

Bucatini all'Amatriciana
By Eric Guido

I beg you to look for guanciale. Could you substitute it with pancetta and still enjoy this dish? Sure, but I assure you that it is pale in comparison to guanciale. I was able to find guanciale after only stopping at two Italian butchers. It's certainly not something that you'll find at the local supermarket but, with just a little digging, it's very possible to source.

Also, I found that using a combination of both fresh and canned tomatoes gave this dish a gorgeous contrast on the palate and my tasting panel agreed wholeheartedly. You could just use the canned tomatoes but it would take away from the recipe, in my opinion.

Makes 4 – 5 servings

½ pound slice guanciale

1 pound Bucatini (pasta)

4 –5 cloves of Garlic (rough chop)

½ teaspoon red pepper flakes (you can double this if you prefer a good amount of heat)

28oz of canned San Marzano tomatoes

¾ cup of plum or grape tomatoes cut into large dice (must be fresh and ripe)

¾ cup of grated pecorino Romano cheese

½ cup red wine (preferably the same wine you plan to pair with the dish)

Olive oil (as needed)

Bunch of fresh basil (for garnish)

Place a large pot of salted water on a burner on high to bring to a boil.

Strain the juice from the canned tomatoes and, over a strainer, try to remove as many seeds as possible. When you're done, you should have a bowl of strained and deseeded tomatoes and a bowl of tomato juice.

Place a medium to large sauté pan (or sauce pan) over a medium flame. Add olive oil to just barely coat the pan. Before the oil gets too hot, add the guanciale. Think about making Sunday bacon, but with the intention of pulling the meat before it gets crispy.

Add the pasta to the water and set the timer for one minute short of its recommended cooking time.

Remove the guanciale from the pan onto a paper towel to drain, and pour the rendered fat from the pan through a fine mesh strainer. (This is not 100% necessary, but those small bits you can't scoop out with a spoon may burn if you leave them in the pan.) Wipe any burnt bits from the pan and pour two tbs of the rendered pork fat back into the pan.

Add the red pepper flakes, the garlic and the fresh tomatoes. Allow to cook over medium-low flame for two minutes. Then (with the pan removed from the burner) add the red wine.

Once the wine has begun to reduce, add the strained San Marzano tomatoes and a cup of the strained tomato juice that came from the can. Bring this entire mixture to a simmer and allow to reduce for 3 – 5 minutes.

Around this time, the pasta should be done. Strain the pasta and pour back into the pot. Now pour the sauce over the pasta and stir until combined. Sprinkle half of the cheese into the pot as well as half of the cooked guanciale. Over a low flame, stir until completely combined. Allow this mixture to cook for one minute on low flame.

Check for seasoning, but remember that the guanciale can add a good amount of seasoning on its own.

Chiffonade the basil.

To plate, place a mound of pasta on a heated plate and sprinkle with pecorino Romano, then guanciale, and finally the basil chiffonade. Clean the rim of your plate and serve.