



13 Ways to Make Any Jarred Pasta Sauce Better

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There are all kinds of easy ways to personalize prepared pasta sauce and turn it into something that tastes special. We've put together 13 make-it-better tips that will punch up the flavors and textures of a basic jarred tomato sauce in the time it takes to cook the noodles.

Note: All quantities are given for a 24/25-oz. jar of prepared marinara or other pasta sauce.

1. Start with the right pasta and sauce

You may already have a favorite jarred pasta sauce, but if you don't, choose a brand that is oil-free and low in sodium like [Delallo Fat-Free Marinara Sauce](#) or [Whole Foods 365 Fat-Free Marinara](#). (Tip: When it comes to finding high-quality whole grain pastas, we've done the work for you in our [Healthy Pasta Taste Test](#).)

2. Season with dried herbs

Classic Italian herbs like basil and oregano taste pretty mellow in jarred sauces. Reviving their aromatic goodness is easy when you stir 2 tsp. dried oregano, Italian seasoning blend, or herbes de Provence into the sauce, then let it simmer, covered, 5 minutes or more.

3. Or flavor with fresh herb sprigs

Pungent fresh herbs like thyme, rosemary, sage, tarragon, and marjoram can liven up tomato sauce with their bold, distinctive flavors. Add 1 to 2 sprigs of one or more of them to your favorite sauce, cover, and simmer at least 5 minutes to allow them to infuse in the sauce.

Remove the sprigs before serving.

4. Double up on tomato goodness

Tomato paste can lend deep, tomato-ey flavor to a prepared sauce and help thicken it. Simply whisk 1 tablespoon of tomato paste into the sauce while you're warming it up.

5. Add more garlic and/or onions

Jarred pasta sauces are designed to appeal to a wide majority of consumers, which means they often lack the aromatic kick you get from fresh onions and garlic. To ramp up the aromatic flavors, stir ½ cup water and 24-oz. jarred pasta sauce together in a saucepan, then stir in ½ cup chopped onion and/or 1 teaspoon minced garlic. Cover, and simmer 15 minutes.

6. Sweeten and thicken with squash purée

A cup of pureed pumpkin, butternut, or other winter squash gives pasta sauce a hint of sweetness and a velvety consistency that coats pasta like a cream sauce.

7. Punch things up with a pinch of chili flakes

Arrabbiata, puttanesca, and many other classic Italian tomato sauces call for a pinch of chili flakes to give them some fiery heat. The spicy addition is a great way to wake up the flavors of a jarred sauce as well.

8. Try this secret ingredient

Add a coin or two of fresh ginger to the sauce in addition to using one of the flavor-boosting techniques above. The heat of fresh ginger highlights the acidity of tomatoes and rounds out all the other flavors in the sauce.

9. Make it chunky with extra veggies

Got cooked vegetables in the fridge? Cut them into same-

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size pieces then stir them into the sauce while heating. Frozen vegetables will also do the trick.

10. Wilt a handful of greens

Tender greens add incredible flavor and texture to tomato-based pasta sauces. Simply stir 2 cups baby spinach or chopped leafy greens into the simmering sauce, then cover and cook 1 to 2 minutes, or until the greens are wilted and tender.

11. Don't forget beans!

[Beans](#) give pasta dishes a protein-packed heartiness and incredible texture. Add 1 to 1½ cups cooked chickpeas, lentils, or beans to the sauce when heating.

12. Save and use your pasta cooking water

Swirl ¼ to ½ cup of pasta cooking water into your pasta and sauce before serving. The starch in the cooking water helps emulsify the sauce and bind it to the pasta.

13. Finish with a sprinkle of fresh herbs

Fresh basil is the natural choice with simple pasta sauces like marinara, but parsley, cilantro, and even mint can also give pasta dishes a burst of fragrant flavor when they're sprinkled on just before serving.