



THE OASIS COOKBOOK

Marco Sarli



SECOND EDITION

Over 150 everyday recipes for the expat, with ingredients and tools easy to find. Because there are little things one does not think about 'till.....one can no longer get them.





The Oasis Grocery Store Hanoi

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WHY THIS BOOK AND WHAT IT IS ABOUT :

This is the second edition of this book, revised and integrated with a lot of new recipes. The motivations have not changed : I know, out of personal experience, how difficult it can be to live in a foreign country and how much we would like to have the food we are used to. I know how frustrating it can be to scout all the shops in town looking for that particular ingredient or tool we think is absolutely necessary for our preparation. This is why I have kept all the recipes in this book extremely simple and with easy to find ingredients and tools. The words that follow are those I have written as an introduction to the first edition and reading them again today I do not find anything to add except, maybe, that cooking and eating are such an important part of our marvelous adventure and should be ,above all, a thing of love and a source of pleasure.

I have been an expatriate all my life. Having an Italian father and a German / Swiss mother was a complicated affair. Wherever I was, there was always something missing, particularly if food was involved. Those things I loved so much in Italy and the other ones I liked in Switzerland or Germany could never be had together. Later I went to live and work in different countries and continents and, until now, I have never stopped moving. In every new place I learned something, faced new challenges and reproduced, as best as I could, the food I love. Cooking involves culture, science and also a bit of magic. For some strange reason most of my life as an adult has been spent in “difficult” places and times, where finding the appropriate ingredients and tools was impossible. I arrived in China during the Deng Xiao Ping era, for example, and not much was available at the time as the country had just started to open up again to the rest of the world. I had a one year single entry visa at the beginning, and for one year I did not leave the country. I was living in Fuzhou, Fujian province, not exactly the center of the action and went to Xiamen, Shenzhen, Shanghai or Beijing to find tools and ingredients. After one year I went to Hong Kong, at that time still a British colony, and the first thing I did was to go to a supermarket. I explored the shelves for a couple of hours in complete astonishment and left without buying anything. Obviously on the next day I went back and stocked up everything I needed and a lot of things I did not need and ended up paying an enormous sum in overweight at the airport.

Wherever I have lived and worked a lot of things were always missing and, being cooking part of what I do for a living, I had to get inventive and find ways to do things from scratch. I know the frustration of the expat at not being able to find that particular item so common at home, so essential, so basic. Who would have thought that other cultures could live perfectly well without it! All these recipes are the result of an endless struggle with the lack of basic things and the burning desire of a little taste of home.

I must thank all the customer and friends for helping me to perfect these recipes forgiving my mistakes and giving me their advice and renewed trust after some epic mix-up. I must also thank all the staff working with me, now and in the past, for their constant reminder that what seems so easy when you know how it is done can be extremely confusing if one is new to it. I must also thank my staff for helping me to develop a certain ability to keep things simple and understandable. And obviously I must thank them for putting up with my bad character and my eruptions whenever something “so simple” turned out to be “very difficult”.

All the recipes in this little book have been extensively tested in different places and conditions and are as simple as they could be made. Ingredients and tools are very basic and can be found almost everywhere without problems. They have been posted over the years on our website www.oasishanoi.net on our Facebook page www.facebook.com/oasishanoi and our Google + page <https://plus.google.com/+oasishanoi.net/page> .

If anything goes wrong, blame it on me and if you need any assistance, please do not hesitate to contact me at marco@oasishanoi.net



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1. BREADS AND SAVORY BAKES



AROMATIC RICE CRACKERS WITH POPPY SEEDS

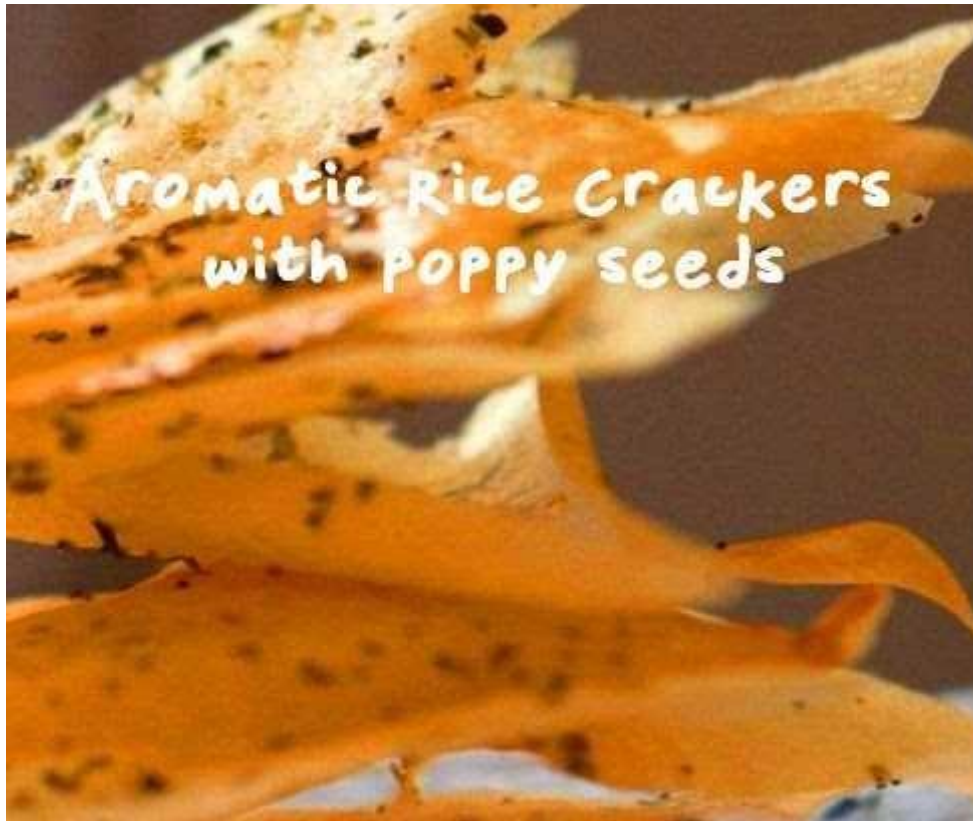
These very light crackers are a tasty alternative to bread and can be prepared in minutes. Rice flour is available everywhere and your crackers will have the added bonus of being Lactose free, eggs free, wheat free and above all very tasty.

INGREDIENTS:

250 grams of rice flour
100 ml of water
Oregano
Extra virgin olive oil
6 grams salt
Poppy seeds

PREPARATION:

Mix the rice flour, water, salt, some poppy seeds, a bit of oregano and one tablespoon of olive oil. Knead until you get a compact but workable dough. Using a rolling pin prepare a very thin sheet of dough. Cut the dough sheet into triangles or rectangles and put them in a lightly oiled baking pan. Brush a little oil on the surface of the crackers sprinkle with poppy seeds and oregano and cook for 8-9 minutes in a preheated oven at 180 degrees. Take them out and let them cool. When they are completely cold they will become crispy. Your crackers can be stored in a dry place for several days.



BAGELS

Not as difficult as one could think. This is the basic recipe. You can add any topping or filling, increase the shine by brushing with milk or egg and give the dough any other shape

INGREDIENTS:

- 12 gr. dry yeast
- 1 1/2 cups water, lukewarm
- 3 Tablespoons sugar
- 1 Tablespoon salt
- 4 cups all-purpose flour
- 1 teaspoon baking soda

PREPARATION:

In a bowl, dissolve yeast and sugar into warm water. Let stand.
Stir in flour and then salt.
Knead dough until smooth and comes away from the bowl.
Cover bowl. Leave in a warm place until doubled.
On a floured surface, roll out balls of dough to thick rectangles.
Roll rectangles into 2 cm pieces. Moisten ends and press together.
Place on baking paper and leave in a warm place for 20 minutes.
Heat water but do not bring to a boil .Add sugar and baking soda
Place bagels in water, 20 seconds. Turn . Do not use metal tools.
Drain on towel. Repeat with remaining dough.
Place bagels on a greased sheet. Bake at 200 C until golden.



