

Pasta Shapes

Kitchen

Why shape and sauce are matched, and the pairings that work.

Traditional pairings, with the reason behind each.

Shape	Sauce	Why
Spaghetti	Oil-based, light tomato	Smooth; thin sauce clings
Penne / rigatoni	Chunky, meat	Ridges and tubes trap pieces
Fusilli	Pesto, thin cream	Spirals hold thin sauces
Tagliatelle	Rich meat ragù	Wide surface carries weight
Orecchiette	Vegetable, sausage	Cups catch small pieces
Farfalle	Cream, light	Uneven thickness
Small shapes	Soup	Fit on a spoon

Save a mug of the starchy cooking water. Added to the sauce, it emulsifies and makes it cling instead of pooling.