

Pasta for All

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Introduction: What Is Pasta?

Pasta: a basic staple ingredient used in cooking around the world.

Pasta: an ingredient made from durum wheat semolina or from the flour of certain other grains mixed with water and/or eggs, which is then kneaded and formed into various shapes; it is dried and cooked prior to eating.



Pasta: a dish made with cooked pasta.

Pasta: a delicious family meal favorite; the signature dish of many of the world's most famous chefs; a comfort meal in times of stress; an exciting meal in times of celebration; and a bonding meal when friends gather together around a home kitchen table or a restaurant table.

Pasta: recognized all over the world as an identifying ingredient of traditional healthy meals, especially in Mediterranean and Latin American regions.

Pasta Meal: pasta with other foods that serve as partners on the plate or in a bowl.

Pasta meal: recognized by physicians and nutrition scientists as uniquely healthy, because:

1. Its centerpiece — pasta — is a slowly-digested carbohydrate;
2. It is traditionally dressed with olive oil, a very healthy dietary fat; and
3. It is often mixed with tomato sauce, cheese, vegetables, beans, and seafood, or other lean meat.



Introduction: Summary and Purpose of PASTA FOR ALL

This *PASTA FOR ALL* brochure summarizes the consistent accumulation of scientific evidence for the healthfulness of pasta and the pasta meal. These recent findings support that pasta itself is a healthful and nutritious food, and also that when paired with its “partners”—olive oil, vegetables, beans, cheese, fish, or meat—pasta can be made into a delicious and balanced meal.

The brochure is also an overview of pasta’s popularity in most corners of the world. Pasta has become a truly international dish, which is good news for people who want to eat for health, taste, and convenience.

Many people around the world are likely to say, at home or at a restaurant, “I want some pasta,” or words to that effect. What they really mean is, “I want pasta with some sauce,” or, “I want soup with pasta.” Suddenly, “pasta” is transformed into an artistic creation, and the artist can be a restaurant chef preparing an elegant dish, or a home cook preparing a family dinner. Wonderful, versatile pasta can be served in a variety of dishes from everyday to gourmet.



Whether served simply or grandly, pasta is wonderful!

Healthy Pasta Meal Scientific Consensus Statement

Scientists Confirm Pasta's Healthy Place In the Diet

Pasta made headlines around the world in February 2004 when nutrition scientists from three continents met in Rome to discuss pasta and health. Their conclusion? Pasta is a healthy carbohydrate-containing food, and is a key ingredient of healthy traditional diets.

To learn WHY pasta is healthy, 1) take a look at the conclusions of the Healthy Pasta Meal Scientific Consensus Statement written by 34 prestigious scientists, and 2) also refer to the summary of just a few of scientific studies supporting the healthfulness of pasta.

Pasta's Place in a Balanced Diet and the Points of the Scientific Consensus Statement



Consensus Statement #1 Carbohydrate-containing foods are an essential part of a healthy, balanced diet.

Dietary carbohydrate is the primary source of glucose for the body, which is the main fuel (or energy source) for the brain, red blood cells, muscle and organs. Without carbohydrates, a diet is not balanced or complete. There is worldwide consensus among high-level nutrition scientists that carbohydrates are a key ingredient in an eating

pattern that promotes healthy longevity. Around the world, scientists and government agencies recommend that people divide their calories in this way: 45–60 % carbohydrates, 25–30 % fat, and 15–20 % protein.

Healthy Pasta Meal Scientific Consensus Statement

Consensus Statement #2

Pasta has a low glycemic index.

The glycemic index (GI) measures how rapidly a carbohydrate-containing food triggers a rise in one's blood glucose level — the higher the GI number, the greater the blood glucose response (which makes the body digest the food more quickly, and not receive the full benefits of eating that food). Pasta, a low GI food, does not cause blood glucose levels to rise quickly. Slow-release carbohydrates/low glycemic index foods, like pasta, may have benefits for healthy longevity and physical and cognitive performance, and may play a key role in preventing chronic diseases such as obesity, diabetes, coronary heart disease and certain cancers.

Consensus Statement #3

Pasta is a “good” carbohydrate.

The overall structure of pasta causes it to be digested more slowly than most other carbohydrate-containing foods.



Consensus Statement #4

Pasta meals are very efficient “delivery systems” for healthy foods.

