



Pasta e Fagioli

Also called pasta fazool (or pasta fasul), pasta e fagioli is not a precise recipe, every Nonna across Italy makes a variation based on what she has on hand. This is my version, but as long as there's pasta and beans in some form, the rest is up to you. I use rosemary and bay leaf because they're in my garden, but you could add oregano, parsley or basil, add more or less chilli or garlic to suit your taste, alter the ratio of pasta to beans if you prefer more of one or the other and add more or less water to give it a soupier or heartier consistency. Whatever you do, it's even better the next day! It will thicken up when it's left to stand, just add more water when you reheat it. As it's a peasant dish, I often add leftover parmesan rind to mine.

Serves 6 as a starter or 3–4 for supper

INGREDIENTS

- ½ cup extra virgin olive oil, plus extra for drizzling
- 1 brown onion, finely chopped
- Salt flakes, to taste
- 2 cloves garlic, crushed
- 1 sprig rosemary, leaves finely chopped (about 2 teaspoons)
- 1 fresh bay leaf, torn
- Dried chilli flakes, to taste
- 400g canned borlotti beans, drained and rinsed
- 210g Italian crushed tomatoes (polpa)
- 750ml boiling water
- 100g risoni, ditalini or other small pasta
- Freshly grated parmesan, for serving (optional)

METHOD

1. Place oil and onion in a medium-sized saucepan over medium heat.
2. Stir in a good pinch of salt, cover and cook for 15–20 minutes, stirring occasionally, until very tender.
3. Stir in garlic, rosemary, bay leaf and a good pinch of chilli flakes and cook for a couple of minutes, stirring regularly, until garlic smells cooked.
4. Add beans, crushing them roughly in your hand as you put them in. Cook for 3 minutes, stirring often.
5. Increase heat, stir in tomato, water and pasta and bring to the boil.
6. Reduce heat and simmer for 10–15 minutes, stirring often, until pasta is tender.
7. Taste and stir in salt and more chilli flakes if you like.
8. Serve with a drizzle of oil and grated parmesan if using.