GRISSINI

Grissini are an essential part of any Italian bread basket and a lovely snack or vehicle for Parma ham or Italian cured meats.

They originate in Turin and they have been invented because Vittorio Amedeo of Savoia, king of Piedmont, had digestive problems and could not eat regular bread,

The industrial ones you get in the plastic packets in most restaurants are extruded and mechanically pumped with air.

The original recipe calls for lard but olive oil is a perfect modern substitute and adds something to the taste and texture.

Once you have mastered this basic recipe you could try and add sesame seeds, poppy seeds, thyme, sage, rosemary or other herbs, sea salt or ground black pepper or whatever flavour you like. The dough contains olive oil and should be enough to keep your grissini from sticking to the baking paper but some flour or semolina sprinkled on the parchment could also be used.

INGREDIENTS:

2 cups flour

3/4 cup lukewarm water

1 teaspoon sugar

1 tablespoon dry yeast

3 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil

1 1/2 teaspoons salt

PREPARATION:

In a bowl combine 2 tablespoons flour, water, sugar and yeast.

Mix and let sit for 10 minutes. The mixture will become foamy.

Add the remaining flour, olive oil and salt. Mix until the dough is smooth and shiny.

Sprinkle a small amount of olive oil over the dough and roll it around until coated.

Cover with plastic wrap, and let sit for one hour until doubled in bulk.

Preheat your oven to 200°C and line your baking sheet with parchment paper.

Shape the dough into flat rectangle. Cut a finger-sized piece from the rectangle with a sharp knife.

Roll it into a long stick and place on the baking sheet.

Continue with the remaining dough leaving some space between the sticks.

Let the grissini rest for a few minutes, so they puff up a bit.

When they have puffed up, hold both ends between your fingers and stretch them.

Let them rest for another couple of minutes.

Place the baking sheet with grissini into the oven and bake for 10 to 15 minutes.

Keep an eye on them and take them out when they are golden brown.

Take out of the oven and let them cool down.

When the grissini are cold reheat the oven to 120°C and bake them again for 5 minutes.

This will dry them adding the extra crunchiness and crumbliness.



EASY HOMEMADE CORN BREAD

INGREDIENTS:

1 cup polenta
1/2 cup all purpose flour
3 tablespoons sugar
2 teaspoons baking powder
3/4 teaspoon salt
3/4 cup canned creamed corn
1/4 cup unsalted butter, melted, cooled slightly
1 large egg, beaten

PREPARATION:

Position rack in center of oven; preheat to 200°C. Butter a square baking pan. Whisk polenta, flour, sugar, baking powder and salt in large bowl to blend. Add creamed corn, butter and egg. Mix just until blended. Pour batter into pan.

Bake until edges begin to pull away from pan sides and toothpick inserted into center comes out clean, about 20 minutes. Cool in pan on rack.



FRESH FLOUR TORTILLAS

One of those things that mysteriously appear and disappear in Hanoi. So , just in case, here is how you can prepare them at home. Have fun

INGREDIENTS

3½ cups flour

1 tsp salt

½ tsp baking powder

½ cup oil

1 cup very hot water

PREPARATION

Place flour, salt and baking powder in a bowl and add oil and hot water. Mix to combine and then knead for 3 minutes. The dough should be soft enough to roll easily. Cover and allow to stand for 15 minutes.

Divide into 16 portions. Roll into balls, then roll out balls very thinly on a lightly floured board. Place a plate on top of each rolled tortilla and cut around it. Heat a frying pan or and cook tortillas one by one over a low heat. Flip when bubbles puff up. The tortilla will start to fill up with air – when this happens flip it again, squash it down a bit and continue cooking until a few browned marks have appeared on both sides (about 1 minute each side). Vacuum pack or freeze if you do not use them immediately.



FOCACCIA

Fragrant and savory, focaccia from Liguria is the ideal snack, anytime of the day. Focaccia in various versions can be found all around the Mediterranean area and was already made by the Phoenicians and Romans. No one knows exactly where focaccia was precisely born but the most famous and well-loved version is the one from Liguria. Originally considered a peasant's dish due to the low cost of the ingredients, focaccia quickly became a popular street food in Genoa. Already in the 16th century focaccia was consumed at any time during the day, even during mass. Focaccia was served with wine during the benediction at weddings until the Bishop of Genoa decided to excommunicate anyone, aristocrat or plebeian, who ate inside the church. Focaccia is wonderful as it is but can also be the base of incredibly tasty sandwiches or cocktail bites.

INGREDIENTS:

Dough

900 gr. all-purpose flour, 25gr yeast, 2 ½ cups water,
½ cup extra virgin olive oil ,20 gr salt

Topping mixture

3 ½ tablespoons water

2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil

salt to taste

PREPARATION:

Dough: Dissolve the yeast in lukewarm water with a pinch of flour. Let it stand until the surface becomes frothy. Mix flour, dissolved yeast, olive oil, salt and enough water to make dough. Allow to rise for at least three hours covered with a dish towel. Then distribute it uniformly into a rectangular tin, slightly oiled, with a height of about 2,5 cm pressing with your fingers to make small Holes.

Topping Mixture: Beat together the ingredients until frothy. Brush over the top of the focaccia covering it all and filling the holes. Sprinkle with salt.

Bake in a hot oven (200°C) for about twenty minutes.

The quantities to prepare the dough could slightly vary according to humidity and quality of the flour used. Keep some extra flour and water aside, in order to add them to the dough when necessary to gain the right consistency, which is a smooth and elastic dough, not sticking anymore to your hands and the working table.



HOMEMADE PRETZELS

Having a German mother I have spent a lot of time in Germany and Switzerland and Pretzels have always been at the top of my favourite snacks list. Pretzels are made in different ways, with different recipes and toppings, from Northern Italy to Sweden and have spread to other continents.

This recipe is simple and a reasonable compromise between the different variations. The important thing is to dip them in boiling water with baking soda before baking. It really makes the difference and you will have fun preparing them and get a final product completely different from the usual rubbery shopping mall variety.

INGREDIENTS:

- 1 teaspoon instant yeast
- 1 tablespoon sugar
- 3 cups flour
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1 cup lukewarm milk
- 4 teaspoons baking soda for the boiling water

PREPARATION:

Dissolve the yeast in the milk

Combine all the ingredients in a bowl (except the baking soda) and mix together until it forms a ball.

Remove it from the bowl and knead it by hand until the dough begins to get smooth and satiny.

Preheat the oven to 220 C. Cut the dough into 6 pieces. Roll each one into a pencil-shaped piece.

Cover with a towel, and let the dough relax for 5 to 10 minutes.

After it has risen you will be able to roll it out again and stretch easily.

Let them rise again and give each a third roll and stretch session. They will double in width while baking, so roll them out quite thin. Place a rope of dough on the work surface in front of you.

Take each end in a hand, loop the dough away from you, and bring the ends back toward your body, crossing them in the middle. Apply a little bit of pressure to make the loops stick together. Bring a pot of water to a boil and add the baking soda. Dip each pretzel in boiling water for 5 seconds, then place them onto a baking sheet. Hold the pretzel in place with a spatula or spoon while holding it under water.

Brush them gently with an egg that has been whisked with some drops of water or milk.

Sprinkle with coarse salt or other toppings. Place the baking sheets into the oven and bake until golden brown.



RYE SODA BREAD

A very simple rustic bread. A bit compact and crumbly. It keeps for a couple of days in a sealed plastic bag.

