

PAPPARDELLE

Pappardelle is a wide, flat noodle, often used in the foods of Tuscany in northern Italy. You may not always find pappardelle in the supermarkets, but you can find it at Trader Joe's in Sacramento or Stockton. There I found some made with lemon and black pepper. The package had a recipe for cooking the noodles with shrimp, which turned out absolutely delicious. Here is *pappardelle di limon con gamberi*.

You'll need a pound of raw shrimp, peeled and deveined. Safeway was having a sale on just such shrimp last weekend, which made the prep time nothing at all. You'll also need a lemon, some olive oil, and some Italian or flat-leafed parsley.

The pappardelle comes in 8-ounce packages, which is what you need for this recipe. Cook the pappardelle according to the package instructions. While the pasta is cooking, heat three tablespoons of olive oil in a large frying pan over medium high heat. When the oil is hot, add the shrimp and sauté until the shrimp are just pink. Don't over cook the shrimp. Season with a little salt and some freshly ground black pepper.

Drain the pappardelle, saving about a half-cup of the cooking water. Add the cooked pappardelle to the shrimp, plus a couple of tablespoons of freshly-squeezed lemon juice, and 2-3 tablespoons of freshly chopped Italian parsley. Add some of the reserved pasta cooking liquid to keep it moist. Stir well and serve. This serves three, generously.

With this, I served a salad of sliced tomatoes, some sliced Italian buffalo mozzarella that I also got at Trader Joe's, (although you can often find real buffalo mozzarella at Andrae's Bakery in Amador City), with some shredded basil leaves and dressed with a little olive oil and balsamic vinegar and salt and pepper.

Pappardelle, being a fairly robust pasta, can often overwhelm the taste of more subtle sauces, which is why you often find it paired with sauces made with meat, such as rabbit or duck. Here's a vegetarian pappardelle recipe, for *pappardelle al finocchio*, that features fennel, a strong flavored vegetable.

Take two fennel bulbs, trim off the bruised outer leaves, cut them in half and then slice them thinly lengthwise. If you have any of the leaves, strip them and chop the feathery fennel leaves until you have about a tablespoon or so of finely chopped fennel leaves. Cook the half-pound package of plain pappardelle according to the instructions on the packet.

While the pappardelle is cooking, melt 4 tablespoons of unsalted butter in a large frying pan over medium-low heat. You can get unsalted butter at any supermarket, but I like to use Italian unsalted butter made from the same milk that Reggiano Parmigiana cheese is made, which I get at Andrae's bakery. It has a wonderful taste and richness.

Add the sliced fennel and about half a cup of water and simmer, covered, for about 15 minutes, until the fennel is tender. Add a cup of heavy cream and about half a teaspoon of freshly grated nutmeg and heat through, keeping it warm.

When the pappardelle is cooked, drain the pasta and put it in a large, warmed serving bowl. Add the fennel and cream mixture, some salt and freshly ground black pepper, and about 4 tablespoons of freshly grated or ground Parmesan cheese, and toss together. Sprinkle the chopped fennel leaves over the top for some color and serve immediately.

A word about Parmesan cheese. You can find good Parmesan cheese, either whole or grated, at any supermarket these days. Therefore there is simply no excuse for the stuff in the green tins. That's like using Parmesan-flavored sawdust. Try the real stuff—which is better if you grate it fresh for each use. A very fine or micro plane grater makes this easy. The first time I served some real freshly-grated Reggiano Parmigiana cheese to my guests at dinner, they proceeded to take turns eating the grated cheese out of the serving bowl until it was all gone. That gave me the idea of how good the real stuff is compared to the packaged and tinned. This is Steve Muni for the Hometown Kitchen.