Pasta is not eaten by itself, but joined by “partners” in a mixed meal, including vegetables, olive oil, tomato sauce, beans, nuts, and lean cuts of poultry, meat, fish and shellfish. By combining these multiple healthy ingredients, it becomes a pasta meal, slowing digestion and absorption of blood glucose while providing essential nutrients such as fiber, protein and vitamins. Although pasta has a low GI on its own, the GI of a mixed meal containing pasta may be even lower.

Healthy Pasta Meal Scientific Consensus Statement

Consensus Statement #5

Pasta, when eaten in healthy portions, does not promote weight gain.



Weight gain cannot be attributed to one food in particular. It is caused by consuming more total calories than are burned off. When eaten in the proper portions and in combination with healthy foods, pasta does not cause weight gain. A healthy portion of pasta is 80 to 100 grams of uncooked pasta.

Consensus Statement #6

High-fat/low-carb diets are dangerous.

High-fat/low-carb diets may pose health risks, and may increase the risk of serious chronic diseases including obesity, diabetes, coronary heart disease and some forms of cancer.

Consensus Statement #7

Traditional diets are strongly recommended.

Traditional diet patterns, like the Mediterranean, Latin American, and other heart-healthy diets offer greater health benefits than the typical Western diet. These patterns are characterized by an abundant variety of plant foods (fruits, vegetables, breads, pasta, other forms of cereals, potatoes, beans, nuts, and seeds), healthy fats like olive oil, dairy products (mostly cheese and yogurt), fish and poultry consumed in low to moderate amounts, and wine consumed in low to moderate amounts.

Why Pasta Is Healthy: Scientists Explain in Plain Language

Evidence of Pasta's Health Benefits

There is a consistent and mounting accumulation of scientific evidence for the healthfulness of pasta and the pasta meal. The following pages include summaries of recent scientific studies. These findings make clear that not only is the pasta itself a healthful and nutritious food, but that when it is paired with other healthy ingredients like olive oil, vegetables, beans, fish, or meat — pasta is a perfect meal.

Pasta meals help lower the glycemic index of a meal — more nutrition benefits!

Scientists find when pasta is combined with other foods, such as cheese, chili con carne, beans or tuna fish, these added ingredients may lower the glycemic index of a pasta-based meal. Pasta-based meal + other healthy ingredients = a lower GI index of the meal = more nutritious and filling!

Henry CJ, Lightowler HJ, Kendall FL, et al. The impact of the addition of toppings/fillings on the glycaemic response to commonly consumed carbohydrate foods. *European Journal of Clinical Nutrition*. 2006; 60: 763-69.

Pasta can be beneficial for those with diabetes.

A study published by *Diabetes Care* concluded grain-based foods (especially whole grain varieties) with a low glycemic index, such as pasta and oats, are beneficial for people with diabetes.



McKeown NM, Meigs JB, Liu S, et al. Carbohydrate Nutrition, Insulin Resistance, and the Prevalence of the Metabolic Syndrome in the Framingham Offspring Cohort. *Diabetes Care*. 2004;27:538-46.

Why Pasta Is Healthy: Scientists Explain in Plain Language



Pasta may reduce the risk of breast cancer.

A study from the *Annals of Oncology* reported that high glycemic index foods may increase the risk of breast cancer, while the intake of pasta, a low glycemic index food, seemed to have no influence.

Augustin LS, Dal Maso L, La Vecchia C, et al. Dietary glycemic index and glycemic load, and breast cancer risk: a case-control study. *Annals of Oncology*. 2001; 12: 1533-8.

Pasta may lower the risk of Type 2 diabetes.

In 2008, a study published in the *American Journal of Clinical Nutrition* concluded that a low GI diet filled with low GI foods, like pasta, may be preferred for the dietary management of type 2 diabetes.

Wolever TMS, Gibbs AL, Mehling C, et al. The Canadian Trial of Carbohydrates in Diabetes (CCD), a 1-y controlled trial of low-glycemic-index dietary carbohydrate in type 2 diabetes: no effect on glycosylated hemoglobin but reduction in C-reactive protein. *American Journal of Clinical Nutrition*. 2008;87(1):114-25.

In 2002, Finnish researchers found that consumption of pasta-based carbohydrates and rye bread can lower the risk of developing Type 2 Diabetes.

