



Pasta Power

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Did you know that Thomas Jefferson was the first person credited with introducing pasta to America in 1789? Pasta is a versatile pantry staple and often a family favorite. It sometimes has a reputation as being unhealthy. However, pasta provides many nutrients for our body including complex carbohydrates, dietary fiber, B vitamins including thiamine, riboflavin, niacin, and folate, and minerals including iron, magnesium, and selenium. Complex carbohydrates also provide essential energy for children as they grow at a rapid rate. Here are a few ideas for using pasta:

- Pasta pairs well with a variety of food groups including vegetables and herbs, beans, lean proteins, dairy based sauces, and even some fruits. Combining these nutrient-rich foods is exactly what MyPlate encourages us to do most often.
- MyPlate also recommends that half of our grains should be whole grains. Try incorporating whole-grain pasta into your family's favorite pasta dish. If your family is not used to eating whole grain pasta, consider starting the change gradually. Try doing half and half, refined grain and whole grain. Even small changes will add nutritional value to your meal.
- Pasta is also an easy way to sneak in vegetables for your picky eaters. Add spinach and shredded carrots to spaghetti sauce or broccoli and green beans to macaroni and cheese. Peas, tomatoes, and zucchini are other options for add-ins.



Fun Facts About Pasta:

- The word “pasta” comes from the Italian word for paste, meaning a combination of durum wheat semolina and water.
- There are more than 600 different pasta shapes made around the world.
- Pasta existed for thousands of years before anyone ever thought to put tomato sauce on it. One reason is that tomatoes were not grown in Europe until a Spanish explorer brought them back to Europe from Mexico in 1519.
- If Italians ate their average yearly amount of pasta in spaghetti shape (long thin pasta), they would eat enough pasta to wind around the earth 15,000 times!
- In 2018, the top 5 countries where pasta is consumed the most in the world are Italy, Tunisia, Venezuela, Greece, and Chile

Peanut Thai Ramen

2 packages oriental ramen noodles
2 cups oriental vegetables, frozen
¼ cup peanut butter
1/3 cup hot water
1/4 teaspoon red pepper flakes
1 teaspoon sugar



1. Wash hands with soap and water.
2. Set ramen seasoning packets aside.*
3. Bring 4 cups of water to a boil. Add noodles and frozen vegetables.
4. Cook for 3 minutes. Stir occasionally. Drain.
5. In a medium bowl, whisk together peanut butter, hot water, pepper flakes, and sugar. Add noodles and vegetables to the sauce. Toss.

Makes 6 servings. Each serving contains 206 calories, 10g fat, 382 mg sodium, 24 g carbohydrates 2 g fiber, protein 6g. *Do not use seasoning packets or for a lower sodium meal use 1 packet.

Sources:

1. ChooseMyPlate, USDA: <https://www.choosemyplate.gov>
2. International Pasta Association: <https://internationalpasta.org>

Check out more Food Fun for Young Children Newsletters at:

<http://go.unl.edu/chi>