INGREDIENTS:

2 cups all-purpose flour

2 cups rye flour

1½ teaspoons baking soda

1½ teaspoons salt

2 cups plain yoghurt

All the ingredients available in our shops

PREPARATION:

Preheat oven to 220 degrees C. Line a baking sheet with baking paper; set aside.

In a bowl, mix the flours, baking soda and salt. Make a hole in the center.

Pour in the yoghurt. Stir the yoghurt into the flour mixture until a dough forms.

Put the dough out on a floured surface and bring the dough together into a ball .

Transfer the loaf to the baking sheet. Cut a deep X in the top of the loaf with a sharp knife.

Poke some holes on the top of the dough, making sure to go the whole way to the bottom.

Bake the bread for 30 minutes, then turn it and bake for 10 more minutes.

Transfer the bread to a rack and let cool.



SALTINES / CRACKERS

It is possible to make crackers at home It is fast,cheap and healthy .Here is how:

INGREDIENTS:

4 cups flour
1 Tablespoon Baking Powder
1/4 cup butter or olive oil
1 1/3 cup milk
Rosemary,oregano or any other herb or any other seasoning as desired

PREPARATION:

Mix together the flour, baking powder, and butter or oil until mixture forms coarse crumbs.
If you are adding herbs or seasonings mix with the dry ingredients.
Add the milk and knead to form a ball. Roll out paper thin on a floured surface.
Cut the dough into squares (with a pizza wheel if available)
Place on an ungreased cookie sheet and prick with fork.
Sprinkle with salt (or cracked pepper) and herbs.
Bake at 160 C about 20 minutes until golden brown.



2. STARTERS, FINGER AND STREET FOOD



ARANCINI SICILIAN STYLE

This is street food at its best. Sumptuous, filling, fun to prepare and fun to eat. Try it at your own risk and remember : there is no way back.

INGREDIENTS

For the risotto:

1/4 cup olive oil
white onion, finely chopped
2 ½ cups rice
2 teaspoons salt
1/2 teaspoon freshly ground black
1/2 cup dry white wine
4 cups chicken broth
1/2 cup water
1 cup finely grated Parmigiano-Reggiano
cheese

For the filling:

3 cups shredded mozzarella cheese
1/2 cup finely chopped fresh basil leaves
For frying and serving:
vegetable oil
1/2 cup all-purpose flour
salt
Freshly ground black pepper
4 large eggs
1 1/2 cups fine, unseasoned breadcrumbs
Tomato sauce

PREPARATION

For the risotto:

Heat the oil in a large pot over medium heat. Add onion, salt and pepper, and cook, stirring , until the onion is soft Add rice, salt, and pepper. Cook, stirring constantly and scraping the bottom of the pan, about 1 to 2 minutes. Add the wine and cook, stirring occasionally, until all of the liquid has been absorbed. Add the broth and water, stir to combine, and bring to a boil. Reduce the heat to medium low and simmer, stirring, until the rice is tender and cooked through. Remove from the heat and stir in the Parmigiano-Reggiano. Taste and season with salt and pepper as needed. Transfer the risotto to a baking sheet and spread it into an even layer. Let sit until cooled to room temperature, about 30 minutes.

For the filling:

Mix mozzarella and basil in a bowl. Moisten your hands with water to prevent sticking. Place some risotto in your palm and press it into round patty. Place some of the mozzarella mixture in the center of the patty and wrap the risotto forming a ball.

For frying:

Heat the oil in a large pot over medium-high heat . Put the flour in a bowl and season with salt and pepper. Place the eggs in a second bowl and lightly beat with a fork . Finally, place the breadcrumbs in a third bowl. Working with one ball at a time, roll it in the flour until lightly coated, tapping off any excess. Then dip it into the eggs, letting any excess drip off. Finally, roll it in the breadcrumbs until evenly coated. Return it to the baking sheet and repeat with the remaining risotto balls. When the oil is ready, add the breaded balls and fry, turning occasionally, until golden brown . Using a slotted spoon, remove the arancini. Repeat with the remaining breaded balls. Serve immediately with the warmed tomato sauce.



BRESAOLA, ARUGULA AND PARMESAN

Bresaola is air-dried, very lean beef, from the top round. It originates from Valtellina in the Alps of Northern Italy, and from the neighbouring Swiss Graubünden region.

It is extremely low on fats and calories and gluten free, has a nearly burgundy colour and is aged for at least 3 months.

When I worked in the Libyan desert, where no cured meats could be imported, we used to prepare our own Bresaola and the dry desert air and the temperature would allow us to get our Bresaola ready in two days.

This preparation, similar to Carpaccio, is perfect for a Summer dinner or just as an appetizer.

INGREDIENTS:

1 bag arugula

200 gr Bresaola thinly sliced

4 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil

1 teaspoon balsamic vinegar

1 lemon

A wedge of Parmigiano cheese

Freshly ground black pepper

PREPARATION:

Place the plates on which you plan to serve the salad in the refrigerator.

Wash, trim and pat dry the arugula.

Cut the lemon in half and squeeze out the juice of one half.

In a bowl mix olive oil, lemon juice and balsamic vinegar until emulsified.

Using a potato peeler prepare Parmigiano shavings.

Remove the plates from the refrigerator.

Lay out the bresaola on the plate in a round pattern overlapping the slices and sprinkle with pepper.

Pile a mound of the arugula in the middle of the plate.

Pour the dressing over the plate.

Sprinkle the Parmigiano shavings on top of the preparation.

Cut slices from the remaining half lemon and put on one side of the plate. Ready



BRUSCHETTA WITH TOMATO AND BASIL

This is again one of those things started as poor peasant food and turned in to a world hit. Once more do not overdo but keep it simple. In fact in Italy the real bruschetta is just the toasted bread with garlic and oil.

The tomato and basil topping is a recent addition. The secret as usual is to use top quality ingredients. Obviously one could add anything from anchovies to olives or capers and balsamic vinegar but why? It is already perfect as it is. By the way it is pronounced brusketta and not brushetta. No relation with brushes.

INGREDIENTS :

For the basic bruschetta:

8 thick slices of rustic ,crusty bread 1 day old

Garlic cloves, unpeeled and cut in half crosswise

Extra virgin olive oil, best quality, preferably strong and fruity

Salt

Black pepper

For the tomato topping:

4 medium, firm tomatoes, de-seeded and cubed

Fresh basil leaves, torn into small pieces

Extra virgin olive oil, best quality, preferably strong and fruity

Salt and pepper

PREPARATION :

In a hot cast iron grill pan (the one you use for steaks) toast on both sides the bread slices.

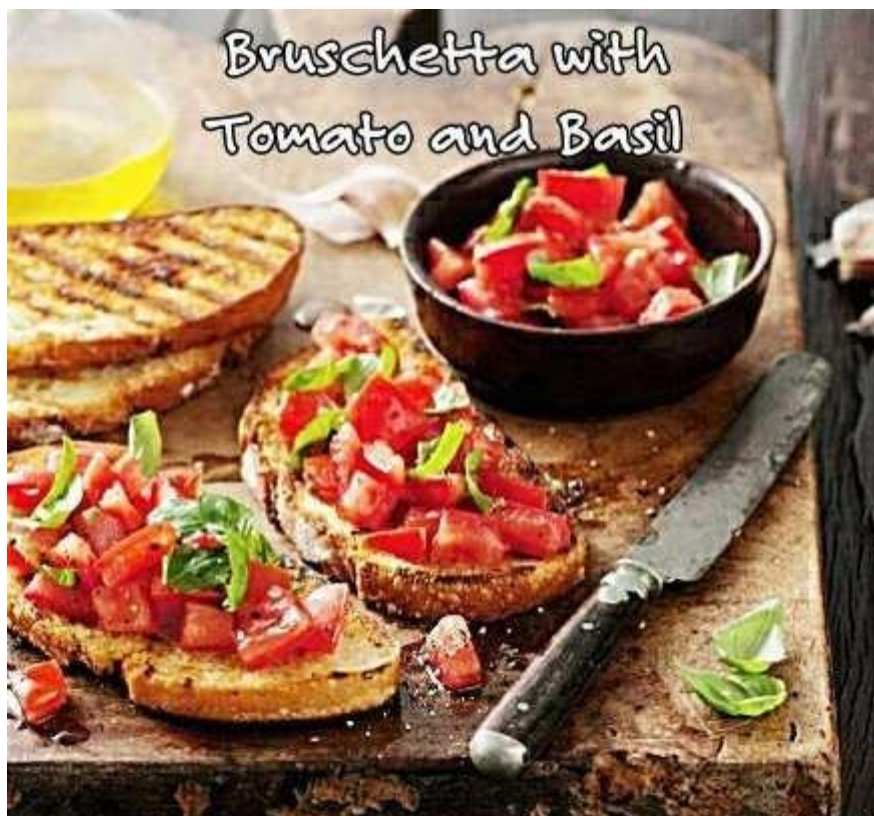
Turn a couple of times to ensure even browning. Be careful they will cook very quickly.

