



Pasta alla Puttanesca

“Puttana” is the Italian word for prostitute and I love the apocryphal story of how Neapolitan pasta alla puttanesca was named. Most respectable Italian women used to (and some indeed still do) shop for fresh ingredients every day, but not the busy working girls of Naples who worked a 6-and-a-half day week it’s said. They had no time to visit the fresh food markets so had to make do with a quick but tasty pasta sauce made from pantry staples such as canned tomatoes, preserved anchovies, capers and olives. Sugo alla puttanesca is a very versatile sauce, delicious with any dried pasta and typically served with spaghetti or penne (I like the smooth version called 'penne lisce'). Always use good Italian canned tomatoes, such as Mutti

Serves 6 as a starter



INGREDIENTS

- ¼ cup extra virgin olive oil
- 1 red onion, finely diced
- Salt flakes, to taste
- 2 cloves garlic, finely chopped
- 4 anchovy fillets
- Pinch dried chilli flakes
- 400g Italian canned tomatoes, chopped
- 2 tablespoons salted capers, rinsed and dried
- 20 small olives
- 500g dried pasta such as penne or spaghetti
- Freshly grated pecorino cheese, for serving

METHOD

1. Heat oil in a saucepan over low heat, add onion and a good pinch of salt and cook, covered, for about 10 minutes, until tender.
2. Meanwhile, put a large saucepan of well-salted water (10g salt/litre water) on to boil.
3. Stir garlic, anchovies and chilli into the onion and cook for a further minute or so until well combined.
4. Add tomato, crushing well with a wooden spoon to break it up, and bring to the boil.
5. Reduce heat, stir in capers and olives, and simmer for 10 minutes or so, while the pasta cooks.
6. Meanwhile, cook pasta in the boiling water for a minute or so less than the packet instructions, until almost al dente.
7. Drain pasta, reserving the cooking water.
8. Add pasta to the sauce with a couple of tablespoons of cooking water and mix together over medium heat until pasta is just al dente, adding a little more cooking water if necessary to give it a good sheen.
9. Spoon into warmed shallow bowls, top with pecorino and serve immediately.