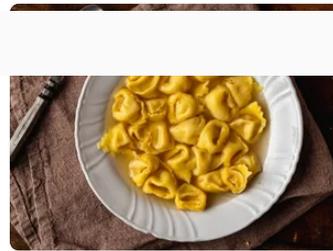


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**tortellini**, a ring-shaped Italian [pasta](#) stuffed with [cheese](#) or [meat](#) that is most traditionally served in broth (*en brodo*), though other sauces—including those made from [tomato](#), [mushroom](#), or meat—are also popular. Tortellini originates from the [Emilia-Romagna](#) region of [Italy](#), and it is particularly associated with [Bologna](#). The meat and cheese used in the pasta can vary, with common fillings being [prosciutto](#) and [Parmesan](#) or [ricotta](#) cheeses. *Tortelloni*, a larger version of the pasta, is typically stuffed with cheese and greens (such as [spinach](#)) and served with a [butter](#) or meat [sauce](#).

[Laura Siciliano-Rosen](#)[The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica](#)

tortellini

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## Emilia-Romagna

region, Italy

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**Emilia-Romagna**, *regione*, north-central [Italy](#). It [comprises](#) the *province* of Bologna, [Ferrara](#), [Forlì](#), [Modena](#), [Parma](#), [Piacenza](#), [Ravenna](#), [Reggio nell'Emilia](#), and [Rimini](#). The region extends from the [Adriatic Sea](#) (east) almost across the peninsula between the [Po River](#) (north) and the Ligurian and Tuscan Apennines (west and south). It is bounded by the regions of [Veneto](#) and [Lombardy](#) on the north, [Piedmont](#) and [Liguria](#) on the west, and [Tuscany](#), [Marche](#), and the [Republic of San Marino](#) on the south. [Bologna](#) is the chief city and regional capital.

The northern portion of Emilia-Romagna is a great plain extending from the Po River southeast to Ravenna and Rimini, where the Apennine Mountains come down to the Adriatic coast. The plain's highest point is no more than 200 feet (60 metres) above [sea level](#), and along the coast there are lagoons near the mouths of the Po. Immediately to the southwest of the ancient Roman road called the Via Aemilia, the mountains begin to rise, culminating in the central chain of the Apennines. Emilia-Romagna's southern boundary follows the summits of this mountain chain. With the exception of the Po, the region's main rivers descend from these mountains. The Trebbia, Taro, Secchia, and Panaro (affluents of the Po) and the Reno, Ronco, Montone, and Savio (flowing to the Adriatic) are the most important rivers.

The name *Emilia* comes from the [Via Aemilia](#), a Roman road that [traversed](#) the region from Ariminum (Rimini) in the southeast to Placentia (Piacenza) in the northwest; a modern railway closely follows its route. In popular usage the name was transferred to the area (which formed the eighth Augustan region of Italy) as early as the 1st century CE, and it was frequently named as a district under imperial judges. After the 3rd century, Ravenna was, as a rule, not treated as part of Aemilia, the chief town of which was Placentia. In the 6th century, Ravenna became the seat of a [Byzantine](#) exarchate.

After the Lombards had for two centuries attempted to subdue the maritime pentapolis (Rimini, Ancona, Fano, Pesaro, and Senigallia), the Frankish king [Pippin III](#) took these five cities from the Lombard ruler Aistulf and in 755 gave them to the papacy, to which, under the name of Romagna, they continued to belong. The other chief cities of Emilia—Ferrara, Modena, Reggio nell'Emilia, Parma, and Piacenza—were independent.

**Emilia-Romagna: cultivated fields**Cultivated fields near Brescello, Emilia-Romagna *regione*, Italy.**Bologna: Palazzo del Podestà** Palazzo del Podestà (left) and Palazzo dei Banchi on the Piazza Maggiore, Bologna, E..[\(more\)](#)**Emilia-Romagna, Italy**

Whether belonging to the Romagna or not, each had a history of its own, and, notwithstanding the feuds of the Guelfs and Ghibellines (papal and imperial factions), they prospered considerably.

