

Italy's Six Hundred Types of Pasta

Although international myths claim that **Marco Polo brought pasta to Italy** during the 13th century, Italians vehemently dispute this claim. They say frescoes in Etruscan tombs show rolling pins and dough. What's more, ancient Roman writers, such as Cicero and Apicius describe something akin to lasagna. Whatever the truth, the strings of pasta as we know them today came about in **Naples during the 1700's**.

At first, it was a dish eaten by the common people. The southern Mediterranean weather, including the light breezes from the sea and hot winds from Mt. Vesuvius allowed cooks to dry their pasta evenly on racks. It was eaten plain and with the hands.

Pasta was sold by the *maccaronari*, who fired up charcoal-stoked cauldrons along the streets. The sight of them was so popular that images of them were second only to images of Mt. Vesuvius.

Italian-language book called, *Pasta: Passione e Fantasia* by chef duo Antonio Chiodi Latini and Mario Busso, they say that pasta passed into the Court kitchen of King Ferdinand IV during the 1700's thanks to his Chamberlain. The word *spaghetti* comes from *spaghi*, meaning small strings. The Chamberlain had the idea of using a fork with four short points instead of the hands, making the dish royal enough to eat. The use of tomatoes then entered the court kitchen and the popularity of using sauces was also born.

Italians are also the largest innovators of the food; **over six-hundred types** exist, their varieties stuffed down several aisles of every Italian grocery store.

Latini and Busso divide pasta into **dried and fresh**. Dried pasta is popular because it can be stored for long periods of time. According to Italian law, dry pasta must be made with 100% durum semolina flour and water. Fresh pastas, on the other hand, must be eaten immediately. In the northern regions of Italy they often use all-purpose flour and eggs for their fresh pasta, while in the southern regions they use semolina and water without eggs.