

AGLIO E OLIO (Garlic and Oil)

Awhile back, I was in the mood for pasta, but didn't quite feel like tomato sauce. What sounded good to me was pasta with olive oil, garlic, pepper, and cheese. Instead of just experimenting, I looked in my America's Test Kitchen cookbook and found this! Deeann was thrilled because she used to eat this dish when she was deployed with Italians! This is a deceptively simple pasta dish that has an incredible depth of flavor, and it doesn't take long to cook at all! This recipe will serve 2 hungry people. If you want to use a whole box (pound) of pasta, it is easy to double the recipe and should serve up to 5 adults, especially if you serve with bread and a salad!

INGREDIENTS:

3 Tablespoons Olive Oil, divided (1 ½ Tbsp. and 1 ½ Tbsp.)
1 ½ Tablespoons Minced Garlic, divided (1 Tbsp. and ½ Tbsp.)
½ teaspoon Salt
1 teaspoon Lemon Juice
¼ teaspoon Red Pepper Flakes*
1 ½ Tablespoons minced fresh Parsley or fresh Basil or ¾ teaspoon dried (optional)
Grated Parmesan or Asiago Cheese for serving
8 oz. Linguini or Spaghetti (1/2 box)

DIRECTIONS:

Bring 2 quarts of salted water to a boil in a large pot for the pasta.

Meanwhile, cook 1 ½ Tablespoons olive oil, 1 Tablespoon garlic, and ½ teaspoon salt in a nonstick skillet over low heat, stirring often, until the garlic foams and is sticky and straw-colored, about 10 minutes. Do not overcook the garlic or it will turn bitter and ruin your dish!

When the water is boiling, add pasta. Follow the manufacturer's directions for *al dente*. Reserve ¼ Cup of the pasta cooking water before you drain the pasta. Once drained, return pasta to the pot.

Stir in the Parsley/Basil, lemon juice, the remaining 1 ½ Tablespoons of olive oil, the remaining ½ Tablespoon raw garlic, and 1 Tablespoon of the reserved pasta water. Next, stir in the cooked garlic/oil mixture and toss to coat. Season with salt and black pepper to taste. If you find that your pasta has become bound or sticky, stir in some more of the reserved pasta liquid a Tablespoon at a time to loosen (it's far more effective than plain water!). Serve with grated Parmesan or Asiago.

* The heat in Red Pepper flakes diminishes over time! If yours are fresh, ¼ teaspoon should be plenty. If yours are older, you will probably want to add some extra.