

Spaghetti with Bottarga

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This is yet another recipe that is more than the sum of its simple parts, as the highest-quality ingredients are required. Mullet bottarga has a more mild flavor; it hails from Sardegna and the coast of Toscana. Tuna bottarga, which is more assertive and darker in color, is native to Sicilia and parts of Calabria.

Always purchase bottarga—pressed fish roe—in a whole piece and grate it yourself for best results. You may use either tuna bottarga or mullet bottarga. Mullet bottarga has a more mild flavor; it hails from Sardegna and the coast of Toscana. Tuna bottarga, which is more assertive and darker in color, is native to Sicilia and parts of Calabria. Bottarga will keep for about one year in the refrigerator after its vacuum packaging is opened (or its beeswax coating is removed). It has an outer membrane that needs to be removed before grating—simply peel back the membrane of the size chunk you think you'll need and leave the rest covered.

Recipe



Yield: 4 to 6 servings

¼ cup extra virgin olive oil
1 clove garlic
¼ teaspoon crushed red pepper flakes (optional)
½ cup fine breadcrumbs
2 tablespoons grated bottarga
Coarse sea salt for pasta cooking water
1 pound spaghetti
¼ cup minced fresh parsley

Bring a large pot of water to a boil.

Heat the olive oil in a large pan over medium-low heat. Add the garlic and red pepper flakes, if using, and cook, stirring frequently, until the garlic is golden. Remove and discard the garlic. Add the breadcrumbs to the pan and cook, stirring constantly to keep them from burning, until they are golden, about 3 minutes. Remove from the heat. Stir in the bottarga.

Meanwhile, once the water is boiling, add salt (keep in mind that the bottarga will be salty, so add a little less than usual), and then add the spaghetti. Cook, stirring frequently with a long-handled fork until spaghetti is al dente.

When the pasta is cooked, reserve about 1 cup cooking water, then drain the pasta in a colander. Transfer the pasta to the pan with the breadcrumb mixture. Toss vigorously over medium heat until combined, about 2 minutes. If the pasta looks dry, add some of the cooking water, 1 to 2 tablespoons at a time, and toss between additions until the consistency is saucier. Garnish with the minced parsley and serve immediately.

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