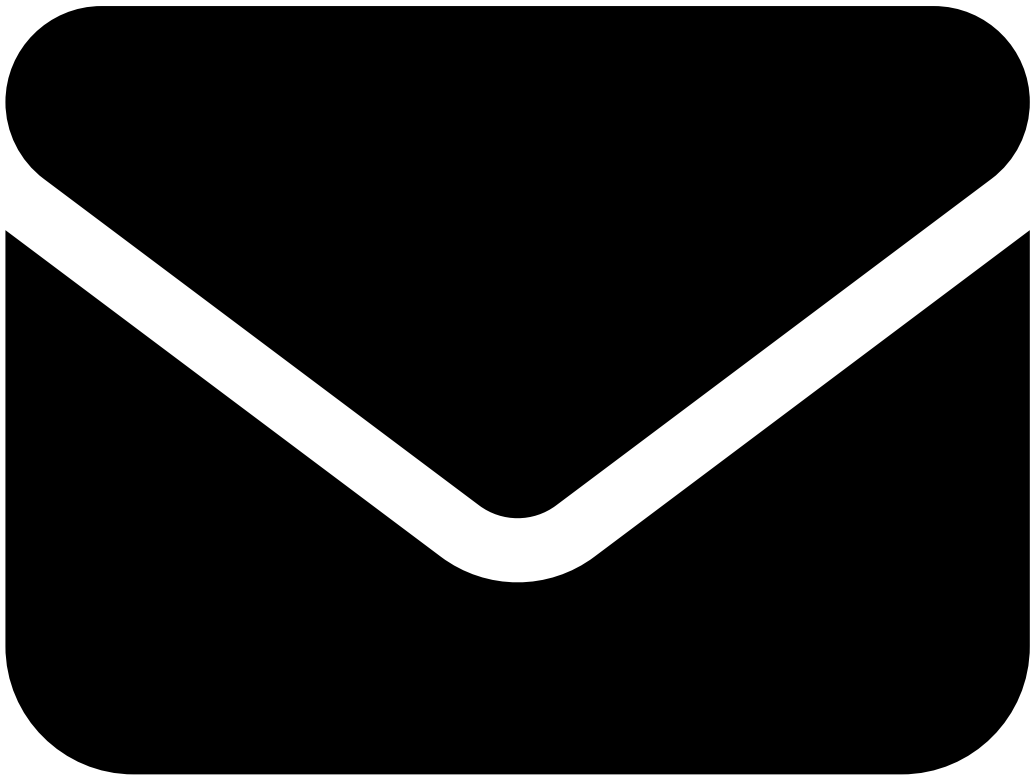


Italian Rigatoni with Silky Whipped Ricotta and Summer Vegetables

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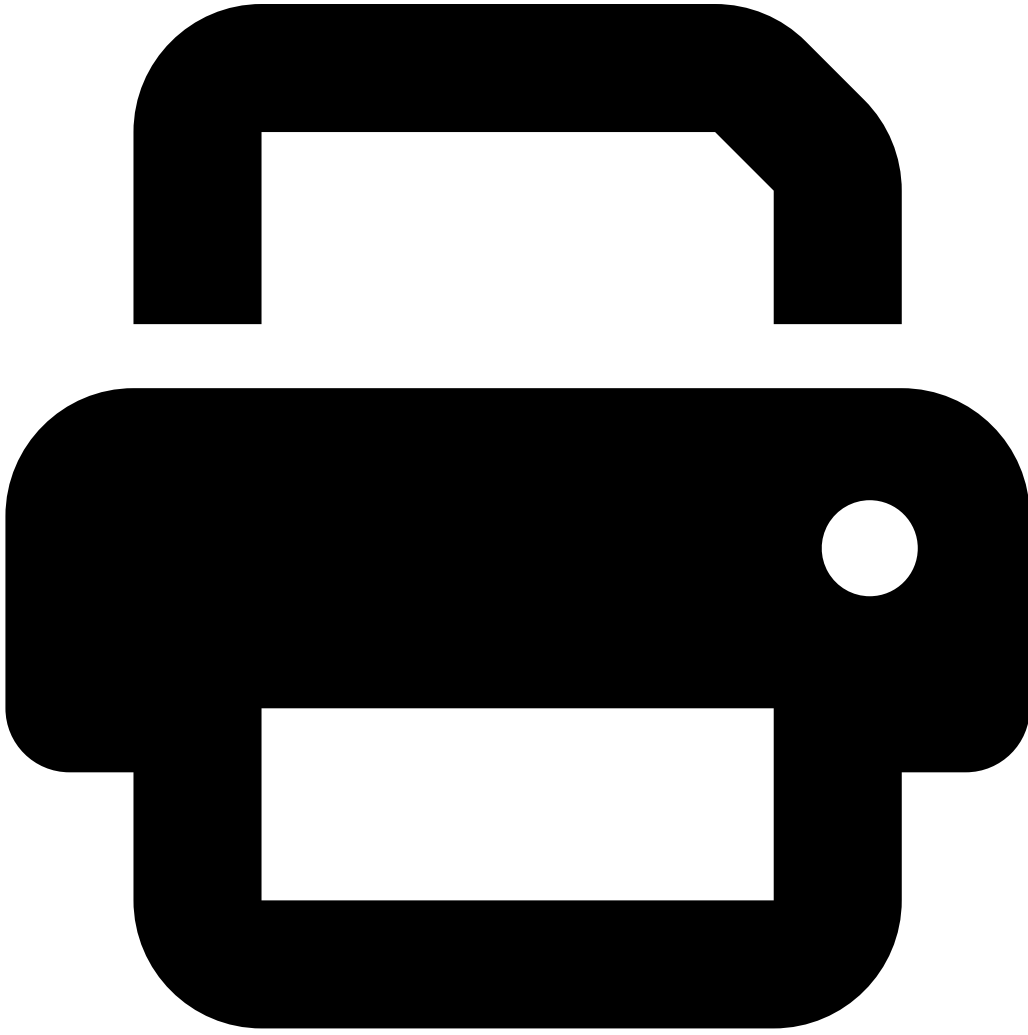
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This is the kind of pasta I make in the middle of summer when the garden is producing more zucchini and cherry tomatoes than I know what to do with.

