

12 Great Ways to Use...

Pasta

Pasta is nutritious, delicious, and affordable, making it an important staple in the Mediterranean Diet. A healthy pasta meal is truly the sum of its parts, and features two key factors: what you pair with your pasta, and how much pasta you eat in a meal. Pasta's versatility allows for almost endless preparations. It is a wonderful partner for almost any vegetable. The dish can be as simple as pasta + al dente vegetables + grated cheese + extra-virgin olive oil, or pasta + a cream sauce with roasted vegetables. Healthy pasta meals are a balance of pleasure and health!

- 1.** Plan on leftovers. Mix leftover pasta (or cooked and cooled pasta) with vegetables, cheese, olives, or other favorites and dress with extra-virgin olive oil and herbs and spices.
- 2.** Add small-size pasta to soups. Italians have many famous soups featuring pasta such as minestrone and pasta fagiole.
- 3.** Use your oven. Mix a pasta shape of your choice with a tomato or cheese sauce and bake in the oven. Lasagna is a classic baked pasta recipe, and there are many, many others ranging from baked macaroni and cheese or mushrooms to baked pasta with tuna and tomatoes.
- 4.** Wrap it up. Use all the traditional ingredients you'd use for a taco—beans, tomatoes, spices like chili peppers and cumin, sauce and cheese—and substitute a large cooked pasta shape, like jumbo shells, for the taco.
- 5.** Think about lunch. Change up your lunchbox by packing cold pasta with vegetables and a dip.
- 6.** Serve pasta for dessert. Pasta isn't just for main or side dishes. Use pasta as the anchor for a sweet dessert, such as fried sweet pasta or tagliatelle with sugar, cinnamon, and nuts.
- 7.** Make stuffed pasta. Pasta can easily be stuffed to make delicious main dishes. Tortellini and ravioli are pasta varieties filled with cheese, vegetables, or meat.
- 8.** Shop for variety. Be on the lookout for new kinds of pasta and shapes you may not have tried. Most supermarkets carry an extensive selection of whole grain choices, veggie pastas, and a wide range of shapes, which kids love: alphabets (for soup), cavatappi (corkscrews) farfalle (bow ties or butterflies), orecchiette (little ears), rotelle (little wheels), radiatori (radiators).
- 9.** Pasta is a great means of introducing children and adults to the magic of beans. Combine your favorite cooked pasta shape with beans (either dried and cooked or canned, rinsed, and drained) along with spices, extra-virgin olive oil, or sauce, and you'll have a new healthy favorite.
- 10.** Spaghetti Tortilla is a great (and quick) way to use leftover pasta, especially spaghetti. Sauté an onion and garlic clove in a skillet until softened, add leftover spaghetti, and then crack 3 to 5 eggs into the onion, garlic and pasta mixture. Let the eggs settle for 3 to 4 minutes, until the underside is browned. Flip and cook for a few more minutes. Add salt and pepper to taste. Serve immediately or at room temperature.
- 11.** Make the classic pasta dish—spaghetti with tomatoes or tomato sauce (meatballs are optional). For a quick “no-cook” sauce, cut a few cups of cherry tomatoes in halves, sprinkle with salt, add a tablespoon of extra-virgin olive oil, toss, and let sit at room temperature for about 4 hours. Stir and serve on top of hot penne or farfalle.
- 12.** Let your mind be bold! We have found many uses for uncooked pasta, including: candle lighter, cake tester, skewer, bookmark, science projects, Christmas decorations, and school art projects, among others.



Learn more about healthy food choices at www.oldwayspt.org.