

Creamy Chicken Pasta with Garlic & Parmesan

Creamy Chicken Pasta with Garlic & Parmesan is the perfect comfort food that combines juicy chicken, tender pasta, and a rich garlic-Parmesan sauce. It's indulgent yet easy to make, ready in about 35 minutes. With freshly grated Parmesan, cream, garlic, and Italian herbs, this recipe delivers restaurant-quality flavors at home. Whether it's a busy weeknight or a dinner with friends, this dish makes a hearty, satisfying meal that everyone will love.

Why Creamy Pasta Always Delivers

A Dish for All Occasions

Creamy pasta dishes strike a balance between cozy and elegant. The sauce clings beautifully to pasta, making every bite indulgent. Adding chicken turns it into a complete meal that satisfies appetites without needing complicated sides. Whether you're feeding family after work or entertaining friends, creamy chicken pasta always feels like the right choice. It's adaptable, impressive, and consistently delicious.

The Comfort Factor

What sets this dish apart is its ability to comfort. Garlic adds warmth, Parmesan offers nuttiness, and cream brings a velvety texture. The balance of flavors makes this pasta feel rich but not overwhelming. Each forkful delivers a satisfying mix of savory, creamy, and herby notes. It's the kind of recipe people request again and again because it feels indulgent yet approachable.

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- Author: [Aaron recipes](#)
- Total Time: [35 minutes](#)
- Yield: [4 servings 1x](#)

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Description

Creamy Chicken Pasta with Garlic & Parmesan combines juicy chicken, al dente pasta, and a velvety Parmesan-garlic sauce. A comforting, restaurant-quality meal ready in under 40 minutes.

Ingredients

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Scale 1x 2x 3x

- ☐ 2 boneless, skinless chicken breasts (cut into 1-inch cubes)
 - ☐ 1 lb fusilli, penne, or rotini pasta
 - ☐ 3 Tbsp unsalted butter
 - ☐ 4–5 cloves garlic, minced
 - ☐ 1 1/2 cups heavy cream
 - ☐ 1/2 cup chicken broth
 - ☐ 1 cup freshly grated Parmesan cheese
 - ☐ 1 tsp Italian seasoning (divided)
 - ☐ 1/4 tsp red pepper flakes (optional)
 - ☐ Salt and black pepper, to taste
 - ☐ 2 Tbsp fresh parsley, chopped
 - ☐ Cook Mode Prevent your screen from going dark
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Instructions

1. Cook pasta in salted water until al dente; reserve 1/2 cup pasta water and drain.
2. Season chicken with salt, pepper, and half the Italian seasoning. Sear in 1 Tbsp butter until golden and cooked through. Remove.
3. Melt remaining butter. Sauté garlic and red pepper flakes for 30–60 seconds.
4. Deglaze with chicken broth, then add cream and remaining seasoning. Simmer 2–3 minutes.
5. Whisk in Parmesan until smooth and creamy.

6. Return chicken to skillet, add pasta, and toss to coat.
7. Add pasta water as needed for silky sauce. Garnish with parsley and serve.

Notes

Always use freshly grated Parmesan for smooth melting.

Add a squeeze of lemon for brightness.

Swap some cream with white wine for depth.

Include spinach, broccoli, or mushrooms for nutrition.

Substitute chicken with shrimp, salmon, or tofu for variety.

- Prep Time: 10 minutes
- Cook Time: 25 minutes
- Category: Dinner
- Method: Stovetop
- Cuisine: Italian-American

Nutrition

- **Serving Size:** 1 plate
- **Calories:** 560
- **Sugar:** 3g
- **Sodium:** 680mg
- **Fat:** 26g
- **Saturated Fat:** 13g
- **Unsaturated Fat:** 12g
- **Trans Fat:** 0g
- **Carbohydrates:** 48g
- **Fiber:** 3g
- **Protein:** 38g
- **Cholesterol:** 135mg

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Ingredients That Make It Special

Pantry Staples with Flavor Power

The ingredient list is simple yet powerful. Chicken breasts provide lean protein. Fusilli, penne, or rotini pasta make the ideal base for the sauce. Garlic, butter, and chicken broth create aromatic layers. Heavy cream and Parmesan give richness and body. Italian seasoning ties it together, while parsley finishes with freshness. These ingredients, though common, work in harmony to produce an extraordinary dish.

Substitutions for Flexibility

This recipe is easy to adapt. Swap chicken thighs for juicier meat or shrimp for seafood lovers. Replace heavy cream with half-and-half for a lighter version. Use pecorino Romano instead of Parmesan for sharper flavor. Vegetables like spinach or mushrooms can be folded in for added nutrition. Adding chili flakes or hot sauce gives a gentle kick. These adjustments make it possible to keep the dish fresh every time you prepare it.

Cooking Pasta and Chicken

Getting the Pasta Right

Cooking pasta properly is essential. Use generously salted water to enhance flavor. Cook until al dente so the pasta maintains texture when tossed in sauce. Reserve about half a cup of pasta water before draining—it's the secret to adjusting sauce consistency. Pasta water's starch helps the sauce cling, ensuring each piece of pasta is coated evenly in creamy garlic-Parmesan goodness.

Perfectly Seared Chicken

Season the chicken with salt, pepper, and half the Italian seasoning. Heat butter in a skillet, then sear the chicken until golden and cooked through, about 3–4 minutes per side. This creates flavorful browned bits that later enhance the sauce. Once cooked, remove the chicken to rest before adding it back. Proper searing ensures juicy chicken that holds up beautifully in the creamy sauce.

