



# 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 nutrients for our body including complex carbohydrates, dietary fiber, B vitamins including thiamine, riboflavin, niacin, and folate, and minerals including iron, magnesium, and selenium. Here are 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 fruits. Combining these nutrient-rich foods is exactly what MyPlate encourages us to do most often.
- MyPlate 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.
- Pasta is also an easy way to sneak in vegetables for your challenging 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.

## Peanut Thai Ramen

2 packages ramen noodles, any flavor  
2 cups stir-fry vegetables, frozen  
¼ cup peanut butter  
⅓ cup hot water  
¼ 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. Cook for 3 minutes. Stir occasionally. Drain.
4. In a medium bowl, whisk together peanut butter, hot water, pepper flakes, and sugar. Add noodles and vegetables to the sauce. Toss. Store leftovers in a sealed container in the refrigerator for up to four days. Makes 6 servings. Each serving contains 180 calories, 7g fat, 260mg sodium, 25g carbohydrates, 2g fiber, protein 6g. \*Do not use seasoning packets for a lower sodium meal or use only 1 packet.

*This article has been peer reviewed and was updated in 2025. For more information check out the Food Fun for Young Children website at: <http://go.unl.edu/food-fun>*

## 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.
- 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!

## Sources:

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