

Spring Pasta with Peppered Peas

Serves 4

For all those spring things you look at and think, “What should I do with this?”, this pasta is the answer. Every green leafy thing, garlicky stalk or flowering something: into this pasta it goes! Use the measurements as a suggestion! Ignore them completely! The goal is a sort of spring-y Alla Gricia (pork fat + lots of black pepper + spring vegetables), so this pasta is ideally made with guanciale, green garlic, pea shoots and fresh peas. But know that even if made with olive oil, regular garlic, arugula and frozen peas, it’ll still be so lovely.

Ingredients

4 oz. guanciale, bacon or pancetta, cut into ½” pieces, optional

12 oz. pasta, a short tube shape or long noodle

Kosher salt

3 tablespoons unsalted butter or olive oil, plus more

2 stalks green garlic or 6 cloves regular garlic, thinly sliced

1 ½ cups peas, fresh or frozen (from one 10-oz. bag of frozen peas)

Freshly ground black pepper

4 cups pea shoots or arugula

¼ cup finely grated Pecorino or Parmesan, plus more

2 tablespoons fresh lemon juice, plus more

Instructions

1. If using, heat pork in a large skillet over medium heat and cook, stirring occasionally, until the fat has started to render and the edges turn nicely browned (you’re not looking for crispy pork, but well-rendered, soft, golden brown pork), 8–10 minutes.
2. Meanwhile, cook pasta in a large pot of well-salted water until just al dente. Drain, reserving 2 cups pasta water.
3. Once pork is where you want it, take a little bite of one piece and think “wow, that pork is so good and so salty.” From there (or if you’re not using pork), add 3 tablespoons butter, letting it melt and foam up before adding about ¾ of the green garlic and all of the peas (if using frozen, just add from frozen, no need to thaw). Season with salt and lots (and lots) of pepper and cook, stirring occasionally until the green garlic is tender (not browned) and peas are bright green and soft, 3–6 minutes (depending if peas are fresh or frozen).
4. Add pasta to the skillet along with half the pea shoots, ¼ cup of Pecorino and 1 cup pasta water. Cook, tossing constantly until the greens are wilted, the cheese is melted, the sauce has thickened and the pasta is cooked through, adding splashes of pasta water as needed to keep things saucy but not soupy, 2–4 minutes.
5. Remove pasta from heat and top with remaining pea shoots and 2 tablespoons lemon juice. Season with salt and pepper and toss, just to incorporate and wilt the shoots slightly (they should remain perky, almost like salad greens or herbs). Divide among bowls and top with more lemon juice, black pepper and Pecorino, if you like.