

## **Beginner's Tomato Pasta**

This is the first recipe I learned as a teenager, and the first recipe I'll make when I move into my own place one day. For those of you who have moved out, left or been cut off from your homes without any decent cooking skills, here's a recipe to start out with, as beginner friendly as possible :]

### **Ingredients:**

Pasta

Store bought tomato sauce

Tinned or fresh tomatoes

Half an onion

As many garlic cloves as you want or 1/8 teaspoon of garlic powder for every clove of garlic (I use around 1-2 cloves for one serving).

Oil

A bag of mixed herbs or, if you want to choose/buy the herbs individually: Rosemary, Thyme, Marjoram, Parsley, Sage and Mint. All of these are optional!

Chilli powder (optional)

Worcestershire sauce (optional)

Vegetable(s) of your choosing

Salt

### **Utensils:**

One medium sized pan

One frying pan

One wooden spoon

One chopping knife

**Recipe:**

Begin by chopping half an onion as finely as you wish. If you're unable to chop an onion (or you don't want to cook an onion), then this ingredient is optional. If you struggle to chop an onion finely, then chop large, round strips and use scissors to chop the rest.

Pour a few drops of oil into your frying pan. You can preheat it if you want, but it's not a big deal. Add some more oil depending on how brown you want the onions. Then place the onions in the pan and stir every so often to avoid it burning. They do not need a lot of stirring (especially if you've put a lot of oil in), just a few nudges with a wooden spoon will be enough to keep them from sticking. You can sit down for this part if you need to.

They should take around 5-7 minutes to cook.

Chop or crush the garlic cloves until fine, or— if you're unable to (or don't want to) chop garlic— then 1/8 teaspoon of garlic powder per clove will work (or just eyeball it). You can add the powder into the sauce at the end.

If you are using cloves, then add them to the onions one minute before the onions have finished cooking. Adding in the garlic too early will make it taste bitter.

When the onions have finished cooking, leave them to one side. You can either begin the next step while they're cooking or afterwards to avoid things getting too overwhelming.

If you want to add vegetables, then wash and chop them up however you wish. I personally go for broccoli and carrots. If you don't like the texture of vegetables, but want to add them anyway, then I recommend blending up the sauce with the vegetables added if you have access to a blender. If not, then the tomatoes in the sauce are enough, I promise.

Fill the medium sized pan up halfway with water, put it on a high heat and wait for it to boil. This should take around 10 minutes, or you can use water from a kettle if you have one. Don't forget to add a few good pinches of salt!

Add the vegetables into the water, turn down the heat a little, and wait for them to cook. Most vegetables take around 5 minutes, depending on how crunchy or soft you want them. Cook them for less if you want them crunchy, and cook them for more if you want them soft. When the vegetables have finished, spoon them out and leave aside.

Then you can add the pasta!

Add around 1.5–2 cups (1.5 if you want a small serving, 2 if you want a bigger one). The pasta should take around 10-15 minutes to cook, depending on the type of pasta (brown pasta takes longer than white pasta) or how soft you want it. Make sure the heat is on low, and that the lid— if you're using one— is at least halfway off, otherwise the pasta will boil over.

There's a lot of waiting during these three steps, so you can sit down and read or watch something if you'd like. Keeping myself entertained helps with the motivation to actually start cooking, and I personally listen to a favourite album or watch cartoons!

If you want to add fresh tomatoes, or whole tomatoes from a tin, then now's the time to chop them. For one serving, I recommend one tomato or half a tin. If you can't/don't want to chop them, then you can use pre-chopped tinned tomatoes. If you don't like the texture of tomatoes, then you can use tomato purée. This step is technically optional, as we are already using store bought tomato sauce, and is only done if you want a richer tomato flavour.

At this point, you can add all of the sauce ingredients together: the tomatoes, the tomato sauce, the onions and garlic (or garlic powder) and the herbs. You can also add chilli powder if you want an extra kick, or a few drops of Worcestershire sauce for added richness.

You can either add the sauce to a separate bowl, which I find easier for mixing purposes and can be done while sitting down, or you can add all the sauce ingredients directly to the pasta after you have strained out the water. If you use the bowl, then I recommend heating it up for around 20 seconds in the microwave just before you add it to make sure it's nice and warm.

Lastly, spoon out the pasta, the sauce and the vegetables, and you're done!

If you want the sauce to have more of a stew-like consistency, then add a few spoonfuls of the pasta water and mix.

Remember to pick and choose which parts of the recipe you can/want to do! The most important thing is simply to eat, so feel free to peel this back to its bare bones if you need it. Boil some pasta for ten minutes while you watch TV and then dump half a bottle of sauce over it for a quick meal, or just eat the pasta if you don't like the taste of tomatoes.

At the very least, I hope I gave you some decent cooking tips if no one else did.

Happy cooking :]