

Cacio e Pepe with Zucchini Blossoms (Cacio e Pepe con Fiori di Zucca)

Cooking Times + Servings

- **Prep Time:** 10 minutes
 - **Cook Time:** 12–15 minutes
 - **Total Time:** 25 minutes
 - **Servings:** 4
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Ingredients

- **3.2 oz (about 1 cup) mezze maniche pasta**
- **3.5 oz (about 1 cup finely grated) Pecorino Romano**, plus more for topping
- **10 zucchini blossoms**, cleaned and sliced into thin strips
- **Freshly ground black pepper**, to taste (be generous)
- **Extra-virgin olive oil**, for sautéing (about 3–4 Tbsp)
- **Salt**, to taste (for pasta water)

Note: This is a *small-batch* portion. If you want a fuller 4-serving pasta dinner, simply scale everything up (especially the pasta).

Instructions

1. **Boil the pasta.**
Bring a pot of water to a boil, salt it well, and cook the mezze maniche until **al dente**. Reserve **1–1½ cups** of pasta water before draining.
2. **Prep the zucchini blossoms.**
Gently clean them (remove the pistil/stamen inside if present), then slice into thin strips.
3. **Sauté blossoms + pepper.**
In a large skillet, warm a **generous drizzle of extra-virgin olive oil** over medium heat. Add zucchini blossoms and a **ladle of pasta water**. Season with **lots of freshly ground black pepper** and a pinch of salt.
4. **Soften the blossoms.**
Cook on **low heat for 3–4 minutes**, until tender and silky.
5. **Finish pasta in the pan.**
Add the drained pasta to the skillet while still al dente. Add a splash more pasta water and cook **3–4 minutes on medium heat**, stirring so the starch helps build the sauce.
6. **Make it creamy (off heat).**
Turn **off the heat**. Add **about 3.2 oz (90 g) grated Pecorino Romano** and toss vigorously,

adding a little pasta water as needed until it turns **creamy and glossy**.

7. **Serve.**

Plate immediately and top with **extra Pecorino Romano** and more **black pepper**.

Tips & Tricks (So It Never Clumps)

- **Turn off the heat before adding cheese.** Pecorino can seize and get stringy if the pan is too hot.
 - **Use finely grated cheese.** It melts faster and creates a smoother emulsion.
 - **Pasta water is your sauce.** Add it gradually—tablespoon by tablespoon—until it looks velvety.
 - **Pepper matters.** Freshly cracked black pepper is the “second sauce” in cacio e pepe.
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FAQ

Can I use another pasta shape?

Yes—rigatoni, spaghetti, tonnarelli, or mezze rigatoni all work great.

How do I clean zucchini blossoms quickly?

Gently open the flower, remove the inner pistil/stamen, and wipe with a damp paper towel. Avoid soaking them—they’re delicate.

Why did my cheese turn clumpy?

The pan was too hot or you added too little pasta water. Always **kill the heat** first and toss with small splashes of water until creamy.

Can I make it ahead?

Cacio e pepe is best **right away**. If it thickens, revive with a splash of hot pasta water while tossing.