

Bottega Caruso

Cavatelli Recipe

Serves 2–4 (as a starter/primi)

Popular in the south of Italy, this simple flour-and-water pasta, rolled by hand into curls, is a pasta I made often as a child with all the women of my family, and one that we still prepare and serve today at Bottega Caruso.

You don't need a pasta machine.

Ingredients

- 100g fine-milled semolina flour (*ideally semola rimacinata di grano duro*)
- good-quality extra-virgin olive oil, for drizzling
- a generous pinch of sea salt
- about 50ml boiled water, left to cool until tepid/room temperature

Method

Put the semolina flour in a bowl, add a generous drizzle of olive oil and the salt and start mixing, then add the water, a little at a time, mixing it into the flour with your hands – you may not need it all, or you may need more: as my grandmother says, 'it takes what it takes'. Keep mixing until the dough comes together, then transfer it to a board or clean work surface and knead it for about 10 minutes. If the dough is really too tough to knead, sprinkle over a little more tepid water and keep kneading well for 5–10 minutes the dough until smooth. Cover and leave to rest for 30 minutes or so.

Roll the dough out with a rolling pin to an even thickness of about 5mm (or pass the dough through a pasta machine at its widest setting (the first setting)). Cut long 1.5cm-thick strips from the sheet of dough, then cut each strip into short pieces about the width of three fingertips.

Press a piece of the dough on a wooden board under the ends of your three middle fingers, drawing your hand towards you and maintaining the pressure on the dough, so it curls in on itself as your fingers move back, then gently flick it away and repeat with the rest of the dough pieces. If you feel confident, try rolling them with both hands at the same time! (You can use just a two-fingertip measure for cutting the pasta and rolling it, if you prefer smaller shapes.) You can also use a ridged wooden board (gnocchi board) to make cavatelli rigati.

Keep the cavatelli spread out on a lightly floured board so they don't stick to each other – you can store them in the fridge for up to a day if you want to make them in advance.

Bring a large pan of water to a rolling boil and salt it generously. Add the cavatelli and cook for about 5 minutes until they rise to the surface of the water. Scoop them out with a slotted spoon and serve, reserving some of the pasta cooking water if you want to loosen a sauce to bring it together with the pasta.