Take a half garlic clove and rub each slice of bread while it is still hot with the exposed cut part of the clove.

Sprinkle your bread liberally with your olive oil.

The slices should be really soaked. Add pepper and salt to taste.

Top each slice with the tomato mixture, made by mixing together the ingredients in a bowl right before you serve your bruschetta.



CHEESE AND POTATO CROQUETTES

I have a passion for Italian street food. It has evolved over centuries, It offers the same colorful variety as the Italian landscape and Italian street vendors are masters at preparing rich, affordable and filling masterpieces. Everybody knows Pizza or Gelato. But that only scratches the surface. Street food in Italy has always been quality food as Italians are both fussy and knowledgeable and top class ingredients are easily available. Every region, city or village has its own specialty but croquettes, or Crocchette, in many variations are present everywhere, from North to South. This is my version.

INGREDIENTS:

For the croquettes dough:

1 kg potato

3 eggs

100g of a mixture of grated Parmigiano and

Pecorino A pinch of nutmeg

Salt and pepper

Finely chopped parsley

For the breading:

3 eggs, beaten with a spoon of milk

Breadcrumbs

Oil for frying

For the filling

Mozzarella and cooked ham, diced

PREPARATION:

Boil the potatoes in their skins until they are fully cooked.

Let the potatoes cool completely.

Peel the potatoes and pass them through potato ricer. Mix in the other the ingredients with a spatula, until the dough forms a ball. If the mixture feels a bit too soft, add a spoon of flour.

Put the beaten eggs in one plate and the breadcrumbs in a second plate

Take a piece of the dough the size of an egg in your hands, and flatten it into an oval shape.

Put some filling into the center and close the dough around.

Roll it around with your hands to form a croquette.

Pass each croquette in the beaten egg, then in the breadcrumbs.

Put them into the fridge for an hour.

Fry the croquettes in oil, until they are nice and golden brown.



PERFECT HOMEMADE CHEESE STICKS

Cheese sticks are not as easy to prepare as it seems. The real secret is in the coating. To obtain a compact, perfectly crisp and tasty coating follow this recipe and you will always get a spectacular result no matter if you decide to fry your cheese sticks or bake them in the oven. The cheese can be the hard sort of processed stretched cheese sold as mozzarella (but it is not mozzarella), real fresh mozzarella, swiss emmental cheese, cheddar, Gouda, Fontina or anything you have or want to use as long as it is hard enough to keep the shape. The same coating is perfect to make wonderful fish fingers.

INGREDIENTS:

300 grams cheese

1 cup flour

3 eggs

3 tablespoons very cold water

1 cup breadcrumbs

1 cup pulverized corn flakes

2 teaspoons mixed dried rosemary, thyme and oregano

1 teaspoon mixed paprika and turmeric

Salt and pepper

PREPARATION:

Cut the cheese into sticks. Place flour in a shallow dish. Whisk eggs and cold water in another shallow dish. Mix breadcrumbs, corn flakes, herbs, spices mixture, salt and pepper in another dish.

Working with one piece of cheese at a time, dredge in flour, shaking off excess. Dip in egg mixture, then coat in breadcrumb mixture, pressing to adhere. Repeat steps for a second coating. Transfer on a sheet of baking paper. Transfer the sheet of baking paper to the freezer and freeze at least 1 hour.

The frozen cheese sticks can be fried in hot oil or baked in a preheated oven and served with your favourite sauce or dip.



CHICKEN CROQUETTES

These chicken croquettes need to be frozen before cooking. Every self respecting “Rosticceria” in Italy has them and every Italian mother used them as a way to recycle chicken leftovers. Nonetheless they are great and a great resource to keep in the freezer for a last minute dinner or as a tv-meal.

Frozen croquettes can be deep-fried or baked ,without any fat, in oven at 180 C.

INGREDIENTS:

5 tablespoons butter
1 cup flour
1/2 cup milk
1/2 cup chicken broth
2 cups finely chopped cooked chicken
2 cups dry bread crumbs
3 tablespoons fresh chopped parsley
1/4 teaspoon salt
3 eggs, lightly beaten
1/4 cup grated Parmesan cheese

PREPARATION:

In a pan, melt 3 tablespoons of butter or margarine.

Add 3 spoons flour and cook, stirring, for 1 min. without browning.

Mix in milk and broth, stirring until smooth and thickened.

Remove from heat; let cool 5 minutes.

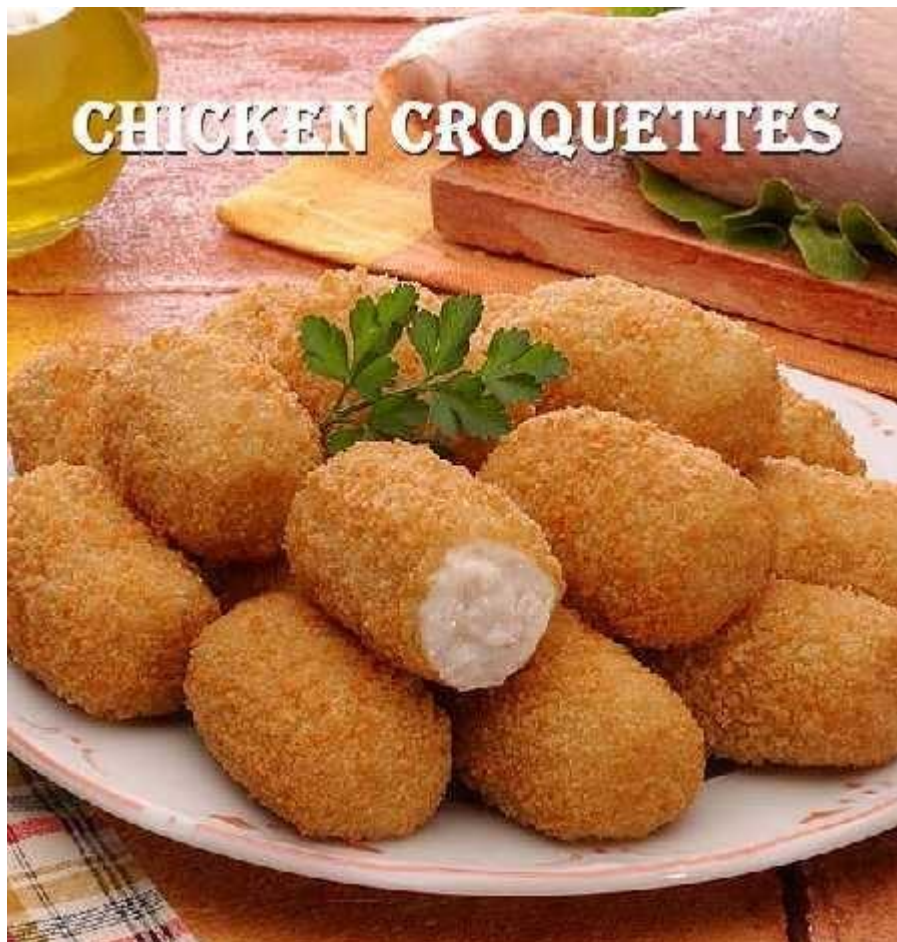
In bowl, combine chicken, 1 cup bread crumbs, parsley, remaining butter, salt and half of the eggs.

