

Rigatoni With Italian Sausage and Rapini Red Sauce



The Chef:
Justin Severino

His Restaurants:
Cure and the recently opened Morcilla, both in Pittsburgh

What He Is Known For: Masterful butchery and charcuterie. Bringing serious, seasonal, Mediterranean-style cooking to the Steel City.

"I GREW UP in an Italian family and everyone was really into good food," said Pittsburgh chef Justin Severino. "After high school I worked for my dad's construction company. In the wintertime, on the road, it was rough and we'd eat at half-ass restaurants three times a day." Finally, Mr. Severino's mother and grandmother taught him to make a few dishes to sustain the crew while they were traveling. "Dad started letting me off an hour or so early to go get dinner ready."

This rich tomato sauce perked up with Italian sausage and sharp rapini (aka broccoli rabe) is a take on one of the recipes Mr. Severino relied on back then. Though the sauce can go with various pastas, or even polenta, here, in his sec-

ond Slow Food Fast contribution, tubular rigatoni is the noodle of choice. Its ridged surface really drinks up the sauce.

"You don't have to add the rapini—my mother doesn't—but I like the bitterness," Mr. Severino said. The vegetable plays well with the fennel-spiked sausage. "I use either Italian sweets or hots. What you don't want is something frozen."

Mr. Severino has come a long way since he cooked to fuel a construction team. With his wife and business partner, Hilary Prescott Severino, he recently opened his second Pittsburgh restaurant, Morcilla, and tables are already booked well into next month. Still, at the end of the day, in his home kitchen, this simple dish remains a go-to. —*Kitty Greenwald*

TOTAL TIME: 30 minutes SERVES: 4

Kosher salt
Freshly ground black pepper
1 tablespoon olive oil
½ pound hot or sweet Italian sausage, skins removed and meat broken

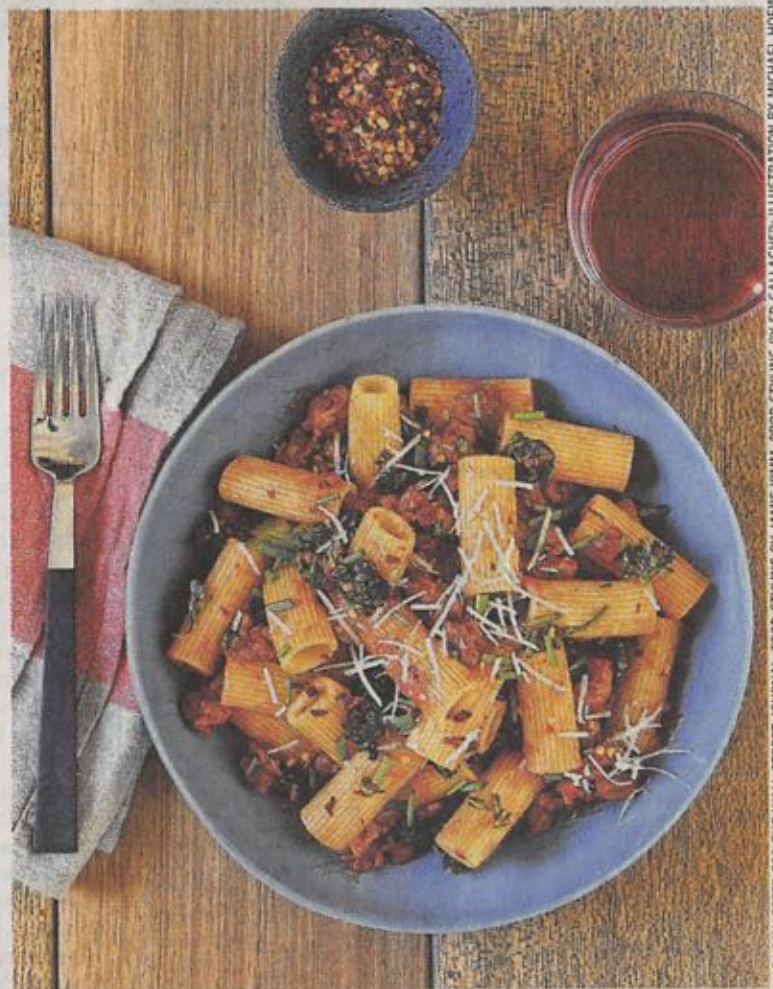
into bite-size pieces
4 cloves garlic, grated or finely chopped
1 pound rapini, cleaned and cut into ½-inch pieces
1 (28-ounce) can crushed San Marzano tomatoes

Sugar, to season
1 pound rigatoni
Pecorino Romano, Parmesan or fresh ricotta, to garnish
Snipped chives, to garnish (optional)

1. Set a large pot filled with salted water over high heat. Bring water to a rolling boil.
2. Meanwhile, set a medium pot over medium-high heat and slick with olive oil. Once hot, add sausage and cook, stirring, until browned on all sides, about 4 minutes. Add garlic and cook until fragrant, about 1 minute. Stir in rapini, tomatoes and ¼ cup water. Bring to a simmer and cook until rapini tenderizes,

about 20 minutes. Season with salt, pepper and sugar to taste.

3. About 10 minutes before sauce is ready, cook pasta in boiling water until al dente. Drain pasta, reserving 1 cup pasta water, and add noodles to sauce. Cook until pasta drinks up sauce, about 1 minute more. Add splashes of water to stretch the sauce if necessary. Garnish with cheese and chives, if using.



BITE IDEA Rapini, also called broccoli rabe, has a bracing bitterness. It brings a healthy helping of green and another dimension of flavor to this dish.