

Photo: Kevin Rathbun

MAINS KR Steakbar

KR Steakbar's cacio e pepe

By Sarra Sedghi · Rough Draft Atlanta, 3/10/2026

Serves 8

Ingredients

DOUGH

- [ ] 1 pound, plus 12.2 ounces double zero flour
- [ ] 10.25 ounces water
- [ ] 4.5 ounces egg yolks, about 7 to 8 large yolks
- [ ] 2.2 teaspoons kosher salt
- [ ] 2 cups semolina flour

SAUCE

- [ ] 2 Tbsp olive oil
- [ ] 2 2/3 Tbsp coarse cracked black pepper, fresh preferred
- [ ] 4 cups grated Pecorino Romano, separated into 3 and 1-cup portions

Directions

1. Add all dough ingredients except semolina to a stand mixer. Mix on low speed for 10 minutes. Change speed to medium and mix for an additional 5 minutes.
2. Remove dough ball and wrap in plastic wrap. Let rest for one hour.
3. Cut dough into 12 portions. Roll out to around 1/2 inch. Feed dough sheets into a spaghetti cutter, or hand-cut into strands. Heavily dust noodles with semolina and set aside.
4. Bring a large pot with heavily salted water to a boil.
5. Heat olive oil over medium in a pan. Add black pepper and toast until fragrant. Remove the pan from heat and add 4 ounces pasta water.
6. Cook noodles for approximately 4 minutes, or until tender and floating.
7. Add the pan with pepper back to the stove on medium heat. Add noodles to the pan. Do not rinse noodles. Carry approximately 12 ounces of starchy water from the pot to the pan with the noodles.
8. Cook noodles in pan until the water has reduced by half.

9. Remove from heat. Add 3 cups Pecorino Romano and stir aggressively until cheese is melted and emulsified into the sauce.
10. Divide into 8 bowls and sprinkle remaining cheese over the top.

The story

Earlier this year, a Rough Draft reader requested the recipe for the cacio e pepe from Kevin Rathbun's KR Steakbar in Peachtree Hills. This week, we're honoring that request by sharing the recipe with our readers.

Historians debate the origins of the Roman pasta dish. Laborers or shepherds most likely created cacio e pepe (cheese and pepper) using cheap, spoil-resistant ingredients. But despite its probable humble origins, the simple pasta tossed with cheese and coarse black pepper continues to endure.

"Cacio e pepe is often said to be a barometer of a great Italian restaurant," Rathbun said.

Rathbun recommends purchasing ingredients at specialty shops like Tuscany at Your Table or grocers like Whole Foods. Although, you may already have everything you need in the pantry at home.

While the recipe isn't overly complicated, Rathbun does have a few suggestions.

"Make sure the water that you are cooking the pasta in tastes like sea water," he said. Additionally, for best results, use a microplane grater on the Pecorino [cheese]. "Very fine grated cheese leads to a silky texture," Rathbun added.

Serves 8

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