Mix well. Pour in sauce, blend well.

Combine Parmesan and remaining bread crumbs in a dish.

Shape chicken croquettes mixture to form cylinders.

Roll croquettes in beaten eggs, then bread crumb mixture. Freeze.



CHICKPEAS AND PECORINO BALLS WITH KEFIR AND MINT DIP

All patties and balls preparations are irresistible. They are always delicious, be it meatballs, the many versions of vegetable patties, falafel or rice balls or something more unusual and creative. These are very tasty chickpeas and pecorino cheese balls, to be served with a kefir and mint dressing. The recipe is very simple and you can prepare the dough in advance, frying it at the last moment.

INGREDIENTS

250 g of Canned drained chickpeas
1 Egg
50 gr Grated pecorino romano
Freshly ground black pepper
½ Clove garlic
Extra virgin olive oil
Salt
Breadcrumbs
Oil for frying
1 jar of Kefir
Mint leaves

PREPARATION

Use canned chickpeas as they are already cooked and do not need soaking. Drain and pour into a food processor along with a little extra virgin olive oil, garlic and a pinch of salt. Blend until you have a thick paste, adding, if necessary, a couple of tablespoons of water. Transfer the dough to a bowl, add the egg, pecorino and a pinch of pepper. Mix. The consistency should be thick, but not hard. If it is too liquid add some breadcrumbs until you reach the desired consistency. Take some dough and form into balls. Roll them in breadcrumbs and place on baking paper. In a pan with heat oil for frying. Fry the meatballs taking care to brown them on both sides. Drain and transfer them to a plate lined with a paper towel. Mix the kefir with a few leaves of fresh mint. Serve the chickpeas and pecorino balls hot with a side of Kefir and mint dip



FARINATA

This is one of those childhood things. A snack, a worker's dinner student's food, a simple wonder... Once it was on every corner now, I am told, it is getting more difficult to find I keep doing it at home and love it. **It is easy, healthy and it is gluten free**

INGREDIENTS:

2 1/2 cups chickpea flour

4 cups water

1/2 cup extra virgin olive oil

Salt and pepper to taste

PREPARATION :

In a bowl mix chickpea flour into water dissolving every crumble. Add oil and mix.

Season with salt to taste and set aside to rest for at least two hours.

A foam will form on the surface. Remove it gently with a slotted spoon

Strain through a sieve if you see any flour crumb

Pour the mixture on an oiled baking sheet

Bake in a preheated 220°C oven for about twenty minutes, until golden brown

Season with ground black pepper, cut in wedges and serve warm



FRITTATA WITH MOZZARELLA AND SPICY SALAMI

This frittata will puff up in the oven. Cut in wedges or cubes it will make a wonderful starter. It is a surprisingly tasty and quick way to prepare a meal for unexpected guests and also a good way to recycle cheese and cold cuts sitting in your fridge.

INGREDIENTS :

1 tablespoon butter
1/2 cup red capsicum strips
1/2 cup chopped red onion
150 grams spicy Salami cubes
8 eggs
1 cup milk
1 cup Parmesan cheese
1 cup cubed mozzarella
1/4 teaspoon salt
1/4 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
2 tablespoons oregano, parsley and basil

PREPARATION :

Heat oven to 200 C.

Melt butter in a pan. Add capsicum and onion; cook, stirring frequently for 5 minutes.

Add salami; continue cooking 2 minutes.

Beat eggs whites stiff.

Mix egg yellow, milk and 1/2 cup of parmesan, mozzarella, salt and pepper.

Add vegetables and herbs and egg whites

Pour in round buttered tray and cook in the oven until set in the middle

Sprinkle with remaining parmesan and cook in the oven for 2 more minutes. Done



FRITTATA WITH PESTO, MOZZARELLA AND TOMATO

I like it simple and I love both pesto and frittata. This combines it all in a superb and easy preparation .Leave it a bit soft in the middle and it will be even better. It can be served hot or cold .

INGREDIENTS :

8 eggs
1/3 cup basil pesto
Salt and pepper
1 cup shredded mozzarella
3 tablespoons cream
1/2 cup parmesan cheese
1 teaspoon oregano
1 teaspoon olive oil
2 tomatoes, thinly sliced

PREPARATION :

Set your oven to 180 C and preheat.
In a large bowl beat eggs ,cream and half of the Parmesan cheese.
Stir in pesto, oregano, salt, pepper and mozzarella.
Pour in oiled oven tray
Arrange tomato slices on top
Sprinkle with parmesan cheese
Bake in oven until puffed and center is just set. Done



GIARDINIERA (ITALIAN ANTIPASTO PICKLES)

A classic spicy Italian pickles mixture that's mostly eaten as an antipasto but also added to sandwiches, rice or pasta salads, pizza topping or side dish. This is the basic recipe but olives, mushrooms, beans or eggplants can be added

INGREDIENTS:

- 1 kg small Carrots
- 1 bunch Celery
- 4 Capsicums of different colors
- 1 kg Cauliflower
- ½ Kg String Beans
- 1 kg Small white onions, peeled
- 1 cup Salt
- 4 liter Cold water
- 2 liter White vinegar
- 1/4 cup Mustard
- 2 tablespoon mixed dry herbs
- 3 Dried chilies
- 4 garlic cloves
- 1 tablespoon black peppercorns
- 500 g Sugar

PREPARATION:

Peel carrots, cut in half lengthwise then into 4cm long pieces.
Cut celery into similar sized pieces.
Remove seeds from Capsicums and cut into 2cm strips, 4cm long.
Break the cauliflower into 4cm florets.
Clean the string beans and cut into 4cm long strips
Dissolve the salt in cold water.
Cover the vegetables with this brine and leave overnight.
Drain the vegetables, rinse in cold water, and allow to drain again. .
In a pan combine vinegar, mustard, herbs, chilies, garlic, peppercorns and sugar.
Boil for 3 minutes and then add the carrots and onions and boil for 5 minutes.
Fill clean jars with hot vegetables and top up with vinegar to the rim. Close.



GREEN OLIVES TAPENADE

Tapenade is a preparation of Roman origin and has been used for thousands of years in southern France and all along the Italian coast. It is made mostly with black olives but this version made with green ones is also excellent. Tapéno is the Provençal word for capers. Tapenade can be served as a nibble in a small bowl, surrounded with toasted baguette slices or crackers. It pairs also very well with eggs, fish cheese or poultry, makes a wonderful pasta sauce and adds interest to any salad. The more character your olives have the better the result will be.

INGREDIENTS:

- 1 garlic clove, crushed
- 1 lemon, juice only
- 3 tbsp. capers, chopped
- 6 anchovy fillets, chopped
- 250g green olives, pitted and roughly chopped
- small bunch fresh parsley, chopped
- salt and freshly ground black pepper
- 2-4 tbsp. extra virgin olive oil

PREPARATION:

To make a rough tapenade, simply mix all the ingredients together, adding enough olive oil to form a paste.

For a smoother tapenade, put garlic, lemon juice, capers and anchovy into a food processor and spin on low for about 10 seconds. Add the olives and parsley and just enough olive oil to make a fine-textured cream.



