

## Pasta with Ham and Lemon-Cream

*Tagliatelle con prosciutto cotto e panna*

This recipe is from one of the grandmothers, a widow named Anna, that I met while I lived in Umbria. She enjoys creating simple dishes now that she is cooking for one. Anna often uses fresh *tagliatelle* pasta, but it is delicious with dried pasta. For a richer sauce, add extra cheese and cream.

**Yield:** 4 main-dish servings (6 to 8 first-course servings)

- 2 tablespoons butter
- 1 small onion, finely chopped
- 6 ounces ham, diced (about 1-1/8 cups)
- 1 pound dried pasta, such as *gemelli*, penne, fettuccine
- 1 cup heavy cream plus more if desired
- 12 large basil leaves, torn into thirds
- Finely grated zest of 1 lemon
- 1 ounce grated Parmigiano-Reggiano cheese plus extra to pass
- Juice of 1 lemon
- Salt
- Freshly ground pepper

**Getting started:** Bring about 3 quarts of cold water to a boil in a large pot to cook the pasta; add about 1 tablespoon salt to the boiling water.

1. Heat a medium saucepan over medium-low heat. Swirl the butter around the saucepan until it melts. Sauté the onion in the butter, stirring occasionally, until very tender, 6 to 8 minutes. Add the ham; cook, stirring frequently, for 5 minutes.
2. Meanwhile, cook the pasta according to package instructions (but check for doneness early), stirring occasionally, until *al dente*. Shortly before draining the pasta, reserve about 1 cup of the cooking liquid. Drain the pasta; return it to the pot. Set aside.
3. Add the cream, basil, and lemon zest to the saucepan with the ham and onions. Simmer over low heat, stirring occasionally, for 5 minutes. Pour the sauce into the pot of pasta; toss to coat the pasta. Sprinkle with the cheese and toss again. Add the reserved cooking liquid by the tablespoon as needed to make it saucy. Season to taste with the lemon juice, salt, and pepper. Pass extra cheese at the table.

**Substitution:** Use chopped Italian parsley instead of basil.