



Rain, Rain Go Away ... But If You Stay ... & Tagliatelle alla Carbonara

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Contact me at susannye@tds.net
603/526 7319



As I tap away it's a bone-chilling, rainy morning.

It's just one in a seemingly endless string of always chilly, sometimes rainy, sometimes only gray and dreary but rarely sunny days. It's already starting to get old and the forecast calls for plenty more of the same. It's bad enough that the rain and drizzle put a damper on outdoor fun but the frigid humidity has prolonged the bad hair season.

So short of climbing under the covers and staying there until ski season starts ... what can you do to pass the time on these endless dark days? Here are a few ideas:

Bake cookies. Eat one, okay two, and pack up the rest for the unsung or under-sung heroes in town. Drop some off at the police station and firehouse. Leave batches at

the nurses' station and emergency room at the hospital. Don't forget the nurses and aids at the VNA and nursing home.

Organize a film festival. Invite your pals over for an all-afternoon or evening marathon of your favorite films. Snacks are easy. A big bowl of popcorn and champagne or a fun and fruity martini sound pretty good.

Host a tea party. Take a tip from the English. After all, who knows more about rain and tea? Whether your party is plain or fancy, life always looks better after a nice cuppa.

Take a zumba class. Or yoga if you prefer. Go bowling; find a climbing wall or an indoor track. Yes, you can stay active in miserable weather.

Indulge yourself. Take a long, luxurious bubble bath.

Give yourself a facial or a mani-pedi or both. Better yet, invite your buddies around for an at-home spa party.

Knit scarves or hats for all your friends and relatives. Knitting not your thing? Then build birdhouses or something equally crafty. Before you know it, your holiday gift list will be complete.

Tackle the ten (twenty, thirty or more) years of photographs which are piled willy-nilly in drawers, closets and bins. Organize them into beautiful scrapbooks for your family. Sound daunting? Just sort the photographs into boxes for your kids and grandkids and let them make the scrapbooks.

Get out your pasta machine and roll out miles and miles of tagliarini or tagliatelle. Invite the neighbors around for a simple supper of Carbonara or Alfredo. The company will do you good.

Don't have a pasta machine? Make soup instead. Gallons and gallons of soup ... some for now and some for the freezer. You'll be happy you did. The house will smell wonderful and your well-stocked freezer will come in handy at the end of a too busy day.

Cuddle up on the couch with your favorite author. It's up to you but I'll keep it light and indulge in a guilty pleasure. For me that would be a mystery or crime novel. One rainy Sunday I read half a dozen Agatha Christie books.

And when all else fails, take a nap. But please, do get up before the snow flies.

Stay warm and dry and bon appétit!

Tagliatelle alla Carbonara

Homemade pasta is easy to make and has a wonderful, delicate flavor and texture. Give it a try on the next rainy day. Enjoy!

Serves 6

Olive oil

About 4 ounces pancetta or thick-cut bacon, chopped

2 cloves garlic, minced

Pinch hot pepper flakes

2 large egg yolks

2 large eggs

1/4 cup heavy cream

2 teaspoons finely chopped fresh sage

1 teaspoon fresh thyme

1 ounce Parmigiano-Reggiano cheese, grated

1 ounce Pecorino Romano cheese, grated

Sea salt and freshly ground pepper

About 12 ounces homemade (recipe follows) or store-bought fresh tagliatelle or fettuccine
Garnish: chopped walnuts, toasted

Heat a little olive oil in a large nonstick skillet over medium heat, add the pancetta and cook until crisp. Using a slotted spoon, transfer the pancetta to small bowl and reserve. Drain off excess fat, leaving just enough to lightly coat the pan, add the garlic and pepper flakes and cook for 1 minute. Set the pan aside and keep warm.

Put the eggs and egg yolks together in a bowl, add the sage and thyme, season with salt and pepper and whisk to combine. Reserve.

Meanwhile, bring a large pot of salted water to a boil. Add the pasta and cook uncovered, until al dente, 1 to 2 minutes. Reserving some pasta water, drain the tagliatelle.

Put the tagliatelle in the skillet with the garlic and toss to coat and combine. Whisking continually, slowly add 1/4 cup hot pasta water to the eggs. Pour the eggs over the pasta and toss to combine. Add the pancetta and sprinkle with half of the grated cheeses and toss again. Cook on low heat for 1-2 minutes, stirring in a little more pasta water if needed until the sauce reaches the desired consistency.

Serve immediately with a sprinkle of chopped walnuts and pass the remaining Parmigiano-Reggiano and Pecorino Romano.



Homemade Pasta

Makes about 12 ounces



2 cups (plus more for dusting) all-purpose flour
 1 teaspoon salt
 3 large eggs
 2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
 Cornmeal for dusting (optional)

Put the flour and salt in the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with a dough hook. Start the motor on low and mix to combine. Gradually increase the mixer speed to medium while adding the eggs, one at a time. Add 1 tablespoon olive oil and mix until the dough comes together in a ball.

If you don't have a stand mixer, combine the flour and salt on a flat work surface, form a mound and make a well in the center. Put the eggs and 1 tablespoon olive oil in the well and lightly beat with a fork. Gradually mix the flour in with the eggs, incorporating all the flour and stirring to combine.

Sprinkle your work surface with flour and knead the dough until it is smooth and elastic, about 10 minutes. Put the remaining olive oil in a large bowl. Roll the dough in the oil to coat evenly. Cover the bowl and let the dough rest for about 30 minutes.

The dough can be made ahead to this point, covered and stored in the refrigerator for up to 4 hours. Remove the dough from the refrigerator and bring to room temperature before continuing.

Cut the dough ball into 6 pieces. Set all but one piece of dough aside and cover with a clean, kitchen towel. Dust your work surface and the first piece of dough with a little flour. Using your palm or a rolling pin, flatten the dough.

Roll the dough through a pasta machine 2-3 times on the widest setting. Fold the dough into thirds and pass it through 2-3 more times. Reduce the setting and crank the dough through 2-3 times. Dusting the dough with more flour as needed, continue rolling and tightening until the machine is at the narrowest setting. The pasta sheet should be about 1/8-inch thick.



Cut the sheet into wide (tagliatelle), very wide (pappardelle) or thin (tagliolini) ribbons by hand or attach the ribbon cutter to the pasta machine and roll the dough through. Toss the pasta ribbons with a little cornmeal or flour and gather them into a loose pile or two. Let the pasta sit uncovered for about 30 minutes before cooking to dry slightly.

Continue with the remaining dough.

The pasta can be made up to 8 hours ahead, covered and refrigerated after drying.