

Pasta with Sausage, Browned Butter and Broccoli Rabe

Serves 4

This is a simple recipe, but an important one. Take the measurements and ingredients with a grain of salt, knowing that at the end of the process you should end up with a skillet of saucy, porky pasta laced with as many greens as it can handle. It should be salty and spicy with room for a pile of cheese at the end. If you're dairy-free, leaving out the butter and cheese will not impact your experience (pasta will still be wonderful), and frankly, the sausage can be anything you want (if you don't have sausage, ground pork seasoned with fennel seed and crushed red pepper flakes is close enough). Point being, this is as basic and iconic a pasta recipe as a good red sauce is. Both important to have in your repertoire, both flexible as your fridge or pantry require, both always hit the spot.

Ingredients

2 tablespoons olive oil

1 pound hot or sweet Italian sausage, casings removed

4 tablespoons unsalted butter

6–8 cloves garlic, thinly sliced

1 bunch broccoli rabe or kale, bottom ends trimmed, chopped or torn into bite-sized pieces

Kosher salt, freshly ground black pepper

12–16 ounces pasta, short noodle or tube shape preferred

A hunk of parmesan or pecorino, for grating

Crushed red pepper flakes

Instructions

1. Cook pasta in a large pot of salted water until al dente. Set aside 2 cups of pasta water and drain the rest; set pasta and pasta water aside.
2. Meanwhile, heat olive oil in a large skillet over medium heat. Breaking off a few little pieces at a time, add sausage to the skillet. The best way to describe this is to break off the sausage like you're feeding white bread to ducks at the park—small, irregular little bits tossed into the skillet—this way, the sausage doesn't clump together.
3. Let the sausage cook, stirring occasionally to keep it broken up and browning all over, until it's golden brown and starting to look a little crispy, like it came from the top of a pizza, 5–8 minutes. Add the butter, letting it melt and brown around the sausage, a minute or two.
4. Increase heat to medium–high and add garlic. Give it a stir to evenly coat in the fat and cook, stirring occasionally, until it's nicely browned, like little garlic chips, 90 seconds or so.
5. Starting with one large handful, add greens (the stemmy parts first, they take longer to cook) to the skillet and season with salt and pepper. Cook, stirring occasionally, until greens are wilted down, then add another handful, repeating with remaining greens.
6. Once greens are wilted and cooked and taste wonderful, add pasta and 1 cup of pasta water to the skillet. Cook, tossing and stirring frequently, until the pasta is cooked through (taste a piece of pasta after a few minutes to test) and the sauce is, well, saucy (it should be nicely thickened, almost creamy looking, not watery), 5 or so minutes (you can and should add more pasta water if the skillet looks dry before the pasta is cooked).
7. Remove from heat, add some cheese and lots of pepper directly to the skillet and toss to combine. Spoon into bowls and top with more parmesan, crushed red pepper flakes and more black pepper.