

# Pork Noodle Soup with Broccoli Rabe and Fennel

Serves 4

The broccoli rabe is important here as it is in the name of the recipe. All jokes aside (!), it does have a unique ability to be everything at once: both delicate and sturdy, bitter and sweet. Simmering it in the fatty, seasoned broth mimics the effect of blanching, which mellows out the intensity some people find so offputting, so I'd love for you to take a leap of faith even if you don't think you like it. If you REALLY hate it, okay, use kale.

1 tablespoon olive oil, plus more for drizzling  
1 pound ground pork\*  
Kosher salt, freshly ground pepper  
4 cloves garlic, thinly sliced  
1 tablespoon fennel seed  
½ teaspoon crushed red pepper flakes, plus more  
6 cups chicken or vegetable broth (I strongly recommend using water + Better Than Bouillon)  
6–8 ounces pasta (short, tube-y noodle or something fun like radiatori)\*\*  
1 bunch broccoli rabe, thick stems removed, chopped (or fine, use kale)  
Parmesan or pecorino, lots of it  
1 lemon, halved for squeezing (optional)

\*alternatively, use one pound of hot Italian sausage, casing removed, and leave out the additional fennel seed and red pepper flakes

\*\*If you're into weighing out your pasta, I can't relate, but we are talking approximately 6 ounces of pasta needed here to serve 4 people. That's about ⅓ of a one-pound box, ½ if your box is 12 ounces (which many are these days??). Basically: just eyeball it. Sorry in advance for all the opened boxes of pasta you're about to have.

1. Heat one tablespoon olive oil in a large pot over medium–high heat. Add pork and season with salt and pepper. Cook, resisting the urge to break it up too much at first. As it browns, break it up into small pieces; some of the pork will get very small (these will get very brown and crispy) and some will stay larger in sausage-like clumps (these will stay tender and juicier). Once the pork is about 80% browned to your liking, about 8–10 minutes, add the garlic. Continue cooking until the pork is well browned throughout and the garlic is softened and starting to brown around the edges, another 4–5 minutes.

2. Add the fennel seed and crushed red pepper flakes. Give it a stir to toast the spices in the pork fat, cooking a minute or two. Add the chicken broth (or the water and Better than Bouillon), season with salt and pepper and bring to a simmer.

3. Meanwhile, cook pasta in a medium pot of salted water until just before al dente (it'll continue to cook in the soup, but good to give it a head start. I don't love cooking raw pasta in the soup, makes the broth too starchy/cloudy).

4. Once the soup has simmered a few minutes, add the broccoli rabe and the pasta, stirring to wilt the rabe. Simmer another 5–8 minutes or so, until the rabe is tender and the flavors have mingled appropriately. Season with salt, pepper and more crushed red pepper flakes if you like.

5. To serve, ladle into bowls and top with tons of cheese. Sometimes I squeeze lemon over, but not always (doesn't need it, but it can be nice).

**DO AHEAD:** This soup is great the next day, but the pasta does have a tendency to get a little puffy/soft. Fine for leftovers (had mine today) but if you're making to serve next-day, I'd add pasta when you're ready to eat.

**EAT WITH:** A big salad with toasted walnuts and lots of cheese, probably. Maybe some sourdough toasted in oil and rubbed with garlic.