Laaksonen DE, Toppinen LK, Juntunen KS, et al. Dietary carbohydrate modification enhances insulin secretion in persons with the metabolic syndrome. *American Journal of Clinical Nutrition*. 2005;82(6):1218-27.

Why Pasta Is Healthy: Scientists Explain in Plain Language

Alzheimer's and the Mediterranean diet.

Researchers concluded that following a Mediterranean diet, in which pasta is one of the cornerstone foods, may reduce the risk for developing Alzheimer's disease. Researchers also found that following the Mediterranean diet may increase lifespan in those who do develop Alzheimer's disease.



Scarmeas N, Stern Y, Tang MX et al. Mediterranean diet and risk for Alzheimer's disease. *Annals of Neurology*. 2006;9(6):912-21

Scarmeas N, Luchsinger JA, Mayeux R, et al. Mediterranean diet and Alzheimer's disease mortality. *Neurology*. 2007;69(11):1084-93

Pasta meals with tomato-based sauces may reduce the risk of prostate cancer.

Lycopene, a potent antioxidant found in tomatoes, acts to repair damaged cells in the body. This positive effect of lycopene is thought to help prevent prostate cancer since prostate cancer risk is lower in men who frequently eat tomato products.

Van Breemen RB, Xu X, Viana MA, et al. Liquid chromatography-mass spectrometry of cis- and all-trans-lycopene in human serum and prostate tissue after dietary supplementation with tomato sauce. *Journal of Agriculture and Food Chemistry*. 2002;50(8):2214-9.

Chen L, Stacewicz-Sapuntzakis M, Duncan C, et al. Oxidative DNA damage in prostate cancer patients consuming tomato sauce-based entrees as a whole-food intervention. *Journal of the National Cancer Institute*. 2001;93(24):1872-9.

*"Life is a combination of magic and pasta."
Federico Fellini*

Pasta Fits Into A Weight Loss and Management Program

Pasta meals can help people maintain or lose weight.

Carbohydrate-containing foods, like pasta, may aid weight loss and management efforts. Studies in the *New England Journal of Medicine* and the *Journal of the American Medical Association* report there are no significant differences in weight loss between low-carbohydrate diets and conventional weight loss plans. The studies attribute weight-loss to a reduction in calories, not carbohydrates.



This means that a delicious pasta meal, when eaten in healthy portions, can be part of a successful weight loss plan.

Shai I, Schwarzfuchs D, Henkin Y, et al. Weight Loss with a Low-Carbohydrate, Mediterranean, or Low-Fat Diet. *New England Journal of Medicine*. 2008;359:229-41.

Hu F. The Mediterranean Diet and Mortality. *New England Journal of Medicine*; 2003;348 (26):2595-96.

De Lorenzo A, Andreoli A, Sorge RP, et al. Modification of Dietary Habits (Mediterranean Diet) and Cancer Mortality in a Southern Italian Village from 1960 to 1996. *Annals of the New York Academy of Science*. 1999;889:224-9.

Pasta does not lead to abdominal obesity.

The *Nutrition Journal* reported in its December 2006 issue that eating vegetable oil, pasta and low-fat milk are associated with a healthier distribution of body fat around the hips, rather than around the waist.

Krachler B, Eliasson M, Stenlund H, et al. Reported food intake and distribution of body fat: a repeated cross-sectional study. *Nutrition Journal*. 2006;5:34.

Pasta does not cause food cravings.

The findings of a study looking at the long-term changes in food cravings in a calorie-restricted research program suggested that cravings are actually for calories, not foods high in carbohydrates like pasta, as is widely assumed. What is commonly called “carbohydrate addiction” should probably be relabeled as calorie addiction.

Gilhooly CH, Das SK, Golden JK, et al. Food cravings and energy regulation: the characteristics of craved foods and their relationship with eating behaviors and weight change during 6 months of dietary energy restriction. *International Journal of Obesity*. 2007; 31:1849–58.

“Pasta is architecture designed for the taste buds. Every single shape is a brick, different in form, consistency and color, to create an extraordinary construction, both physical and mental, a true expression of taste...”

