

Bucatini with Cauliflower, Pine Nuts, and Raisins **BRAIN HEALTH KITCHEN** recipe by Fabrizia Lanza



Pasta, for me, is the ultimate comfort food. And since this recipe is so evocative of the Sicilian food I grew up with, it is like a double dose of comfort that also happens to be brain-healthy.

Bucatini is one of the favorite pastas of Sicily, and it is the obvious choice to accompany this rich, slowly cooked cauliflower sauce. Pine nuts and dried raisins are classic Sicilian ingredients, but other nuts (walnuts and pistachios) and dried fruit (currants or wild blueberries) are other brain-healthy options.

Recipe excerpted from *The Food of Italy* by Fabrizia Lanza, @Artisan Books, 2023.
Photography by Guy Ambrosino.

Serves 4 to 6

For the sauce

Fine sea salt

1 head cauliflower (about 2 pounds/900 g), cut into bite-size florets

1 medium red onion, chopped

⅓ cup (80 ml) olive oil

3 oil-packed anchovy fillets

3 tablespoons pine nuts

3 tablespoons raisins, soaked in hot water for 5 minutes

1 tablespoon estratto (sun-dried tomato paste) or other good-quality tomato paste

1 cup (240 ml) white wine

Freshly ground black pepper

For the toasted bread crumbs

½ cup (60 g) plain dried bread crumbs

1 tablespoon olive oil

1 tablespoon finely chopped fresh flat-leaf parsley

For assembly

1 pound (450 g) dried bucatini or other long pasta

Make the sauce: Bring a large pot of salted water to a boil. Add the cauliflower and cook until tender when poked with a fork, about 10 minutes. Use a slotted spoon to transfer the cauliflower to a colander. Reserve 2 cups (480 ml) of the cooking water. (Keep the pot with the remaining water to cook the pasta, adding more water if needed.)

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In a large skillet, sauté the onion in the olive oil over medium heat until very light golden, 2 to 3 minutes. Add the anchovies, mashing them with a wooden spoon, then stir in the pine nuts, raisins, and cooked cauliflower.

Dissolve the estratto in the wine, then pour the mixture into the pan along with the reserved 2 cups of cauliflower cooking water. Simmer gently until the cauliflower is falling-apart tender, 30 to 40 minutes. Season to taste with salt and pepper. Keep warm over very low heat.

Meanwhile, make the toasted bread crumbs: In a small skillet, cook the bread crumbs in the olive oil over medium heat, stirring constantly, until well toasted, about 3 minutes. Remove from the heat and stir in the parsley.

Assemble the dish: Return the pot of salted water to a boil. Add the bucatini and cook until al dente. Reserving 2 cups (480 ml) of the cooking water, drain the pasta in a colander. Transfer the pasta to the pan of cauliflower. Toss gently to coat the pasta in the sauce, adding a little cooking water if needed.

Scatter the toasted bread crumbs on top and serve at once.