

# TAGLIATELLE PASTA with PROSCIUTTO

Serves 4 to 6

By Dennis W. Viau; modified from a recipe in  
*Saveur Cooks: Authentic Italian.*

This Tagliatelle with Prosciutto is supposedly a classic dish in Bologna, Italy, but unlike their world famous ragu, this dish is rarely seen anywhere else. I make it with homemade pasta, as I do many pasta dishes, but you can substitute with fettuccine. My food encyclopedia says: “Tagliatelle is the name used in Northern Italy for fettuccine.” My *Pasta* book says fettuccine is slightly thinner.



## Ingredients:

¾ pound (340g) prosciutto; cut into ¼-inch (0.5cm) dice<sup>1</sup> (see Note at end)  
1 cup (240ml) whole milk  
2 cups (475ml) stock or broth; preferably beef, but chicken stock can be substituted<sup>2</sup>  
1 28-ounce (794g) can whole Italian plum tomatoes; puréed  
Freshly ground black pepper  
1 pound (450g) tagliatelle; fresh or dry (fettuccine can be substituted)  
Salt to taste  
1 teaspoon butter; room temperature (or a little extra virgin olive oil)  
½ cup (60g) freshly grated Parmesan or Romano cheese

## Directions:

Purée the tomatoes and set aside until needed.

Dice the prosciutto and place in a medium saucepan over low heat. Cook about 5 minutes to render the fat. Meanwhile, heat milk to almost boiling and keep warm.

Season the cooked prosciutto with black pepper and add the heated milk. Bring to a boil and reduce the heat to medium-low. Simmer, stirring occasionally, until almost all the liquid has evaporated, about 10 minutes. Watch it closely.

Add the stock and puréed tomatoes to the prosciutto, bring to a boil, and simmer over low heat for at least 15 minutes. The sauce can be simmered for up to an hour for a thicker consistency. For this dish, a slightly watery sauce, rather than a thick ragu, is traditional. Test of salt and adjust, if necessary. My sauce did not need salt.

Cook pasta according to package directions until *al dente*. If using fresh pasta, shape with a pasta machine or a rolling pin and cut into tagliatelle. Cook in boiling water for 30 seconds to 1 minute.

Drain the cooked pasta, dress with 1 teaspoon of butter (or a little extra virgin olive oil) and mix in the grated cheese. Then add the sauce and mix well to coat evenly.

Serve with additional grated cheese for garnish.

The **Step By Step** guide begins on the following page.

## STEP-BY-STEP

1



You can use dry pasta in this dish. The plastic-wrapped packet in the front is some homemade pasta dough I made in advance. This is only about a third of the pasta I would need to serve a full meal to guests. Most of the sauce I made was stored in the freezer for later use. The prosciutto (right-front) was purchased at a deli counter where the clerk sliced it  $\frac{1}{4}$  inch thick for me.

There is a recipe for making Pasta From Scratch in the Recipe Archive on my web site. Look in Basics.

2



I don't get to use my immersion blender often. I used it here to purée my whole tomatoes. You can do this step in a food processor or blender. You could also buy tomato purée in the can.

3



Here is my tomato purée. The immersion blender made quick work of it.

4



Cut the prosciutto into  $\frac{1}{4}$  inch (0.5cm) dice. If you can only purchase thinly sliced prosciutto, cut it into  $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch (1cm) pieces. The picture of the original recipe in the cookbook showed pieces of thinly sliced meat.

5



To render the fat out of the meat, cook it for a few minutes (no oil in the pan) over low heat. Not much fat rendered from my prosciutto because it was already fairly lean. Meanwhile, heat the milk to almost boiling.

6



Add the hot milk and bring to a boil. This was an unusual step for me. I had never heard of this cooking practice. Simmer the milk until nearly all the liquid has evaporated. The liquid milk would curdle when the acidic tomato purée is added, thus the need to cook it all away, leaving only the milk fat behind.

7



Here is how the prosciutto looked after the milk was “cooked out.” The liquid remaining is mostly fat. Season with freshly ground black pepper, but not salt. Save the salt for later.

8



Add the stock and tomato purée. Bring to a boil and simmer over medium-low heat at least 15 minutes. You can cook it longer, uncovered, to thicken the sauce.

9



My sauce started out fairly watery; so I simmered it for one hour. 45 minutes would have been enough. I tasted it for salt and it needed none. This sauce is traditionally made thin, not like a thick ragu.

10



I rolled my pasta into a sheet and then cut it with a knife. True tagliatelle should be about half an inch (1.5cm) wide. The original picture in the cookbook showed a pasta cut into varying widths, for a more rustic look. I chose to cut my pasta this way. Being fresh, this pasta will cook in under a minute.

Cook dry pasta according to package directions, drain, and dress with a little butter or extra-virgin olive oil. The cheese and sauce are then stirred in to coat the pasta evenly.



Serve with additional grated cheese for garnish.

## Conclusion

Made the traditional way, this dish takes more than few minutes to prepare. The flavor is well worth the effort.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Unless you live near a good deli or your local grocery store has a well stocked deli counter (like mine does), you might not find whole prosciutto. At the deli I asked the clerk to slice the prosciutto thick, at least  $\frac{1}{4}$  inch, or as all one piece. If you can only purchase prosciutto pre-sliced (it is usually paper thin), cut the meat into  $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch (1cm) pieces.

<sup>2</sup> As I understand it, broth is made with only meat. Stock is made with meat and trim, including bones. Bones and cartilage yield a natural gelatin that solidifies when chilled, making stock gel when refrigerated. Which is better? For soups I prefer stock, as the gelatin gives the liquid a velvety texture. In this recipe either stock or broth will be okay.