L’Enciclopedia della Pasta

Pasta and whole grains: a delicious, healthy relationship

For extra health benefits, try a whole grain pasta variety of pasta for dinner. Whole grains provide a healthy mix of nutrients proven to be beneficial in the fight against heart disease, strokes, type 2 diabetes, even obesity. Pasta is a delicious and family-friendly way to add more whole grains to any diet.

There are a wide range of whole grain pasta options, from gluten-free to 100% whole wheat. Some manufacturers have even created pastas that blend traditional refined semolina flour with whole grain ingredients. The taste of these pastas range from nutty and rich to smooth and mild and can be a great way to introduce whole-grain pastas to even the most discerning palate.

As with regular refined flour pastas, it is always a good idea to prepare whole-grain pastas according to package directions. However, whole grain varieties tend to dry out a bit faster once removed from boiling water, so try to add sauces or coatings as quickly as possible.

Newby P, Maras J, Bakun P, et al. Intake of whole grains, refined grains, and cereal fiber measured with 7-d diet records and associations with risk factors for chronic disease. *American Journal of Clinical Nutrition*. 2007;86(6):1745–53.

Pasta Recipes From Around the World

Tips on Cooking Pasta:

Pasta tastes its very best when eaten right after it's cooked. The golden rule is to cook pasta "al dente" — neither too raw nor too cooked. To taste pasta at its finest, just follow these simple guidelines and cooking times:

- Pour a generous amount of water (1 liter per 100 grams of pasta) into the pot, and place pot on high heat. Add salt (10 grams per liter of water).
- When the water begins to boil, add the pasta to the pot.
- Let the water return to a boil, stirring the pasta from time to time, cooking it per the "boiling time" displayed on the pasta label.
- Use a colander to drain the pasta, and then put the pasta on a plate. Add your favourite sauce, mix well and serve hot.



Capellini with Peppers, Tomato, & Prosciutto

250 grams capellini
150 grams diced prosciutto
1 red pepper
1 green pepper
1 carrot
30 grams pine nuts
3 peeled and chopped tomatoes
150 grams grated cheese
Pinch of paprika powder
Pepper and salt to taste
Butter or margarine



Belgium

Clean or peel the peppers, tomatoes, and carrot and cut them into small pieces. Heat the butter in the pan over low heat and sauté the pine nuts gently until light brown. Then add the pieces of carrot, peppers and prosciutto, turn heat to medium and simmer until all begins to brown. Add the tomatoes and simmer until tomatoes begin to break down. Season the mix with pepper, salt and paprika powder. In the meantime, cook the pasta per the package instructions. Toss the pasta and sauce and sprinkle with the grated cheese.

Makes 2-3 Servings

Pasta Recipes From Around the World

Penne Rigolotto

500 grams penne pasta
300 grams eggplant
360 grams mozzarella
cheese
900 milliliter tomato sauce
1 tablespoon pesto
5 grams chopped garlic
2 tablespoons extra-
virgin olive oil
2 egg yolks, beaten
30 grams wheat flour



Brazil

Cut the eggplant in 1 cm wide slices. Beat eggs yolks with fork in shallow bowl. Combine bread crumbs and wheat flour on a dinner plate. Dip the slices of eggplant in beaten egg yolks, and then in bread crumbs mixture to coat. Sauté in olive oil over medium heat until browned. Place them on paper towel to drain and cool. Cut the cooked eggplant and the mozzarella cheese into cubes and set aside. Cook penne pasta "al dente" in a lot of salt water. Drain and set aside. Sauté garlic in olive oil for one minute, then add the pesto, the tomato sauce, the eggplant, and cooked penne pasta. Stir delicately and then add the cubed mozzarella cheese. When the cheese melts, remove from the heat and serve immediately.

Makes 4 Servings

Salad with Farfalle, Vegetables & Goat Cheese

400 grams farfalle
350 grams red and yellow
peppers
250 grams small zucchini
3-4 fresh thyme springs
½ bunch fresh basil
60 grams crottin de chèvre
(goat cheese)
100 grams pitted green
olives
9 tablespoons extra virgin
olive oil
Salt and pepper



France

Cook the farfalle in 4 liters of salted boiling water until al dente. Meanwhile, trim and dice the zucchini, then sauté with 4 tablespoons of the olive oil for several minutes, seasoning with salt and pepper. Set aside. Cube the goat cheese and set aside. Wash and chop the herbs; set aside. Wash peppers, cut in two and discard seeds and white filaments. Grill peppers and cut them in cubes; set aside. When pasta is cooked, rinse in cool water and drain. Put the pasta in a salad-bowl, tossing with two tablespoons of olive oil. Add zucchini, peppers, aromatic herbs, goat cheese, olives and the rest of oil. Mix and serve.