Papal supremacy in the Romagna remained little more than [nominal](#) until [Cesare Borgia](#), the natural son of Pope [Alexander VI](#), crushed most of the petty princes there, and the Romagna came under papal administration after the death of Alexander in 1503. The papacy also controlled Ferrara and Bologna after the 16th century, while the rest of the region was largely dominated by the Este duchy of Modena and the Farnese duchy of Parma and Piacenza. After a period of Napoleonic domination, the [Congress of Vienna](#) (1815) returned Romagna to the papacy and gave the duchy of Parma to Marie Louise, wife of the [deposed](#) Napoleon, and Modena to the archduke Francis of Austria, the heir of the last Este. After a period of continuous unrest and numerous attempts at revolt, Emilia passed to the Italian kingdom almost without resistance in 1860. The name of the region was changed to Emilia-Romagna in 1948.

With its broad lowland and adequate [water supply](#) (from both rainfall and irrigation), Emilia-Romagna is one of the leading agricultural regions of Italy. Wheat, [corn](#) (maize), fodder, and sugar beets are the principal crops; vegetables and fruits are also grown in the lowlands and grapes on the Apennine slopes. Livestock raising and [dairy farming](#) are [extensive](#), and the region has a large food-processing and food-packing industry.

The manufacture of cars and trucks, [farm machinery](#), chemicals and pharmaceuticals, ceramics, and clothing is important. Small hydroelectric stations on the rivers provide power, and these are connected with the Alpine plants so that interchange at different seasons is possible. The discovery of large deposits of [natural gas](#) (at Cortemaggiore north of [Fidenza](#) and near Ravenna) and of oil (at Busseto near Cortemaggiore) gives the region a vital role in the energy economy of Italy.



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Bologna is a communications hub for commerce between northern and southern Italy, and the region is well served by secondary railway lines and highways. Area 8,542 square miles (22,123 square km). Pop. (2006 est.) 4,187,557.

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This article was most recently revised and updated by Amy Tikkanen.

Entertainment & Pop Culture > Food

## Bolognese sauce

food

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Written by [Gregory Lewis McNamee](#)

Fact-checked by The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica

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**pasta with Bolognese sauce** A plate of pasta with Bolognese sauce.

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**Bolognese sauce**, [tomato](#)-based meat [sauce](#) for [pasta](#) attributed to the [Italian](#) city of [Bologna](#), the centre of a rich agricultural region.

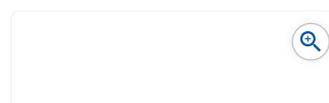
Bologna, in north-central Italy, is the main city of [Emilia-Romagna](#), a region that some say produces the best [food](#) in the country. Emilia-Romagna is renowned for its rich production of cattle and grain and, with its mild climate, a [cornucopia](#) of vegetables as well—which contribute to *ragù alla Bolognese*, or Bolognese sauce. There is no single [canonical](#) recipe, and chefs and cookbook writers differ widely on its exact [constituents](#), but two ingredients are essential to its classic version: coarsely ground or chopped beef and tomatoes. The ragù also typically includes [olive oil](#) and butter. Beyond that, some cooks advocate simplicity, while others are not shy about adding numerous [amendments](#).

A typical method of preparation is to heat butter and olive oil together, add diced [carrot](#), [celery](#), and [onion](#), and cook until the vegetables are softened. To this *soffritto* is added the meat. When the meat is lightly browned, tomato paste, puréed tomatoes, and water or chicken or beef broth are added, and the whole is left to simmer over very low heat for an hour or two until reduced to a thick sauce.



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Some chefs argue that a Bolognese sauce is incomplete without the inclusion of ground [veal](#), and many recipes call for equal quantities of ground veal, ground [beef](#), and ground [pork](#). [Pancetta](#), [prosciutto](#), and chicken livers also figure as



common additions. Some recipes add a pat of butter to the finished sauce to give it a smooth shiny appearance, while others blend in a little milk or cream or red or white [wine](#). One variation, called a white sauce, [forgoes](#) tomatoes entirely, but there is some disagreement over whether this is an authentic Bolognese sauce; its origins appear instead to be [Tuscan](#) or [Umbrian](#), as evidenced in part by the frequent appearance of wild boar in recipes.

Cooks and diners in Emilia-Romagna generally agree, however, that the wide egg [noodle](#) called tagliatelle is the best vehicle for the ragù, allowing the thick sauce to cling to every bite. One other point of agreement is that garlic is never used, although many chefs, especially outside the region, overlook this convention. Bolognese sauce is also used in the region with lasagne and timbales. When one finds it on a menu served with [spaghetti](#), farfalle, or other kinds of pasta, the location is very probably outside Emilia-Romagna.



**Spaghetti being mixed with a pan of Bolognese sauce** Cooked Italian spaghetti being mixed with a pan of Bolognese sauce.

Gregory Lewis McNamee

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