

Easy Italian Broccoli Pasta: Your Go-To Simple Weeknight Meal

Forget complicated recipes on busy evenings. This **Easy Italian Broccoli Pasta** is the simple weeknight meal your family has been craving. It's a rustic, hearty, and incredibly flavorful dish that comes together in about 30 minutes, relying on pantry staples and one powerhouse ingredient: Italian sausage. This recipe is the definition of "less is more," creating a robust, savory sauce by layering flavors in a single skillet. It's the perfect back-pocket recipe for those nights when you need a satisfying dinner on the table fast.

The Heart of the Dish: Italian Sausage

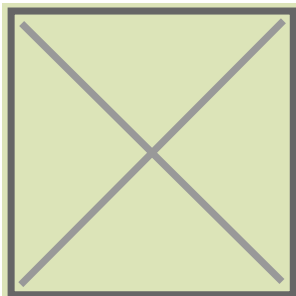
The secret to this simple weeknight meal is using Italian sausage. It's a multi-purpose ingredient that provides the protein, the fat, and the primary seasoning all in one. As the sausage browns, it releases its fat, which is packed with flavors like fennel, garlic, and paprika. This rendered fat becomes the base for building the entire sauce, infusing the broccoli and onions with its savory essence.

Hot, Mild, or Sweet: Choosing Your Sausage

You can completely control the flavor profile of this dish by choosing your sausage. Hot Italian sausage will lend a wonderful, spicy kick that permeates the whole dish. Mild or sweet Italian sausage will create a more savory, fennel-forward flavor that is very kid-friendly. You can also use chicken or turkey sausage for a lighter, though less traditional, version.

The Rendered Fat: A Flavor Secret

Don't you dare drain that fat! After browning your sausage (removed from its casing), you'll have a few tablespoons of flavorful rendered fat in the skillet. This is not grease; this is flavor. You'll use this fat to sauté your onions and broccoli, ensuring that every single component of the dish is infused with that deep, savory sausage flavor from the very beginning.



Easy Italian Broccoli Pasta: Your Go-To Simple Weeknight Meal

No reviews

- Author: [Aaron recipes](#)
- Total Time: [30 minutes](#)
- Yield: [6 servings](#) [1x](#)

[Print Recipe](#)

[Pin Recipe](#)

Description

This Easy Italian Broccoli Pasta is the perfect simple weeknight meal. It's a 30-minute, one-skillet sauce recipe featuring savory Italian sausage, tender broccoli, and a light, flavorful garlic and broth sauce.

Ingredients

Copy to clipboard

Scale [1x](#) [2x](#) [3x](#)

☐ 1 lb Pasta (Penne or Farfalle) 1 tbsp Olive Oil 1 lb Italian Sausage (mild, sweet, or hot), casings removed 1 medium Yellow Onion, diced 5 cloves Garlic, minced 1/4 tsp Red Pepper Flakes 1 large head Broccoli, cut into small florets 1 cup Chicken Broth 1/2 cup Grated Parmesan Cheese Salt and Black Pepper to taste

☐ Cook Mode Prevent your screen from going dark

Instructions

1. Bring a large pot of salted water to a boil. Cook pasta according to package directions until al dente. Reserve 1 cup of pasta water before draining. 2. While pasta cooks, heat olive oil in a large, deep skillet over medium-high heat. Add the Italian sausage (casings removed). Cook, breaking it apart with a spoon, until browned and cooked through, about 5-7 minutes. 3. Do not drain the fat. Add the diced onion to the skillet with the sausage fat. Sauté for 3-4 minutes until softened. 4. Add the minced garlic and red pepper flakes. Cook for 1 more minute until fragrant. 5. Add the broccoli florets and the chicken broth. Stir to combine. 6. Bring the broth to a simmer, then cover the skillet. Let the broccoli steam for 3-5 minutes, until tender-crisp. 7. Uncover the skillet. Add the cooked, drained pasta to the skillet along with the grated Parmesan and 1/2 cup of the reserved pasta water. 8. Stir everything together vigorously for 1-2 minutes, allowing the sauce to thicken and coat the pasta. If it seems dry, add more pasta water. 9. Season with salt and pepper to taste. Serve immediately.

Notes

Sausage: Use hot, mild, or sweet Italian sausage based on your preference. If using leaner chicken sausage, you may need to add an extra tablespoon of olive oil. **Broccoli:** Don't overcook the broccoli! You want it to be bright green and tender-crisp, not mushy. **Pasta Water:** The starchy pasta water is key to creating a glossy sauce that clings to the pasta, rather than a watery one.

- Prep Time: 10 minutes
- Cook Time: 20 minutes
- Category: Main Course
- Method: One-Pan
- Cuisine: Italian-American

Nutrition

- **Serving Size:** 1.5 cups
- **Calories:** 530
- **Sugar:** 4g
- **Sodium:** 700mg
- **Fat:** 26g
- **Saturated Fat:** 9g
- **Unsaturated Fat:** 17g
- **Trans Fat:** 0g
- **Carbohydrates:** 48g
- **Fiber:** 6g
- **Protein:** 25g
- **Cholesterol:** 55mg

Did you make this recipe?

Share a photo and tag us-we can't wait to see what you've made!

Building a Classic Italian-American Base

This **Easy Italian Broccoli Pasta** relies on a classic Italian-American flavor foundation. It's simple, aromatic, and creates a sauce that tastes like it has been simmering for hours, even though it comes together in minutes.