Makes 4 Servings

Pasta Recipes From Around the World

Spaghetti with Tomatoes and Basil

350 grams spaghetti
500 grams tomatoes (preferably San Marzano tomatoes)
50 grams extra virgin olive oil
30 grams white onion, minced
10 basil leaves
4 tablespoons Parmigiano-Reggiano
Salt and pepper to taste



Italy

Dip the tomatoes into boiling water for about ten seconds and place in a bowl of ice water for 1 minute. Remove from ice water, and dry. Peel them, remove the seeds and cut them in slices. In a saucepan, brown the minced onion in the olive oil, then add the tomatoes. Season with salt and pepper. Cook for about ten minutes. Cook the pasta in plenty of salted water, drain it and add it to the sauce. Garnish with basil leaves and sprinkle with the grated Parmigiano Reggiano cheese before serving.

Makes 4 Servings

Sopa Seca de Fideos

500 grams fideos (thin pasta)
6 medium tomatoes, blanched and peeled
2-3 tablespoons olive oil
1/2 white onion, chopped
2-3 cloves garlic, peeled
500 milliliters chicken stock
Parsley, finely chopped
Grated queso anejo, to taste
Avocado slices (optional)



Mexico

Puree the tomatoes, garlic and onion in the blender until fairly smooth. Heat the olive oil in a large, deep skillet over low heat and add the dry fideos. Stir the fideos until they turn uniformly brown, then remove with slotted spoon and set aside. Add the tomato mixture to the skillet with additional olive oil if necessary, and simmer over medium heat for several minutes. Add 3/4 of the chicken stock and bring to a boil. Add the fideos to the tomato-stock mixture, and then bring heat back to low. Add the salt and parsley. The dish is done when the fideos are cooked and there is no more water in the pan (you may need to add the other 1/4 of stock). Stir in the queso and garnish with avocado slices.

Makes 3 Servings

Creamy Aletria

125 grams Aletria pasta
1/2 dL water
300 grams of sugar
1 cinnamon stick
5 egg yolks
Port wine
Zest of one lemon
1 Tablespoon butter
Ground Cinnamon



Portugal

Bring water, sugar, lemon zest, salt, and cinnamon to boil in a medium saucepan. Add the pasta and cook until al dente, breaking up with a medium spoon if necessary. Meanwhile, in a separate bowl, mix the yolks with a tablespoon of the cooking water with a fork until well blended. When pasta is done cooking, drain well and return to pot, and place pot over low heat. Immediately add the butter and toss to coat the pasta. Add the egg yolk mixture and stir until egg has thickened. Serve in individual cups or a serving dish, sprinkling with cinnamon before serving.

Makes 4 Servings

Fideua Valenciana

1500 grams cut tubettini
5 Norway Lobsters, cooked
5 prawns, cooked
10 shrimp, cooked
5 slices angler fish, cooked
200 grams very ripe tomatoes, peeled, seeded, drained, or a tin of peeled tomatoes
4 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
1/2 onion, chopped
2 cloves garlic, minced
1 sprig parsley
Strands of saffron, crushed
1 1/2 liters fish stock (made with heads of angler fish and hake, a few clams, carrot, onion, garlic, parsely, bay leaf, pepper and salt)

In a big frying pan, gently sauté the chopped onion. When it begins to brown, add the finely chopped tomatoes. Then add the garlic, parsely, and saffron. Stir carefully and simmer. Meanwhile, remove the meat from the cooked lobsters, prawns, shimp, and angler fish, and add to tomato mixture. Add fish stock and bring to a boil. Sprinkle in the pasta, stir well and leave on moderate heat until pasta is cooked. Allow dish to rest, covered, and off the heat for several minutes before serving.

Makes 4 Servings



Spain

Traditional Diet Pyramids

*Mediterranean Diet
Pasta Meal Pyramid*



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*Latin American Diet
Pasta Meal Pyramid*



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