

Nidi Di Rondine (Fresh Pasta Rolls with Ham, Cheese, Mushrooms, and Besciamella)



YIELD Serves 6

TIME 2¾ hours, plus 1 hour resting

Why This Recipe Works

Nidi di rondine—snug, crispy-topped pasta spirals filled with cheese, ham, and besciamella—is a speciality from the tiny republic of San Marino. Our recipe for Fresh Pasta Without a Machine makes this hearty, creamy baked pasta dish achievable even if you don't own any specialty equipment. For a pasta dough that could be easily rolled out by hand, we added five extra egg yolks and 5 teaspoons of olive oil. In addition, we incorporated an extended resting period to allow the gluten network to relax and developed a simple, effective rolling technique. We used besciamella sauce in two ways: In its original thick consistency, it held the fillings in place in our rolls; when dramatically thinned out, it provided hydration for our pasta as it baked in the covered skillet, removing the need for precooking before assembly. Chopped raw mushrooms, which are not always included in nidi di rondine, not only provided complementary flavor and texture in our version but also acted as spacers that prevented the rolls from being too tight (rolls that are too tight don't hydrate evenly). As the mushrooms baked, they shed moisture and shrank, hydrating the pasta further and leaving our rolls relaxed and graceful. A final flash under the broiler crisped the tops of the rolls.

Gather Your Ingredients

Pasta

Before You Begin

- * A large wooden cutting board, anchored with a board mat or a damp towel, is ideal for rolling out the dough because it provides a bit more grip than a smooth

- ☐ **1¾ cups** (8¾ ounces/248 grams) all-purpose flour
- ☐ **2** large eggs plus 5 large egg yolks
- ☐ **5** teaspoons extra-virgin olive oil

Besciamella

- ☐ **3** tablespoons unsalted butter
- ☐ ¼ cup all-purpose flour
- ☐ **1¼** teaspoons table salt
- ☐ ¼ teaspoon pepper
- ☐ ⅛ teaspoon ground nutmeg
- ☐ **3** cups milk, divided
- ☐ ½ cup water

Nidi

- ☐ **6** ounces fontina cheese, shredded (1½ cups), divided
- ☐ **6** ounces white mushrooms, trimmed and chopped, divided
- ☐ **6** ounces thinly sliced Black Forest ham, divided
- ☐ ¼ cup grated Parmesan cheese

counter. Though this pasta is designed to be rolled by hand, you can use a pasta machine if you have one.

Instructions

- 1. FOR THE PASTA:** Process flour, eggs and yolks, and oil in food processor until mixture forms cohesive dough that feels soft and is barely tacky to touch, about 30 seconds. (If dough sticks to your fingers, add up to ¼ cup flour, 1 tablespoon at a time, until barely tacky. If dough isn't cohesive, add up to 1 tablespoon water, 1 teaspoon at a time, until it just comes together; process 30 seconds longer.)
- 2.** Turn dough ball onto dry counter and knead until smooth, 1 to 2 minutes. Shape dough into 6-inch-long cylinder. Wrap in plastic wrap and let rest at room temperature for at least 1 hour or up to 4 hours. (Dough may be refrigerated for up to 24 hours.)
- 3. FOR THE BESCIAMELLA:** Melt butter in 10-inch broiler-safe skillet over medium heat. Add flour, salt, pepper, and nutmeg and cook, stirring constantly, until golden and fragrant, about 1 minute. Slowly whisk in 2 cups milk and bring to boil. Reduce heat to simmer. Cook, whisking occasionally, until sauce is thick and smooth, about 5 minutes.
- 4.** Transfer 1 cup besciamella to liquid measuring cup. Add water and remaining 1 cup milk to remaining besciamella in skillet and whisk until smooth. Set aside.
- 5.** Cut pasta dough crosswise into 4 equal pieces. Working with 1 piece of dough (rewrap remaining dough), dust with flour, place on clean counter, and press into 3-inch square. Using heavy rolling pin, roll into 6-inch square. Dust both sides of dough lightly with flour. Starting at center of square, roll dough away from you in 1 motion. Return rolling pin to center of dough and roll toward you in 1 motion. Repeat steps of rolling until dough sticks to counter and measures roughly 12 inches long. Lightly dust both sides of dough with flour and continue rolling dough until it measures roughly 20 inches long and 6 inches wide, frequently lifting dough to release it from counter. (You should be able to easily see outline of your fingers through dough.) If dough firmly sticks to counter and wrinkles when rolled out, dust dough lightly with flour. Transfer pasta sheet to dry kitchen towel. Repeat with remaining dough.

- 6. FOR THE NIDI:** Adjust oven rack to upper-middle position and heat oven to 375 degrees. Lay 2 pasta sheets on counter and trim short rounded sides of each sheet. Cut each sheet in half crosswise to create 4 rectangles. Arrange rectangles with short sides parallel to counter edge. Spread 2 tablespoons reserved thick besciamella over each sheet. Sprinkle evenly with half of fontina, followed by half of mushrooms. Lay half of ham over mushrooms, tearing slices to distribute evenly (ham will not completely cover surface). Starting at side nearest you, roll each pasta sheet into cylinder. Repeat with remaining pasta sheets, thick besciamella, fontina, mushrooms, and ham (do not wash measuring cup).
- 7.** Transfer 1 cup thin besciamella to now-empty measuring cup and set aside. Cut each roll crosswise into 3 equal pieces and transfer, cut side down, to skillet, nestling pieces together. Drizzle reserved besciamella over rolls. Spray sheet of aluminum foil with vegetable oil spray and cover pan tightly. Transfer to rimmed baking sheet and bake until pasta is cooked through and sauce is bubbling, about 1 hour.
- 8.** Remove sheet from oven and heat broiler. Remove foil and sprinkle evenly with Parmesan. Broil until tops of spirals are browned and crisp, 2 to 4 minutes. Let cool 10 minutes before serving.

Simplifying Nidi di Rondine

This baked pasta dish is undoubtedly a project—but we’ve made tweaks to each phase of the recipe to make the process simpler and more streamlined.



ROLL THE PASTA BY HAND

Extra egg yolks, olive oil, and an extended rest make this dough easy to roll out by hand.



MAKE ONE BESCIAMELLA—

A thick, smooth besciamella serves as a cohesive filling for the rolls.



—AND USE IT TWICE A

thinned-out version of the same sauce hydrates the pasta, so there's no need to parcook.



CREATE STURDIER ROLLS

Mushrooms make the rolls slightly wider, which keeps them from tipping over in the pan.



SERVE IN THE SKILLET

The dish can be assembled and served out of the same pan used to make the sauce.