged - it is important to follow the cooking instructions. For dried pasta, use 1L of water for every 100g of pasta (remembering to add a pinch of salt to the boiling water before immersing the pasta). Italian pasta is traditionally cooked *al dente* (or “firm to the bite”). All that is left is to choose your accompanying sauce, and then serve.

