

## BUCATINI ALLA MATRICIANA OR ALL'AMATRICIANA

PASTA, AMATRICE STYLE

The famous *all'amatriciana* treatment, which originates in Amatrice, near Rome, uses abundant *pancetta* or *prosciutto* as the meat. It is a simple and highly spiced preparation with black pepper and hot red pepper flakes. The dish is related to *pasta alla carbonara*, except that tomatoes replace the eggs; and as in that treatment, *all'amatriciana* employs grated cheese, though not as abundantly as the other. This is certainly among the most popular recipes, for its simplicity and excellence, so don't mess it up by adding extraneous ingredients or by trying to be original. Its classic simplicity is its strength. The substantial *bucatini*, with the hole down the middle, is the preferred pasta where this preparation originates.

Coarsely chop the onion. Cut the *pancetta* or *prosciutto* into cubes less than ½ inch thick. Place the oil and *pancetta* in a medium-sized saucepan over low heat and sauté for 15 minutes, or until all the fat has been rendered out and the meat is very crisp. If fresh tomatoes are used, cut them into pieces. Pass the canned or fresh tomatoes through a food mill, using the disc with the smallest holes, into a crockery or glass bowl. Use a slotted spoon to transfer the meat to a plate and set it aside until needed. Add the onion to the saucepan and sauté for 5 minutes, then add the tomatoes along with the red pepper flakes and salt and black pepper to taste. Simmer for 20 minutes, stirring every so often with a wooden spoon.

Bring a large pot of cold water to a boil, add coarse salt to taste, then add the pasta and cook until al dente, for 9 to 12 minutes depending on the brand. Transfer the sauce to a large skillet set over low heat. Drain the pasta, and add it to the skillet. Raise the heat, and add the reserved meat; sauté for 30 seconds. Remove the skillet from the heat, add the cheese, mix very well, and transfer the pasta to a warmed serving platter. Serve immediately.

### NOTE:

In Italy, the cured meat used for this dish is pork cheek (*guanciale*), not easily available elsewhere, rather than *pancetta* or *prosciutto*. The dish is a rare example of the combination of cheese and hot red pepper.

FROM LAZIO

SERVES 4 TO 6

1 medium-sized red onion,  
peeled  
8 ounces *pancetta* or  
*prosciutto*, in 1 piece  
3 tablespoons olive oil  
1 ½ pounds very ripe, fresh  
tomatoes; or 1 ½ pounds  
canned tomatoes,  
preferably imported  
Italian, drained  
½ teaspoon hot red pepper  
flakes  
Salt and freshly ground  
black pepper  
1 pound dried *bucatini*,  
*vermicelli*, or *spaghetti*,  
preferably imported  
Italian

TO COOK THE PASTA:

Coarse-grained salt

TO SERVE:

½ cup freshly grated  
*pecorino romano* or  
*Parmigiano* cheese