The Holy Trinity: Onion, Garlic, and Red Pepper

After cooking the sausage, the next layer is the aromatics. Sautéing a diced onion in the sausage fat builds a sweet, savory foundation. Minced garlic and a pinch of red pepper flakes are added for just a minute until fragrant, providing that classic punch of flavor and a gentle background heat that balances the richness of the sausage.

Why Chicken Broth is Better Than Water

Instead of just water, this recipe uses chicken broth (or vegetable broth) to steam the broccoli and form the sauce.¹² This adds another layer of savory depth. As the broth similes, it deglazes the pan, lifting all the browned bits of sausage and onion, and then reduces slightly, concentrating its flavor and mingling with the garlic and spices.

Perfecting the Broccoli

The goal for the broccoli in this dish is “tender-crisp.” You want it to be cooked through and flavorful, but not mushy or grey. This recipe uses a simple and effective technique to achieve that perfect texture every time.

The Sauté-and-Steam Technique

You'll add your small broccoli florets to the skillet right after the onions have softened. Let them sauté for a minute or two, tossing them in the flavorful fat. This helps them absorb all those good flavors. Then, you'll pour in the chicken broth and cover the pan. This traps the steam, which quickly and gently cooks the broccoli in just 3-5 minutes.

How to Avoid Mushy Broccoli

The key is timing. Don't cover the pan and walk away. Check the broccoli after 3 minutes. You want it to be bright green and easily pierced with a fork, but still have a slight bite. Remember, it will continue to cook a little bit more when you add the hot pasta, so it's better to err on the side of slightly undercooked.

Your Step-by-Step Weeknight Game Plan

The beauty of this **Easy Italian Broccoli Pasta** is that you can make the entire sauce in the time it takes to boil the water and cook the pasta. This is all about multitasking for a 30-minute finish.

Multitasking: Cooking Pasta and Sauce

Get your large pot of salted water on to boil *first*. While you're waiting for it to boil, you can brown your sausage, dice your onion, and mince your garlic. Once the pasta is in the water, you can start cooking the sauce in your skillet. By the time the pasta is al dente, your sauce will be ready and waiting. This is a great workflow for any pasta night, whether you're making this or our quick [cowboy pasta salad](#).

Bringing It All Together with Pasta Water

Once the broccoli is tender, return the sausage to the skillet. Use a spider or slotted spoon to transfer your cooked pasta directly from its water into the skillet. Add a generous handful of grated Parmesan and a half-cup of that starchy pasta water. Stir everything vigorously. The pasta water, cheese, and broth will combine to create a light, glossy sauce that coats every single piece.

Ingredient Swaps and Variations

This simple weeknight meal is incredibly flexible. You can easily swap ingredients based on what you have in your fridge, making it a true go-to recipe.

Making It Vegetarian

This dish is easily made vegetarian. Simply omit the sausage and start by sautéing the onion in 2 tablespoons of olive oil. To replace the hearty, savory flavor of the sausage, add a can of drained and rinsed cannellini beans or chickpeas to the skillet along with the pasta. You may also want to add a dash of fennel seed with the garlic to mimic the sausage flavor.

Different Greens to Try

This recipe is a great way to use up other greens. If you have a bag of spinach or kale, you can throw a few large handfuls into the skillet at the very end. They will wilt down in the residual heat in just a minute or two, adding even more nutrients and color to your final dish.

Variation	Key Change	Flavor Impact
Vegetarian	Swap sausage for 1 can white beans + 1/2 tsp fennel	Lighter, herby, and still hearty
Creamy Version	Add 1/2 cup heavy cream with the Parmesan	Richer, more decadent, and less brothy
Spicy Arrabbiata	Use hot sausage + 1 tsp red pepper flakes	Fiery, bold, and assertive
Lighter Fare	Use ground chicken or turkey sausage	Less rich, but still savory

Frequently Asked Questions

Question 1? Can I use chicken sausage instead of pork?

Answer: Yes, absolutely. Chicken or turkey sausage works very well. Be aware that most poultry sausage is much leaner, so it won’t render as much fat. You will likely need to add a tablespoon or two of olive oil to the pan before sautéing your onion.

Question 2? My kids don’t like broccoli. What can I substitute?

Answer: This recipe is very adaptable. You can substitute the broccoli with other quick-cooking vegetables. Green beans (trimmed), asparagus (cut into 1-inch pieces), or sliced zucchini and yellow squash all work beautifully. Just adjust the “steam” time as needed.

Question 3? What does “removed from its casing” mean for the sausage?

Answer: This means you are using the sausage as “ground meat” rather than in links. If you buy sausage links, simply take a small knife, slice open the thin casing (the skin), and peel it off. Then, you can add the ground sausage meat directly to the pan and break it up with a spoon as it cooks.

Conclusion

This **Easy Italian Broccoli Pasta** proves that a simple weeknight meal can be packed with robust, satisfying flavor. It’s a 30-minute marvel that leverages the power of Italian sausage and classic aromatics to create a dish that tastes like it was an all-day affair. It’s hearty, comforting, and

endlessly adaptable. This is the kind of recipe that doesn't just feed your family on a busy night; it makes them happy. It is destined to become a permanent fixture in your dinner rotation.

Generated by Aaron Recipes