KALE CHIPS

Baked Kale chips are perfect for a quick snack in front of the tv, as a tasty and healthy snack for an evening with friends, as a side dish for other preparation or for a quick aperitif. It is a very easy recipe rich in beneficial properties. Kale is known to be a source of antioxidants and immunostimulants, already used in traditional soups, such as ribollita. This fast vegetarian preparation has few calories and is a great substitute for common potato chips (and you will not put on weight).

INGREDIENTS

250 g of kale leaves
6 tablespoons of extra virgin olive oil
20 g of sesame seeds
10 grams of ground cardamom
salt
pepper

PREPARATION

Wash the leaves of black cabbage, and then dry them with a cloth. Clean the leaves of the central inner part. In a bowl, prepare a sauce with extra virgin olive oil, cardamom, sesame seeds, salt and pepper. Place the black cabbage on a sheet of baking paper, place it on the oven grill and brush the cabbage with the sauce of oil and seeds. Bake at 180 ° C and cook for 5-10 minutes, if you are using an electric oven turn on the ventilation. Be careful they must be crunchy but not scorched. Serve your whole leaf kale chips or, if you prefer, chop them like small chips. They can be prepared also with red or white cabbage or mixed with delicious Pumpkin and Rosemary Chips but that will be my next recipe.



MOZZARELLA IN CARROZZA

Mozzarella in carrozza translates to “mozzarella in a carriage” and is one of the glories of Neapolitan street food. It is a fried cheese sandwich very easy to prepare and very flexible as it was probably invented as a way of recycling stale bread, mozzarella leftovers and other ingredients. You don't need the best quality mozzarella di bufala to get acceptable results, although the better the cheese, the tastier the dish while the anchovy sauce, while not mandatory, will add interest. It is commonly made with soft white bread, pressed together to seal the edges better but it is tastier with sourdough bread or a rustic loaf. You can actually use any bread you like for this as long as the crusts are cut off and the bread is slightly stale. Tomatoes, herbs, spicy salami slices can add a different note and help clean your fridge of leftovers.

INGREDIENTS

- 200 gr mozzarella
- 2 anchovy fillets
- extra virgin olive oil
- 2 eggs
- Milk
- breadcrumbs
- salt
- 4 bread slices crust removed

PREPARATION

Cut slices of mozzarella and wipe off excess moisture if needed. Puree the anchovy fillets in extra virgin olive oil. Mix the eggs with 2-3 tablespoons of milk and a pinch of salt. Brush the inside of the slices of bread with anchovy oil, then fill them in twos with a slice of mozzarella; drown the obtained sandwiches in the egg batter, drain and coat in breadcrumbs. Fry immediately in hot oil so that it forms a crust and does not spill the mozzarella. Reduce the heat and continue to fry until golden. Drain the mozzarella in a carriage on paper towels and serve immediately.



OVEN BAKED RICOTTA

A great starter, very delicate . It has a soft and crumbly texture but is firm enough to be cut into wedges.

INGREDIENTS:

1 1/2 Cups Ricotta
1/2 Cup grated Parmesan cheese
1 Egg
1 Tablespoon Olive oil
Salt and pepper
3 Tablespoons chopped Basil and Oregano
Freshly grated Parmesan cheese and tomato sauce

PREPARATION:

Preheat the oven to 200 C

Mix ricotta, parmesan, egg, olive oil, herbs and seasonings, until creamy.

Place the mixture into a muffin baking pan and press slightly.

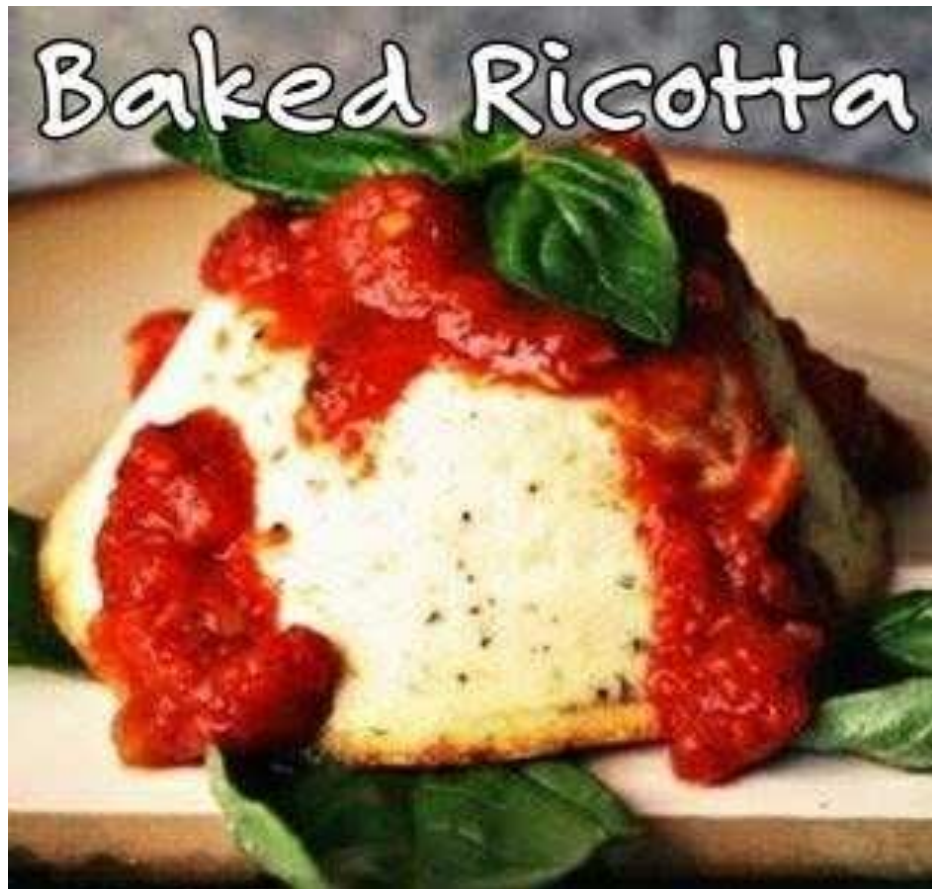
Bake for 25 to 30 minutes.

Remove from the oven and muffin pan.

Turn the baked ricotta cones and place on greased baking tray.

Top with grated parmesan cheese and tomato sauce.

Bake for two more minutes. Sprinkle with basil leaves. Done.



PASTA CRESCIUTA FRITTERS WITH ANCHOVIES

This is superb Neapolitan street food. It comes in countless variations. With tomatoes or provola cheese or spicy salami and many more. I love it with the anchovies. There are also some sweet versions for special occasions but that is another story. I do not know now but once on every corner someone was preparing these and selling them in paper cones called cuoppo. Seafood, vegetables, and other delicacies were also prepared and sold the same way. The frying process is very fast and the result is extremely light. If done the proper way there is nearly no fat and it is like putting a cloud in your mouth. It then melts and explodes in a triumph of taste when you reach the filling. The shape will be irregular and the balls will grow and release some water during the frying. It will sizzle and splatter a bit so keep a safe distance.

INGREDIENTS

12 grams yeast
50 grams anchovies
300 grams flour
Salt
Peanut oil for frying

PREPARATION

Pour the flour into a bowl. Crumble the yeast in the center. Add 350 ml lukewarm water. Knead the ingredients and add a pinch of salt. Work the mixture until the dough is very soft and smooth. Cover the bowl and let dough rise in a warm place for 2 hours. Drip anchovies from the oil and place them on paper towels to lose the excess oil. Divide each anchovy fillet into 2-3 pieces. Gently scatter on the surface of the batter the pieces of anchovy. Using two slightly wet spoons take a little batter. Form a ball by making sure that the batter covers the anchovy. Drop the batter in a pan with plenty of hot peanut oil. Cook a few pieces at a time until are puffy, golden and crispy. Leave to drain on paper towels. Keep warm in the oven at 120 ° until you have fried all the dough and serve it



PIZZE FRITTE

In the classic movie “The gold of Naples” Sophia Loren makes exactly these Pizza. This is Neapolitan street food at its peak.No need for an oven, easy to prepare,an explosion of flavor.I have found similar preparations in many places, many of them extremely good, but nothing ,in my opinion, can compete with these.This is pure fried joy and who cares about calories.

