



LIFE

## The perfect slow-simmered, red sauce to hold together any dish

by MEG WALKER | 11 JUNE 2018



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**T**his is a Sarno staple that brings me back to my childhood. We pull it out whenever we need a quick meal. With garlic bread, salad, and a bottle of red, it's the perfect go-to dinner on weeknights. I could eat it five days a week. – *Chad Sarno*

Our nana was a second-generation Italian American who lived in Billerica, Massachusetts. Whenever you walked through her door, the aromas of this red sauce filled your nose with anticipation. Every time, no matter what time of day. She could be making meatballs, sausages, lasagna, or manicotti. Anyway, this sauce was the gravy, the glue that held everything together – sometimes, it held the family together, too! It's a simple sauce, but you can't just throw everything in a pot. That would make a stew or a fresh pomodoro sauce. To make this classic, slow-simmered red sauce, you have to build layers of flavour one by one. Follow these steps and you'll always have a great sauce to hold together whatever dish you are making.

### Serves 4

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## Ingredients

Nana Sarno's Red Sauce (see below)

sea salt

450g of your favourite dried spaghetti or spaghettini

chilli flakes, optional

chopped, fresh basil, optional

plant-based Parmesan or nutritional yeast, optional

For Nana Sarno's Red Sauce (makes about 1.75 litres)

everyday olive oil

1 white onion, diced small

2 large cloves garlic, minced

1 red bell pepper, diced small

1½ tsp minced fresh oregano

sea salt and freshly ground black pepper

2 tins San Marzano tomatoes, drained

170g tomato purée

about ¼ tsp organic cane sugar, optional (see Pro Tips)

large handful of basil leaves, torn

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## Method

Heat a large saucepan over medium-high heat. Add enough oil to cover the bottom of the pot. Sauté the onions in the oil until they look golden around the edges, about 4 minutes. Add the garlic, bell pepper, and oregano. Sprinkle with a little salt and pepper, then sauté until the peppers are soft, about 5 minutes.

Use your hands to pinch and pull out the tinned tomatoes' cores, then crush the tomatoes right into the pot. Add the tomato purée and sugar. Add 700ml water to the pan, and stir until incorporated. Simmer the sauce uncovered over low heat for 1 to 1½ hours, stirring now and then to prevent burning. Use a hand blender in the pot to purée the sauce.

Return the sauce to low heat and simmer until the flavours blend, an additional 1 to 1½ hours. Taste the sauce, and add salt, pepper, and sugar until it tastes good to you. Remove from the heat and stir in the basil.

Be sure that Nana's sauce is in a pot on the stove on low heat. Bring 460 litres of water to a boil in a large pot. Season the water with 2 tbsp salt. (A large pot with plenty of water helps to keep the pasta from sticking, and the salt helps season the pasta and create a chewy yet tender al dente texture.) Add the pasta to the water, fanning it out. Give it a stir, then return the water to a boil and cook until the pasta is tender yet chewy when you bite into a piece, 8 to 10 minutes. Stir occasionally with tongs to prevent sticking. Strain in a colander. The sauce will cling to the pasta better if you don't rinse it.

There are two ways to serve spaghetti: Mix the pasta into the sauce in the pan, then transfer to a pasta bowl; or put the pasta in a bowl and pour the sauce on top. Most chefs like the former because you can meld the pasta and sauce together over low heat. But my kids pour their sauce on top because they don't like too much sauce. I'm not going to argue with them. Finish with a sprinkle of chilli flakes, basil, and

some plant-based Parmesan or nutritional yeast.

### Pro tips

**Cheater chopping** Pulse the onion in a food processor. While it's sautéing, pulse the garlic and bell pepper as well. Then chop the tinned tomatoes the same way.

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**Nana used fresh tomatoes whenever possible** To do that, peel, seed, and chop 6 pounds fresh San Marzano tomatoes and use instead of the tinned.

**If your tomatoes are sweet enough, you will not need the pinch of sugar** Alternatively, you could get a little sweetness by adding 25g finely shredded carrot when sautéing the onions.

**the WICKED HEALTHY** cookbook



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CHAD SARNO, DEREK SARNO AND DAVID JOACHIM  
FOREWORD BY WOODY HARRELSON

Extracted from *The Wicked Healthy Cookbook* by Chad Sarno, Derek Sarno, and David Joachim (Sphere, approx €23). Photograph by Eva Kosmas Flores. Copyright © 2018 by Chad Sarno and Derek Sarno.

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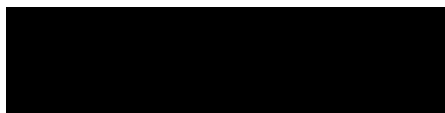
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