



To produce its own handmade pasta Alica uses:

- 1)excellent raw materials
- 2)traditional techniques of production

### **Excellent raw materials**

Good durum wheat semolina is essential for the production of good pasta and the semolina we use is produced from highly selected wheat and therefore of high quality. We choose the kind that has the necessary requirements so that we can produce pasta that has colour and gluten. The semolina chosen by us derives only from the processing of Italian wheat and is composed of 80% of “Preco” quality (produced in the Apulian Tableland) which has a very high ratio of proteins and colour giving the product a certain elasticity and typical taste of durum wheat. The semolina so obtained has all the characteristics to be an excellent raw material for the production of pasta. Finally, in respect of our handmade production, the semolina we use is produced by non high-grinding mills so that the flour is not overworked and retains its more “natural” characteristics.

### **Processing techniques**

The basic philosophy of our production is to treat the raw material and the product that is derived from it with care. To get the best results from the excellent semolina, we employ handicraft techniques that consist in keeping a low temperature of processing so that the gluten contained in the semolina (which is formed by the mixture of semolina and water) is not reduced, therefore increasing the cooking properties of the pasta.

The first step of processing, the dough, is followed by the pasta maker who (which) scrupulously adds water manually and thus controls the time at which the dough is ready to be transformed. Our kneading machines are not very large to avoid heating.

Also in the second step, where the dough obtained in the first step of processing, is drawn, we use handcrafted machinery. The bronze draw-plates determine the shape of the pasta (if they are round we get spaghetti etc., if they are of circumference form, rigatoni, penne, etc.)

It is known that a lower number of turns of the extrusion screw corresponds to a lower temperature and a better quality of pasta. Our machines work to a slower pace with bronze draw-plates so that the pasta obtained results rough (rough pasta is the most suitable for absorbing the sauce).

The third step consists in the pasteurization of the produce in order to eliminate the bacteria which may have been formed.



The quality of the pasta also depends on a careful and studied pre-drying process. Once, the drying was carried out exposing the pasta to the air so that more airy and sunny places were the ideal sites for pasta factories. Today our pasta makers place the product on beech-wood looms which are then put into static driers at a low temperature, around 35°C, for 30/40 hours, so that it maintains intact all its organoleptic characteristics and also preserves its pale yellow colour of wheat. If on the contrary a forced drying is carried out, i.e. 85-100°C, so as to complete the operation in a few hours, the pasta becomes partially cooked with a glazed surface due to the high temperature, making it particularly smooth and impermeable to the sauce. It must be said that such an energetic drying process causes structural changes likely to jeopardize the original characteristics of the product; therefore, pasta obtained by low quality wheat is destined to this type of drying and is generally Teflon drawn.

Finally, the packaging is followed by our staff, allowing a final control of the finished product by checking the drying degree and discarding what doesn't conform to our standards.

To proceed by these methods, which are very old and traditional, means to take more time, more space and more human resources to produce less, but it also means to preserve the flavour and taste of the pasta.

## **SHORT, LONG SMOOTH OR RIGATA**

The choice of pasta is vast, in small or large forms, smooth or grooved, etc... Such differences bring out the best in the sauce that seasons it. Large and thick pasta dilutes the taste of the sauce to a greater extent in comparison to smaller shapes, and so are more suitable for important sauces like bolognese, braised meat sauces and game sauce, whereas the tinier shapes are appreciated with more delicate sauces such as fish, vegetable and those generally more simple. Short pasta is sold either smooth or grooved. The first one holds in less sauce, therefore resulting more delicate and can be associated to full-bodied sauces. The latter holds in more flavour for two reasons:

Firstly because the grooves increase the friction of the pasta with the sauce, holding it in better, secondly because, as it is grooved, it has a larger external surface than the smooth pasta and consequently requires more sauce to cover it. It is still to be said that hollowed pasta such as cavatelli and orecchiette are more suitable for amalgamating solid parts of the sauces like broccoli, minced meat and vegetables etc. improving their taste.

## **Cooking “al dente” to digest pasta better**

The method of cooking is another thing to consider to get the best out of pasta. It is important to cook it “al dente”, so that it still results somewhat resistant while chewing it, allowing you to feel the so-called nerve under the teeth... Apart from the preferences of taste, it is shown that pasta cooked in this way ensures maximum digestibility, whereas overcooking would leave pasta soft, slippery and sticky, making it difficult to chew and indigestible. On the other hand, undercooking would leave the inside raw, hard and difficult to be broken down by the digestive juices. Therefore the virtue “also for pasta” is in a happy medium.



## **Pillar of the most authentic Mediterranean diet**

It is a fact that in a balanced diet, at least 55-60% of calories during the day should come from carbohydrates, 10-15% from protein and 25-30% from fat. Nevertheless, it is necessary not to exceed the amount of sweet-tasting carbohydrates (the so-called “simple” sugars, like sugar and honey) and focus instead on what is technically called “complex carbohydrates”, among which starch is of distinct importance. Here is the first element of merit of pasta: it is by far the best source of starch (it contains about 70% of its weight) and unlike other products such as bread and rice, it also has a relatively low glycemic value. In fact, after having eaten it, it doesn’t provoke an abrupt increase in the blood sugar level (glycemia), but it guarantees a regular and sustained supply of energy to the organism, avoiding a too violent release of insulin.

Pasta also contains a good amount of protein and is rich in mineral salts (calcium, iron, phosphorous) and group B vitamins.

## **Does pasta make you put on weight?**

Speaking about pasta without considering how it is seasoned makes no sense, because “the dressing” may radically affect its nutritional profile, transforming it even into an “all in one” dish. If you consider that 100 grams of dried pasta, seasoned lightly, provides about 375 kcal, (more or less one fifth of an average daily requirement) it is a quota that can, not only easily enter into the daily diet, but that must be complemented by a further intake of carbohydrates, if you want to achieve a perfect balance. So instead of pointing an accusing finger on the calories of pasta, it is worthwhile trying to appreciate all of its virtues, cooking it in a way to complete its nutritional value without making it heavy.

## **Then pasta is.....nice!**

It seems an absurd affirmation, but the reality is that there is nothing more pleasurable, colourful and happy than a beautiful plate of pasta with tomato sauce, three leaves of basil, extra virgin olive oil and grated cheese. To cook good pasta is part of the DNA of the Italians, the best is obtained by the choice of **good quality purchases**, the choice of the type combined to the seasoning and cooking “al dente”.