INGREDIENTS FOR THE DOUGH:

2 cups lukewarm water
2 teaspoons dried yeast
Pinch of caster sugar
4 cups plain flour
1 teaspoon salt
1/4 cup olive oil

INGREDIENTS FOR THE FILLING

500 gr ricotta
250 gr mozzarella
200 gr spicy salami cubed (Neapolitan Salsiccia
piccante is better)
pepper
salt
Oil for frying

PREPARATION:

Combine the water, yeast, sugar and 2 tablespoons of flour in a small bowl.
Set aside for 5 minutes or until foamy.
Combine the flour and salt in a large bowl and make a well in the centre.
Add the yeast mixture and oil. Use your hands to bring the dough together in the bowl.
Add a bit of water if the dough gets hard.Brush a bowl lightly with oil.
Turn the dough onto a lightly floured surface and knead until smooth and elastic.
Place in the prepared bowl and turn to coat in oil.
Cover with plastic wrap and set aside to rise until dough doubles in size.
Divide the dough in 8 pieces and prepare small balls.
Put on a floured tray, cover with a damp cloth and let rise until doubled
Meanwhile, prepare the filling: Cut the mozzarella into cubes,
Mix with a fork ricotta, mozzarella, salami, pepper and salt.
Flour your hands and take a ball and flatten starting from the center.
Spread it with your fingers trying to maintain a uniform thickness.
Pour a spoonful of cheese and salami mixture in the center and close the dough over itself.
Seal the edges pressing hard with the side of your hand.
Pressed repeatedly to close very well. Do not fold the edges, just press.
When the oil is hot stretch a bit the corners of the pizza and fry
until golden brown on one side first then the other.The pizza will puff up so leave space in the pan.
Eat as they are or topped with some tomato sauce and Parmigiano.



PUMPKIN CHIPS WITH ROSEMARY

Another recipe for alternative chips, easy and quick to prepare. Pumpkin and rosemary: these two ingredients are enough, easily available and cheap, to make excellent chips in a short time. Colorful and beautiful to look at, these pumpkin chips with rosemary are a savory, greedy and healthy snack and a quick and easy vegetarian recipe. The ingredients are for four small portions but consider that the pumpkin in cooking loses a lot of water and reduces considerably and adjusts the amount accordingly. If you are a bit lazy and do not want to peel the pumpkin, wash it very well, remove the seeds and slice with the peel. Fragrant and flavored, you can eat the chips without peel, or enjoy the skin that becomes soft and crunchy same time. Cut the pumpkin into slices about 2 millimeters thick using a mandolin, a slicer or a large and well-sharpened knife. The homogeneity of the slices will favor a uniform cooking.

INGREDIENTS

600 g already cleaned pulpy, yellow pumpkin
extra virgin olive oil
2-3 sprigs of rosemary
salt

PREPARATION

Cut the pumpkin into slices about 2 millimeters thick using a mandolin, a slicer or a large and well-sharpened knife. The homogeneity of the slices will favor a uniform cooking. Turn the oven to 180 ° C. Cover one or two plates with baking paper and arrange the pumpkin slices very close together but not overlapping. Brush with oil and sprinkle with minced rosemary. Bake the pumpkin for 25-30 minutes until it will be well browned and roasted. Remove the pumpkin from the oven, sprinkle the chips with salt, transfer to a bowl and serve. Bake and cook in the same way the second pan and be prepared to cook a third and more.



SUNDRIED TOMATO AND BALSAMIC DIP

Great as a dip or spreaded on bread or croutons this preparation can also be used as a pasta sauce or as filling for a tasti focaccia roll. Sun-dried tomato dip will keep in the refrigerator for 1-2 weeks.

INGREDIENTS:

200 gr sun-dried tomatoes, chopped

200 gr fresh tomato chopped

3 garlic cloves chopped

1/2 cup white wine

1/2 cup sugar

2 Tablespoons fresh lemon juice

1/2 teaspoon sea salt, plus more to taste

1 tablespoon balsamic vinegar

1 pinch of chili powder

Finely chopped herbs, such as thyme, basil and oregano, as desired

PREPARATION:

Mix the ingredients, except for herbs and balsamic, in a pan over medium heat, stirring.

Bring to boil, turn down the heat and let simmer for about 1 hour.

Stir in the herbs and balsamic, add salt and chili pepper to taste.



TUSCAN STYLE CHICKEN LIVER CROUTONS

A classic of Tuscan cuisine. A very tasty starter and extremely simple to prepare.

INGREDIENTS :

1 finely chopped onion
Olive oil
gr 40 butter
gr 500 chicken livers cleaned
dry white wine
gr 60 capers
4 anchovy fillets
beef stock
salt and pepper
Sage, rosemary and oregano
toasted bread slices

PREPARATION :

Clean the chicken livers and chop them in small pieces.
Sauté the onion until tender in half of the melted butter.
Add the livers and cook for 5 minutes, stirring frequently.
Season with salt ,pepper and herbs, add half a glass of wine and cook 5 more minutes.
When the mixtures dries out, soften with beef stock.
Place in food processor add anchovies and capers and process for 10 seconds.
Heat the oil left in the pan over a low fire and add the liver mixture.
Stir, add butter and cook for 2/3 minutes.
Spread the mixture on the toasted bread slices .



TUSCAN CROUTONS WITH MUSHROOM PATE'

Crostini with mushroom pate', a Tuscan appetizer, are very tasty, fairly quick to make and cost effective.

This mushroom pate' will keep well in the fridge if covered with plastic wrap. You can use any kind of Mushroom.

Originally they are prepared with Porcini but any kind of mushroom will give a great result.

INGREDIENTS:

250 gr Mushrooms (Champignon or Shitake are better)

150 gr Butter

1 shallot

20 gr shelled walnuts

1 boiled eggs

1 teaspoon Brandy

1 tablespoon Thyme (if you do not have Thyme, Oregano can be used)

Chopped Chives

Salt and pepper

Sliced bread

PREPARATION :

Clean the mushrooms and slice them.

Finely chop the shallot.

In a large pan brown the shallots with one tablespoon of butter

Add the sliced mushrooms.

Simmer on low for about ten minutes adding thyme salt and pepper to your taste.

Remove from heat and let cool.

Boil an egg until hard remove the shell.

In a food processor put the mushrooms, the remaining butter cut into small pieces, the walnuts, a splash of brandy and the hard egg cut in pieces

blend until creamy then check the taste and add salt if needed.

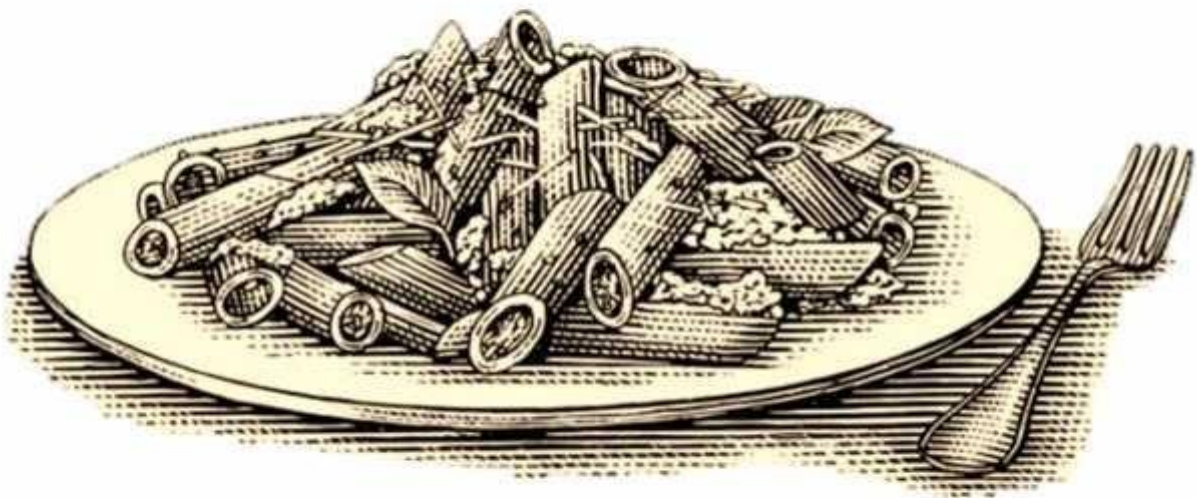
Put the cream in the fridge until firm.

