



Use Your Noodle

Traditional, fortified, or multigrain? How to pick the right pasta for every run **BY JOANNA SAYAGO GOLUB**

THE NIGHT BEFORE a long run or race, what's for dinner? That's easy: spaghetti. The runner's favorite food—traditionally made with just flour and water—is quick to prepare and loaded with carbs. But now there's a new generation of noodles featuring ingredi-

ents like lentils and flaxseeds, and grains like quinoa, kamut, brown rice, and corn. These pastas pack tons of health-boosting nutrients into every meal—and some even taste like the “real” thing. So should you add them to your diet?

Jackie Newgent, R.D., a New York City-

A NEW TWIST

No matter the shape, pasta makes a great high-carb, prerun meal.

based nutritionist, cooking instructor, and the author of *Big Green Cookbook*, thinks so. Many of these new pastas are based on whole grains, which are naturally rich sources of fiber, vitamins, and minerals. “Plus, having a wide range of options adds culinary excitement,” says Newgent. “They can make the diet of a pasta-loving runner more enjoyable.”

With so many options, choosing whether to boil up whole-wheat penne or multigrain fettuccine can be a challenge. This pasta primer will help you find one that matches your nutritional needs—and your personal taste.

SEMOLINA PASTA

WHAT'S IN IT → Traditional pasta is made with semolina, a type of refined durum wheat. “It's not the healthiest choice because refining removes the bulk of nutrients,” says Natalia Rusin, R.D., a culinary nutritionist who works at the New York City restaurant Rouge Tomato. “It loses most of the fiber and many vitamins and minerals.” So-called “white pasta” does have seven grams of protein per serving and 42 grams of easily digestible carbs. Jackie Dikos, R.D., a nutritionist and runner who competed in the 2008 Women's Olympic Marathon Trials, suggests runners eat white pasta the night before a race if stomach problems are a concern.

PERFECT PAIRING

Try Rusin's favorite simple tomato sauce: “Squeeze the seeds out of roma tomatoes. Blend the tomatoes with garlic, red pepper flakes, olive oil, and a bit of sugar and salt until smooth; simmer for half an hour.” →

When making sauce, consider the pasta's shape. Thin pasta (like spaghetti) goes with a thin sauce, like marinara. Thicker pasta goes with thicker sauce.

**EAT
BETTER**



WHOLE-WHEAT PASTA

WHAT'S IN IT → One hundred percent whole-wheat pasta has way more fiber than white (about seven grams per serving compared to just two grams in white) and about two more grams of protein. But whole-wheat pasta also has a denser, chewier texture. "A lot of people try it once and don't like it," says Newgent. "But different brands have different textures. You may just need to try another." Whole-wheat pasta is a good choice for runners trying to lose weight; while both white and whole-wheat varieties have about 200 calories per two-ounce serving of uncooked pasta, "the fiber in whole-wheat helps keep you feeling full," says Dikos.

PERFECT PAIRING "Whole-wheat pasta has a nutty flavor," says Newgent, "so serve it with a rich, nutty sauce—like pesto." Rusin uses Greek yogurt in her pesto. "It adds protein and a creamy flavor and then you need less olive oil," she says.

MULTIGRAIN PASTA

WHAT'S IN IT → Multigrain pastas aren't usually 100 percent whole-grain, but instead are often mixed with refined grains. "You get some whole-grain benefit," says Dikos, "but the white flour gives the pasta a lighter flavor." Multigrain pastas can introduce you to less common grains. "Kamut, a relative of wheat, is great in pasta and it's a nutritional powerhouse," says Dikos. "It has a similar amount of carbs as white pasta, but has 10 grams of protein per serving—more than any other wheat—and provides a little more zinc, magnesium, and vitamin E."

PERFECT PAIRING Rusin makes sauce from roasted vegetables, "which add a really deep flavor," she says. Season chopped tomatoes, carrots, onion, and

garlic with salt, red pepper, and olive oil. Spread in a pan and roast for an hour at 375°F, then puree in a blender.

FORTIFIED PASTA

WHAT'S IN IT → Nongrain ingredients—such as lentils, chickpeas, egg whites, and even flaxseeds—are usually mixed with a multigrain flour and help boost the pasta's fiber and protein content. Barilla Plus, for example, has four grams of fiber and 10 grams of protein. "These ingredients also typically give the pasta a lower glycemic index," says Rusin, "which helps keep your blood sugar at a steady level." Dikos particularly likes pasta fortified with flaxseeds. "A lot of people don't eat enough fish," she says, "so this is a good way to get omega-3 fatty acids into your diet."

PERFECT PAIRING Add small shapes, like elbow macaroni, to soup. For long pasta (like fettuccine), sauté shredded carrot, cabbage, onion, and garlic in olive

oil. Cook the pasta until almost done, then add to the vegetables, along with some pasta water. Cover, and finish cooking.

NONWHEAT PASTA

WHAT'S IN IT → Pasta made with non-wheat grains, such as corn and brown or white rice, are usually gluten-free. That's good news for those sensitive to the wheat protein, which (for a small number of people) causes serious digestive-health issues. These grains can add new flavors and textures to your diet. And corn and rice pastas generally have more carbs (about 43 to 46 grams) and less protein (three or four grams) than traditional pasta. "If you want the big carbo-load, they're a good choice," says Newgent.

PERFECT PAIRING "Make a coconut milk curry to go with rice noodles," says Rusin. "Corn pasta is sweeter and is great in Mexican-style lasagna made with cumin-seasoned ground turkey, diced bell pepper, and a spicy tomato sauce."

NEWS YOU CAN CONSUME

The latest research on foods that boost your running

Coffee helps lung function

HOW → The results of a study published in the June 2009 *American Journal of Epidemiology* show that people who drink four or more cups of coffee a day have better pulmonary function than those who rarely or never drink coffee.



Milk controls hunger

HOW → According to a study in the July 2009 *American Journal of Clinical Nutrition*, drinking fat-free milk (instead of a fruit drink) at breakfast significantly reduces the number of calories eaten at lunch and also leads to feeling more satisfied.



Beets improve exercise

HOW → Participants in a study drank 500 milliliters of beet juice or a placebo for six days and then completed a cycling test. The results, published in the August 2009 *Journal of Applied Physiology*, show that drinking beet juice can help you exercise 16 percent longer.



Apples boost endurance

HOW → A study in the June 2009 *International Journal of Sports Nutrition and Exercise Metabolism* reported that taking 1,000 mg of quercetin daily can increase endurance by 13 percent. Apples are among the best food sources.



AT THE 2008 ING NEW YORK CITY MARATHON PASTA PARTY, RUNNERS ATE 6,840 POUNDS OF PASTA AND 512 POUNDS OF CHEESE.