Italian cooking has always been about making the most of what's fresh and in season. Some of the best meals come from looking at what's growing right now and letting a handful of simple ingredients shine.

For this recipe, sweet cherry tomatoes, tender zucchini, and fresh spinach are tossed with rigatoni and a silky whipped ricotta sauce. Instead of simply stirring the ricotta into the pasta, I blend it with Pecorino Romano and warm pasta water until it's completely smooth and creamy. The result is a light, velvety sauce that coats every piece of pasta while allowing the vegetables to remain the star of the dish.

Finished with fresh basil and a touch of lemon zest, this is

the kind of simple Italian-inspired dinner I find myself making on repeat all summer long.

Things to know about this Italian Italian Rigatoni with Silky Whipped Ricotta and Summer Vegetables

Tips for the Silkiest Ricotta Sauce

How to make ricotta silky smooth

If your ricotta is grainy, don't skip this step. Whisk it with warm pasta water until it becomes loose and creamy. For an ultra-smooth texture, you can even blend it for a few seconds. Whole milk ricotta works best because it naturally emulsifies better.

Prevent watery zucchini

Zucchini releases water as it cooks. To avoid a watery sauce:

- Sauté it over medium-high heat so moisture evaporates
- Don't salt it too early (this draws out extra water)
- Let it get lightly golden for better flavor

Why pasta water matters

The starch in pasta water is what turns ricotta from thick to silky. Add it gradually—it helps bind everything into a glossy sauce instead of a dry mixture.

Don't overheat the ricotta

Once the ricotta is added to the pasta, keep the heat low or off. High heat can cause it to tighten or separate instead of staying smooth and creamy.

Best pasta shapes to use

Short pasta like rigatoni, penne, or paccheri hold the sauce best. Long pasta like spaghetti also works, but short shapes give a more traditional Italian texture.

Variations

- Add peas for a spring version
- Add pancetta for a salty, savory twist
- Swap basil for mint for a fresher finish
- Add chili flakes for subtle heat

More Italian Recipes You'll Love

If you're into simple, seasonal Italian cooking like this zucchini pasta, here are a few more recipes from the blog that fit the same fresh, no-fuss style

- **Classic Zucchini Ricotta Pasta (Rustic Version)** – This is the simpler, more traditional home-style version where ricotta is gently stirred in instead of whipped.
- **Authentic pasta Portofino**– fresh tomatoes, basil pesto, and pasta for a simple summer classic
- **Sausage and Peppers Italian Skillet** – rustic, savory, and perfect for weeknight dinners or sandwiches
- **Baked Ricotta with Roasted Cherry Tomatoes** – warm, creamy ricotta topped with burst tomatoes and herbs

These are all built around the same idea—simple Italian ingredients, cooked at their peak, and kept beautifully uncomplicated.

Italian Rigatoni with Silky Whipped Ricotta and Summer Vegetables



This **Italian Rigatoni with Silky Whipped Ricotta and Summer Vegetables** is a fresh and flavorful pasta recipe made with zucchini, cherry tomatoes, spinach, and a velvety whipped ricotta sauce. Blended with Pecorino Romano and pasta water until smooth, the ricotta creates a light, creamy coating that perfectly complements the seasonal vegetables. Ready in about 30 minutes, it's an easy Italian-inspired dinner that's perfect for summer.

- 12 oz. rigatoni
- 2 medium zucchini, cut into half-moons
- 1 pint cherry tomatoes, halved
- 3 cups baby spinach
- 2 cups whole milk ricotta
- 1/2 cup Pecorino Romano, grated
- 2 gloves garlic minced
- 3 Tbsp extra virgin olive oil
- 1 Tbsp lemon zest
- 1- 1 1/2 cups reserved pasta water
- Salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste
- basil leaves for serving

1. Cook the pasta

Bring a large pot of generously salted water to a boil. Cook the rigatoni until al dente.

Reserve 2 cups of pasta water before draining.

2. Make the whipped ricotta sauce

In a tall container or measuring cup, combine the ricotta, Pecorino Romano, lemon zest, and $\frac{1}{4}$ cup warm pasta water.

Using an immersion blender, blend until completely smooth and creamy. Add additional pasta water as needed until the ricotta becomes silky and pourable.

3. Cook the vegetables

Heat 2 tablespoons olive oil in a large skillet over medium heat.

Add the zucchini and cook for 5–6 minutes until lightly golden and tender.

Add the cherry tomatoes and continue cooking for another 4–5 minutes until they begin to burst and release their juices.

Stir in the garlic and cook 1 minute longer

Add the spinach and cook until wilted, about 1–2 minutes.

Season with salt and pepper.

4. Combine

Add the drained rigatoni to the skillet.

Remove the pan from the heat and pour in the whipped ricotta sauce. Toss gently until the pasta is evenly coated, adding additional pasta water as needed to loosen the sauce.

5. **Finish and serve**

Taste and adjust seasoning with salt and black pepper.

Top with fresh basil, extra Pecorino Romano, and a drizzle of olive oil before serving.

Main Course

Italian

Italian vegetable pasta with ricotta sauce