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Traditional Italian meatballs with Palmini  
noodles for an easy keto meal.  
Photo by Cheryl Malik

# YES, YOU CAN HAVE PASTA ON KETO

BY MADELEINE BURRY AND KORIN MILLER

**S**ad but true: Being on the keto diet means that enjoying a massive bowl of your average pasta is kinda out of the question. And, of course, if you're on keto, you probably fantasize about diving into a bowl of noodles all the damn time. Luckily, being on keto doesn't have to mean you can never, ever have pasta again—but you may have to get a little creative about it. Here's what you need to know about having pasta on keto, plus how to cheat the system a little.

Since keto restricts your daily carb intake to 20 grams a

day, you can ~technically~ have a little regular pasta on the diet. But that's pretty tough, because "that may be all you can eat carb-wise for the day," explains Scott Keatley, RD, of Keatley Medical Nutrition Therapy.

And if you do go the route of spending your carb count on regular pasta, you can't have a very substantial portion of the stuff: A cup of standard dried spaghetti noodles that are cooked has about 43 grams of carbs, so we're talking about you savoring less than half a cup of noodles. And that's just sad.

Also, it's not a stellar way to get your carbs for the day. "I wouldn't advise spending all of your carbs on a food that does not have the nutrition give-back that you should look for in your carbs," Keatley notes.

Just a heads up: You can get a little more keto bang for your buck with standard fresh pasta, since it's made with egg, Keatley says. But, again, we're talking about getting 14.2 grams of carbs for a 2-ounce serving, so you're not exactly having a ton of noodles.

All of that said, plenty of people have gotten creative with pasta on the keto diet. While it might be more "pasta" (yes, in quotes) than PASTA, you can still get your fix. "There are alternative types of pasta that can be enjoyed on the keto diet," says Beth Warren, RD, founder of Beth Warren Nutrition and author of *Secrets of a Kosher Girl*.

Making low carb pasta is easy and allows you to enjoy all the flavors of your favorite pasta dishes without all the carbs. When choosing sauces for your low carb pasta, there are plenty of options. Many keto-friendly sauces, such as Alfredo or pesto, are made with cream, butter, and cheese—just be sure to check the nutritional information when purchasing. For a healthier option, try making your sauce with garlic, herbs, and spices.

When it comes to topping your low carb noodles, consider tossing with olive oil and adding vegetables like mushrooms, artichoke hearts, and peppers. Many of these can be used raw or cooked in order to add flavor. Herbs and spices like garlic, basil, oregano, and rosemary also work great as a topping for your keto noodles.

Adding vegetables to your low carb pasta dish is a great way to make it more nutritious and filling. You can toss in some spinach, arugula, asparagus, zucchini, and other vegetables for a healthy boost. Roasting vegetables like tomatoes and bell peppers adds great flavor and texture to the dish.

Finally, remember to add some herbs and spices to your low carb pasta for extra flavor. Oregano, thyme, basil, paprika, and garlic powder are just a few of the many herbs and spices you can use to add flavor to your keto noodles. Experiment with different combinations until you find something that tastes great!

Photo by Yulia Reznikov





Veggie noodles with carrots, cucumber, zucchini, and more!  
Photo by Vanessa Hartmann

"Spaghetti squash is a lower carb option that can be used to make a spaghetti or lasagna type of dish," she says. "Shirataki or kelp noodles have even less carbs and can be enjoyed more freely," said Beth Warren.

"I like to serve my low carb vegetable noodles in pasta bowls or on plates. Then I garnish them with chopped peanuts, sesame seeds, fresh herbs like Thai basil, mint or cilantro and lime wedges on the side. It's the perfect take away food for warm days in spring or summer, and much better than the Chinese noodles from the snack bar!" said Beth Warren.

# What kind of pasta can I have on keto?

You know, like in slightly larger, more enjoyable amounts? Again, you can have your standard pasta on keto, but that likely means you'll be gnawing on a steak for the rest of the day to make up for all those carbs you got from munching on a few noodles.

That's why Warren recommends looking for non-starchy vegetable pasta options, like spiralized cucumber, eggplant, celeriac, kohlrabi, zucchini, or yellow squash for a spaghetti-like dish, or using a mandolin for a more lasagna type of noodle.

Shirataki noodles only have one gram of net carbs (total carbs minus fiber) per one 3.5 ounce serving, Warren points out, so you can see how diving into a bowl of those is way more preferable when you're on keto than having a measly portion of regular noodles.

Sure, you can get a spiralizer and make your own zoodles. (If that's your thing, more power to you). But you can also just buy keto pastas, which is way easier. And, TBH, don't you have enough to going on already without adding noodle-making to your to-do list? (Just something to mull over.)

Instead, toss one of these options in your shopping cart next time you're craving a keto-friendly pasta night.

## 1. Shirataki noodles

These noodles, made from the fibrous part of the konjac yam, are high in fiber and low in calories and carbs. That means you can eat an entire pouch without fear of bringing your body out of ketosis, says Tammy Lakatos Shames, RDN, one half of the Nutrition Twins.

"Clients who follow the keto diet tell us that if they're craving the texture of pasta, these noodles really help to hit the spot, even though they're a bit more slippery than traditional pasta," says Shames.

## 2. Zoodles

Add these zucchini-based "noodles" to a stir fry or top them with a low-carb sauce, suggests Wetzel. Just be careful about how many you zoodles you have, cautions Mancinelli.

One large zucchini has about seven grams of carbs, she says. "[That's] a lot for someone on a ketogenic diet trying to stay below 20 grams per day, but it's doable if you are careful on carb intake elsewhere," Mancinelli says.



Shirataki translates as 'white waterfall', which perfectly describes the clear nature of these noodles.

Photo by Ellie Edwards

## 3. Spaghetti squash

Spaghetti squash is a great way to eat more veggies, while getting the taste and texture of spaghetti, says Emily Wetzel, RD, LDN, of Dietitians on Demand.

This starchy vegetable is low in calories, sodium, and fat, but high in good-for-you nutrients. "It is also lower in carbohydrates than regular pasta with about seven grams in a one-cup serving," says Lisa Samuels, RD, founder of The Happie House.

It's also super-easy to make: Slice a spaghetti squash in half, drizzle with olive oil, then either roast in the oven or nuke in the microwave, says Samuels. Shred the cooked vegetable with a fork—presto, "spaghetti" noodles. "Saute it together with garlic, tomato sauce, fresh herbs, and sausage or ground beef for a well-rounded meal," suggests Samuels.

Perfect Zoodles (Zucchini Noodles) with Pesto

Photo by Deanna Cat

