**BLT Pasta**

Serves 4

Hands-on 25 minutes Total 35 minutes

If you are looking to whip up a rich pasta awash in flavor, one that gives you the sense of being especially indulgent yet you want to avoid both cream sauce and lots of preparation—you have found the perfect recipe. One day when I found myself considering Tom’s and my dinner plans, I looked in the fridge and found bacon, arugula, and fresh basil. I already had tomatoes in a bowl on the counter. And I thought, “Wait a minute. This is a BLT. What if I put it all together?” I did, and the result was a splendidly tender pasta with a lightly acidic tomato-wine sauce that went perfectly with the smoky bacon. With the peppery kick of the arugula, it really was a BLT. You don’t want to overlook the basil, either. For the nuance of its sweetness, pluck it from your garden or pick it up that day at the grocery store. This serves very simply from a large bowl and is enjoyable year-round, especially with a glass of wine.

12 cups water

¼ cup plus 1/2 teaspoon kosher salt

2 pounds plum tomatoes (about 10 tomatoes)

6 thick-cut bacon slices, chopped

1 medium yellow onion, halved and thinly sliced

1/2 cup dry white wine

1/4 teaspoon black pepper

1⁄8 teaspoon crushed red pepper

12 ounces uncooked spaghetti

4 cups fresh baby arugula

1/4 cup chopped fresh basil

Grated fresh Parmesan cheese

Bring the water and 1/4 cup of the salt to a boil in a large saucepan over high. Hull the stems from the tomatoes. Cut a shallow “x” through the skin on the bottom of each tomato.

Place the tomatoes in the boiling water, and boil about 30 seconds. Using a slotted spoon, remove the tomatoes, and submerge in a bowl of ice water to stop the cooking process. Reserve the salted water in the saucepan.

When the tomatoes are cool enough to handle, peel back the skin using a paring knife. Cut the tomatoes in half lengthwise; squeeze out and discard the seeds. Chop the tomatoes into 1/2-inch pieces.

Place the bacon in a cold large skillet; cook over medium, stirring occasionally, until crisp, 10 to 13 minutes. Drain the bacon on a paper towel-lined plate. Reserve 2 tablespoons drippings in the skillet.

Add the onion to the hot drippings in the skillet; cook over medium, stirring occasionally, until soft and lightly golden, about 10 minutes. Add the wine; cook until the liquid is reduced by half, about 3 minutes. Add the chopped tomatoes, black pepper, crushed red pepper, and remaining 1/2 teaspoon salt to the skillet; cook, stirring occasionally, until the tomatoes begin to break down, about 5 minutes.

Return the reserved salted water in the saucepan to a boil; add the spaghetti, and cook until al dente, about 10 minutes. Drain the pasta, reserving 1 cup of the cooking water. Add the pasta and 1/4 cup of the reserved cooking water to the tomato mixture in the skillet; toss to coat. Add more cooking water, if necessary, until the mixture reaches the desired consistency. Transfer to a large bowl; toss with arugula and half of the chopped bacon. Divide evenly among 4 serving bowls; top evenly with the basil, remaining chopped bacon, and Parmesan.

**Variation:** This is easily adaptable to whatever you have on hand, like spinach and linguine instead of the arugula and spaghetti.

**Cooking Tip:** This is another time I like to sauté my bacon instead of using the oven. All those yummy hot bacon drippings.