PASTA

To make sure pasta doesn’t stick together, use at least 4 quarts of water in a large pot for every pound of noodles. Salt the water with at least a tablespoon—more is fine. Pour pasta into boiling water. Don’t break the pasta; it will soften up within 30 seconds and fit into the pot. As the pasta starts to cook, stir it well with the tongs so the noodles don’t stick to each other (or the pot). Follow the cooking time on the package (spaghetti 8-10 minutes, penne 9-13 minutes, egg noodles 8-10 minutes, fettuccini 11-13 minutes) but always taste pasta before draining to make sure the texture is right. Pasta cooked properly should be al dente—a little chewy. Drain cooked pasta well in a colander. If serving hot, add sauce right away; if you’re making a pasta salad, run noodles under cold water to stop the cooking.