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## Rigatoni with cabbage and fontina in the oven

### Rigatoni con verza e fontina al forno

*Of all the pasta recipes I've given in my cooking classes over the years, this is one of the most popular, and no wonder! Very much a product of the Val d'Aosta region, a cold alpine area, where the famous fontina cheese is made and often cooked in conjunction with potatoes and other starches. In Lombardy, buckwheat pasta is often used. Buckwheat grows in Valtellina, east of Milan, also the home of splendid Valtellina wines. Savoy cabbage is yet another much used local product. Try to find real Italian fontina in a specialist cheese shop – other countries also make fontina, but the flavour is disappointingly nondescript and simply doesn't measure up!*

60ml (¼ cup) extra virgin olive oil  
1 small onion, finely chopped  
2 cloves garlic, finely chopped  
6 sage leaves  
300g short dried pasta, such as rigatoni or penne  
250g floury potato, such as sebago or russet burbank, peeled and cut into 1cm cubes  
300-400g savoy cabbage, cut into 1cm strips  
150g fontina or other good melting cheese, such as gruyere or raclette, thinly sliced  
75g (¾ cup) freshly grated parmesan

Preheat oven to 180°C (160°C fan).

Combine the oil and onion in a small frying pan and cook over moderately low heat until onion is soft, about 5 minutes. Add the garlic and sage and stir a further 1 minute. Set aside.

Cook the pasta in a large pot of salted, boiling water until nearly tender. Drain the pasta, catching the water in another pot. Rinse the pasta. Return the water in the new pot to a boil, add potato and cook until just tender, about 7 minutes.

Return pasta to the pot with the potato and add cabbage. Stir until cabbage wilts, about 1 minute. Drain the pasta, potato and cabbage, reserving a small jug of the cooking liquid. Stir the onion mixture into the pasta mixture.

Spoon half of the pasta into a lightly oiled baking dish, spoon over half the cheeses and season. Top with the remaining pasta and cheeses and season. Pour about ⅓ cup of the reserved cooking liquid down the sides. Cover with foil and bake for 20-30 minutes to melt the cheese. Flash briefly under a hot grill to brown the top and serve immediately.

Serves 4

