

Spaghetti alla Nerano Recipe (Creamy Zucchini Pasta)

Servings: 4 | Prep Time: 15 minutes | Cook Time: 30 minutes | Total Time: 45 minutes

Ingredients

- 12 oz (350 g) spaghetti
- 1 1/2 lb (650-700 g) zucchini
- 5 oz (140-150 g) Provolone del Monaco cheese, finely grated
- 1 oz (30 g) Parmigiano Reggiano cheese, finely grated
- 1 garlic clove
- 10-12 fresh basil leaves, plus more for serving
- Extra virgin olive oil, as needed for frying
- Salt, to taste
- Freshly ground black pepper, to taste
- About 1 cup reserved pasta cooking water, as needed

Instructions

1. Slice the Zucchini

Wash and dry the zucchini. Using a sharp knife or mandoline, cut them into very thin rounds.

2. Fry the Zucchini

Heat a generous amount of extra virgin olive oil in a large skillet over medium heat. Fry the zucchini in batches so the pan is not overcrowded. Cook until tender and lightly golden. Transfer to a plate lined with paper towels, season lightly with salt, and add several torn basil leaves. Reserve a few zucchini slices for serving.

3. Cook the Spaghetti

Bring a large pot of salted water to a boil. Add the spaghetti and cook until very al dente, about 2 minutes less than the package instructions. Before draining, reserve at least 1 cup of pasta cooking water.

4. Prepare the Zucchini Sauce

In a large skillet, heat about 1 tablespoon of extra virgin olive oil. Add the whole garlic clove and gently saute for about 1 minute without letting it burn, then remove it. Add most of the fried zucchini and a small ladle of pasta water. Gently mash a few zucchini slices with a wooden spoon to help create the creamy texture.

5. Finish Cooking the Pasta

Transfer the very al dente spaghetti directly into the skillet with the zucchini. Toss continuously over low heat, adding small amounts of reserved pasta water as needed. Cook for about 1-2 minutes, until the spaghetti are al dente and the zucchini begin coating the pasta.

6. Add the Cheese

Remove the skillet from the heat. Gradually add the finely grated Provolone del Monaco and Parmigiano Reggiano, tossing continuously. Add reserved pasta water a tablespoon at a time until the cheese melts into a smooth, creamy sauce.

7. Finish and Serve

Add freshly ground black pepper and several fresh basil leaves. Toss once more. Divide among four plates and garnish with the reserved fried zucchini, additional basil, and a little extra grated Provolone del Monaco if desired. Serve immediately.