Building the Garlic-Parmesan Sauce

Starting with Garlic and Butter

In the same skillet, melt butter and add garlic. Cook for 30–60 seconds, letting the fragrance release without burning. Add red pepper flakes if you like a touch of heat. Deglaze with chicken broth, scraping up all the browned bits from searing. This creates a savory base that deepens the sauce's flavor profile, proving that simple ingredients can build incredible depth.

Creating Creamy Perfection

Stir in heavy cream and the remaining Italian seasoning, letting it simmer for a few minutes to thicken slightly. Gradually whisk in Parmesan, ensuring a silky texture. Freshly grated Parmesan melts best, avoiding clumps. Taste and adjust salt and pepper. At this stage, the sauce should be smooth, creamy, and rich. It's ready to coat both the pasta and chicken, bringing all elements together.

Tossing Pasta and Chicken Together

Bringing Back the Chicken

Return the seared chicken and any juices to the skillet. Let it simmer briefly in the sauce so it absorbs flavor. This step ensures the chicken is fully coated in creamy garlic-Parmesan goodness. The combination of juicy meat and luscious sauce makes the dish satisfying and well-balanced, with no bland bites.

Adding Pasta to the Mix

Add drained pasta to the skillet, tossing gently to coat. Use reserved pasta water as needed to adjust the consistency until silky. The starch in the water helps the sauce cling, giving the dish a luxurious finish. Garnish with parsley for freshness. At this point, you have a pasta dish that feels indulgent but comes together in less than 40 minutes.

Serving Ideas

Classic Pairings

This creamy pasta works beautifully with garlic bread, which soaks up the extra sauce. A crisp Caesar salad balances richness with crunch. For vegetables, roasted broccoli, asparagus, or green beans make excellent choices. Together, these pairings turn the pasta into a complete and hearty dinner that satisfies everyone at the table.

Creative Twists

You can serve this pasta in unique ways too. Add roasted vegetables directly into the skillet for more color and nutrients. Bake leftovers topped with breadcrumbs for a pasta gratin. Or serve it alongside bold dishes like [Bang Bang Chicken Rice Bowl](#) for a fun mix of creamy and spicy flavors. These twists keep the recipe exciting, making it easy to enjoy often.

Tips for Best Results

Flavor Boosts

Always use freshly grated Parmesan for smooth melting and stronger flavor. Add lemon juice at the end to brighten the sauce or a splash of white wine during deglazing for depth. Season gradually, tasting as you go, to balance the richness. These small steps elevate the dish from good to restaurant-quality, showing how details matter in cooking.

Handling Leftovers

Store leftovers in an airtight container for up to three days. Reheat gently on the stovetop with a splash of cream or broth to loosen the sauce. Avoid microwaving, which can dry pasta and separate the sauce. While this dish doesn't freeze well, it's excellent for next-day meals. With proper reheating, the pasta remains creamy and flavorful even after storage.

Flavor Variations

Adding Vegetables

Vegetables make this dish heartier and more nutritious. Spinach wilts perfectly into the sauce, while mushrooms add earthiness. Broccoli brings crunch and color. Roasting vegetables first intensifies their flavor and makes the pasta even more delicious. Including vegetables turns this into a one-pan complete meal that feels balanced and wholesome.

Exploring Protein Options

Chicken is classic, but shrimp, salmon, or tofu work beautifully too. Shrimp adds sweetness, salmon provides richness, and tofu makes a vegetarian version that still soaks up the sauce. These variations keep the recipe versatile, ensuring it appeals to different diets and preferences while maintaining the creamy garlic-Parmesan foundation.

Frequently Asked Questions

Can I use pre-shredded Parmesan?

Pre-shredded Parmesan works in a pinch, but freshly grated is best. Pre-shredded varieties contain anti-caking agents that may create a grainy texture. Fresh Parmesan melts smoothly and delivers stronger flavor. Taking the time to grate cheese ensures the sauce turns out silky and indulgent.

How can I lighten the dish?

Swap heavy cream for half-and-half or whole milk for fewer calories. Reduce the butter slightly, or replace part of the cream with chicken broth. Add vegetables like spinach or broccoli to balance richness. These adjustments keep the dish satisfying while making it lighter, without losing its signature creamy garlic-Parmesan flavor.

Can I prepare this in advance?

Yes, but store the pasta and sauce separately. Reheat the sauce gently and toss with freshly cooked pasta before serving. This prevents the pasta from absorbing too much sauce and becoming dry. Prepping ahead makes it easier to serve quickly while keeping textures and flavors at their best.

What pasta shapes are best?

Twisted pastas like fusilli or rotini hold sauce well, while penne and rigatoni are also excellent. Their ridges capture creamy sauce, ensuring every bite is flavorful. Long pasta like fettuccine works too, but offers a different feel. Choosing pasta with texture gives the best results for this dish.

Can I add wine to the sauce?

Yes, white wine enhances depth and brightness. Replace 1/4 cup of cream with dry white wine when deglazing. Let it simmer to cook off alcohol before adding cream. The wine's acidity balances the richness of the sauce, making the pasta taste more sophisticated and well-rounded.

Conclusion

Creamy Chicken Pasta with Garlic & Parmesan is a dish that combines indulgence with simplicity. With tender chicken, al dente pasta, and a velvety garlic-Parmesan sauce, it's versatile enough for weeknights and impressive enough for entertaining. By adjusting ingredients and experimenting with variations, you can make it your own while keeping the creamy, comforting essence. This recipe proves that homemade pasta can feel both cozy and gourmet, ensuring it becomes a regular favorite at your table.

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