Spicy Spaghetti

Sometimes, leftovers just make good sense. When I’m under a pressing deadline, I don’t have time to cook every day.

Who am I kidding? I never want to cook every day, and when I’m under a deadline, I have a good excuse not to cook at all! When I was writing the last few chapters of A COOKBOOK CONSPIRACY, that high-octane time leading up to revealing who killed the celebrity chef that everyone loved to hate, every day was, “Hello, takeout!”

So let’s scratch that “deadline” bit and start over...

Sometimes, leftovers just make good sense. Who wants to cook every single day for the rest of their lives? Even people who love to cook need a break from time to time. Otherwise, it stops being a fun hobby and becomes a chore. And for those of us who, ahem, feel something less than 100% genuine enthusiasm for kitchen slavery, leftovers are heavenly.

Spaghetti makes great leftovers, like many tomato-based foods. The flavors have time to meld, so the second day, it tastes even better than the first. (You might want to cook fresh pasta each day, so you’re not eating soggy noodles. I, on the other hand, don’t object to soggy noodles on Day 2.)

This spaghetti recipe is super simple, but it’s delicious, especially if you can make it a few hours ahead of time and leave it on a slow simmer until it’s time to eat. The tomato thickens and the flavor becomes as rich and delicious as an Italian count. The peperoncinis (dried peppers) I use were a Christmas gift from a friend, as part of a wonderful “Taste of Italy” gift basket. They have a nice kick without being overwhelming, and just a hint of smokiness. But if you can’t find these at your local store, you can substitute cayenne powder, and it’s almost as delicious.
Super Simple Spicy Spaghetti

1 lb ground beef  
2 cans tomato sauce  
2 cans diced tomatoes  
½ C red wine (I used Merlot)  
2 dried peperoncinis cut into ⅛-inch slices (or 1 t cayenne powder)

Brown the ground beef. Drain. Stir in the remaining ingredients. Heat to a slow simmer. Cover and simmer for up to four hours, stirring occasionally. If necessary, add a bit of water in ½-cup increments. Serve over spaghetti noodles with garlic bread and a salad.