Pasta alla Carbonara (Pasta with Egg, Guanciale, and Cheese)

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Pasta alla carbonara has humble roots in the Apennine hills of central Italy, not far from Roma. The dish was known as the shepherds' favorite as they roamed the hilly pastures following the movement of flocks, a practice known as transumanza, thanks to its simple, readily available ingredients: egg, guanciale, and cheese.

Yield: 6 servings

1 pound pasta, such as rigatoni
2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
½ pound diced guanciale
4 large eggs, at room temperature
1 cup freshly-grated Pecorino Romano
Kosher salt & freshly-ground black pepper

In a large sauté pan, heat the olive oil over medium heat and add in the diced guanciale. Let the guanciale render its fat until it becomes golden brown and crispy, and then remove from the pan and set aside.

In a mixing bowl, whisk together the eggs, cheese, and 1 teaspoon of freshly-ground black pepper. Set aside.

Bring a large pot of water to a boil and season with salt until as salty as the sea. Add the pasta to the pot, cook until al dente, then transfer the pasta to the large sauté pan set over medium heat. Add in the guanciale, and toss for a minute so that it is evenly incorporated and warmed through.

Remove the pan from the heat and add the egg and cheese mixture, tossing gently and thoroughly so that the pasta becomes evenly coated with the sauce. Divide among warmed serving bowls, and serve immediately.

Buon appetito!

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