

Spaghetti alla gricia

I craved pasta at lunchtime yesterday, but I didn't feel like shopping for ingredients or spending much time cooking. It was too hot. So I dug up my notes from eating in Rome at Armando al Pantheon. The small intimate restaurant—just a few steps from the Pantheon—was so popular that I was unable to get in after I fell in love with this dish on my first visit. So if you go, I suggest you make a reservation.

The sauce is made with *guanciale*, but pancetta or bacon will do. If you use bacon, you'll need to drain some of the fat after sautéing. The classic cheese for this dish is pecorino Romano, a sharp, salty cheese, but since I am in Umbria, I used the region's traditional aged pecorino. For a milder dish, you can use Parmigiano-Reggiano.

Here is my version of *spaghetti alla gricia*. The recipe can be doubled.

Yield: 2 servings

8 ounces dry spaghetti
3 ounces thinly sliced *guanciale*, diced
1/2 tablespoon plus 1/2 tablespoon extra virgin olive oil
1-1/2 ounces (a large handful) grated aged Umbrian or Tuscan pecorino
Kosher salt
Freshly grated black pepper

1. Cook the spaghetti in boiling, salted water until just al dente (usually 1 minute less than package directions); drain but reserve about 1/2 cup of the cooking water. Return the spaghetti to the pot.
2. While the spaghetti cooks, sauté the guanciale in a large saucepan in 1/2 tablespoon of the oil until cooked but not crisp. Stir the cooked spaghetti into the saucepan with the guanciale. Toss well; add several tablespoons of the reserved cooking water.
3. Cook about 1 minute over low heat, adding more liquid, if needed, to keep it moist. It is ready when the spaghetti has absorbed the flavor of the guanciale and the spaghetti is al dente. Remove from the heat; stir in the remaining 1/2 tablespoon of oil and the cheese. Toss to evenly coat; season to taste with the salt and pepper.

Armando al Pantheon

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