

## Mastering Spaghetti Aglio e Olio: A Chef's Guide to Perfect Garlic Pasta

The Art of Simple: Mastering Authentic Spaghetti Aglio e Olio



**TIME**  
**10 min**

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### INGREDIENTS

**200 g (7 oz) Spaghetti:** Go for a high-quality bronze-die extruded pasta if possible; the rougher surface helps the sauce stick.

**4-5 Garlic Cloves:** Must be fresh and thinly sliced (not minced!) for the best texture.

**60 ml (... cup) Extra-Virgin Olive Oil:** Use the good stuff here; the flavor is the base of the dish.

**1/2-1 tsp Red Pepper Flakes:** Adjust based on your heat tolerance.

**1/4 cup Fresh Parsley:** Finely chopped. This adds the necessary brightness and "green" notes to cut through the fat.

**Reserved Pasta Water:** Approximately 1/2 cup. This is your secret weapon.

**Salt:** For the pasta water (it should taste like the sea).

**Optional:** Fresh lemon zest or a dusting of Pecorino Romano.

### DIRECTIONS

- 1. Boil the Pasta:** Bring a large pot of water to a rolling boil. Add enough salt so that the water tastes seasoned (aim for about 1% salinity). Drop your spaghetti and cook until just before al dente. **Critical Step:** Before draining, scoop out about 1/2 cup of the starchy pasta water.
- 2. Infuse the Oil:** While the pasta is boiling, place a wide skillet over medium-low heat. Add the extra-virgin olive oil and the sliced garlic. You want to "sweat" the garlic slowly. It should sizzle softly, turning a pale golden color. If the garlic turns dark brown or black, discard it and start over-bitter garlic will ruin the dish.
- 3. Add the Spice:** Once the garlic is fragrant and golden (about 90 seconds), stir in the red pepper flakes. Let them toast in the oil for about 10-15 seconds to release their oils and color.
- 4. Create the Emulsion:** Add the drained pasta directly into the skillet along with about 1/4 cup of the reserved pasta water. Increase the heat to medium and toss vigorously with tongs. The starch in the water and the olive oil will begin to marry, creating a creamy, glossy coating. Add more water if the pasta looks dry.
- 5. The Finishing Touches:** Remove the pan from the heat. Fold in the fresh parsley and a pinch of salt if needed. If you're feeling fancy, a quick grate of lemon zest provides a beautiful aromatic lift. Serve immediately while the sauce is at its peak silkiness.

## SWAPS & NOTES

Reserved Pasta Water: Approximately 1/2 cup.

Optional: Fresh lemon zest or a dusting of Pecorino Romano.

Salt: For the pasta water (it should taste like the sea).

Swaps and Notes The Pasta: While spaghetti is traditional, linguine or bucatini work beautifully.

### TIPS FOR SUCCESS

Don't Walk Away: Garlic can go from perfect to burnt in a matter of seconds.

Pan Choice: Use a large stainless steel or carbon steel skillet.

You need enough surface area to toss the pasta effectively.

The Water is Key: Never skip the pasta water.

**More recipes:** [ChefManiac.com](https://chefmaniac.com)

Original recipe: <https://chefmaniac.com/mastering-spaghetti-aglio-e-olio-a-chefs-guide-to-perfect-garlic-pasta/>