Slightly toast the slices of bread.

Spread the croutons with mushroom pate, and garnish with finely chopped chives.



3. PASTA, RICE, SOUPS AND SAUCES



AMATRICIANA SAUCE

This sauce is named after the town of Amatrice, about an hour drive east of Rome.

Traditionally served with bucatini it will work well with any pasta you like, dusted with grated pecorino cheese. The ancient version of this sauce, called Gricia, follows the same recipe, without tomato and with more olive oil. Amatriciana is a thick, dark and spicy sauce. This very simple traditional recipe does not call for any onion or garlic and so, in my opinion, it should be done. Any variation should be considered a crime. It is perfect as it is.

INGREDIENTS :

- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 50 gr guanciale or bacon in small cubes
- 1 chilli pepper chopped
- a splash of dry wine
- 1 and 1/2 cup chopped peeled tomatoes
- 1 spoon tomato paste
- salt as needed

PREPARATION :

- Put oil, bacon and chilli pepper in a pan over moderate heat.
- Cook until bacon translucent, don't brown.
- Add wine and let evaporate.
- Add tomatoes and tomato paste and cook 10-15 minutes.



ARUGULA, LEMON AND WALNUT PESTO

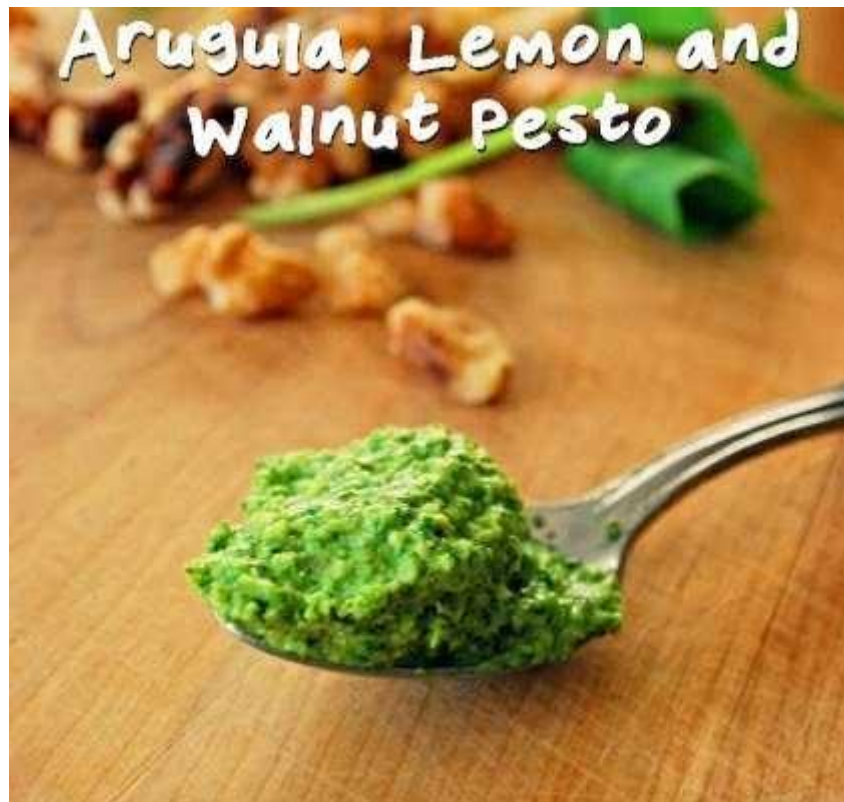
Arugula (or Rocket salad or Rucola in Italian) is a wonderful green and incredibly versatile. Its peppery taste makes it nearly an herb so why not use it as an herb to make an unconventional pesto. I have made it with walnuts and with almonds instead of the classic pine nuts and the result is always great. Lemon pairs beautifully with Arugula and gives to this sauce an additional Mediterranean touch.

INGREDIENTS

2 cups arugula
1 cup basil leaves
3 cloves garlic
½ cup walnuts
Zest of one lemon
Juice of ½ lemon
Salt and pepper, to taste
½ cup olive oil
⅓ cup grated Parmesan
⅓ cup grated Pecorino Romano

PREPARATION:

Put all ingredients except for olive oil and cheese in a food processor.
Turn food processor on. While it is running add the olive oil in gradually.
Once the ingredients are well blended and pesto looks smooth add the cheese.
Pulse shortly to combine.
Use as normal pesto with your pasta or spread it on a Bruschetta or as topping for a pizza.
Store pesto in your fridge in an airtight container for up to two weeks, or freeze for up to 6 months.



BAKED CRESPELLE WITH RICOTTA AND SPINACH

Crespelle are very thin Italian pancakes, a bit similar to French crepes (but much lighter) and are served in sweet and savoury versions. This recipe is an elaboration of Cannelloni. It became extremely popular in the early Seventies and I remember preparing hundreds and hundreds for weddings. Crespelle can also be frozen and kept long time or cut in thin sections, similar to flat noodles, served in a beef broth.

INGREDIENTS FOR THE CRESPELLE (MAKES TWELVE)

Ingredients:

1 cup flour

3 eggs

1/2 teaspoon salt

1 cup water

Olive oil

PREPARATION OF THE CRESPELLE:

In a bowl beat flour, eggs, salt, and water until smooth. The result should be the consistency of cream without any lumps. Cover and refrigerate for at least 30 minutes.

Heat a pan over medium heat. Add 1 teaspoon of olive oil and swirl it around the bottom of the pan.

Holding the pan in one hand, spoon in about 1/4 cup of mixture. Completely cover the bottom with the mixture.

Cook for 30/40 seconds. The edges of the crepe will lift away from the pan. Shake the pan to loosen the crespella and with a spatula turn over. The crepe should be very lightly browned on both sides. Transfer to a plate and repeat adding some oil if needed.

INGREDIENTS OF THE FILLING AND SAUCE:

500 gr spinach

500 gr Ricotta

Salt and freshly ground black pepper

1/2 cup cream

1/2 cup milk

2 cups grated Parmigiano

PREPARATION:

Bring pot of water to a boil. Add the spinach to the water and let sit for 60 seconds.

Move the spinach to a colander to and place under cold running water stop the cooking process.

Squeeze all of the water out of the spinach and chop roughly. Combine the Ricotta, 1 cup of Parmigiano and spinach in a bowl.

Mix well and season with salt and pepper. Place one crespella on a flat surface. Put some of the spinach and cheese mixture in the middle of each crepe. Roll up the crespella and reserve. Repeat with the remaining crespelle. Line the rolled crespelle in a buttered baking tray. Combine cream, milk and Parmigiano in a pan and bring to a simmer over low. Pour over the crepes. Place in preheated oven at 180 C and bake for 15 minutes. Ready



CURRY PENNE SALAD

A tasty and simple vegetarian pasta recipe suitable for the hot weather with an unusual and exotic flavour. Curry powder is a blend of spices including turmeric, coriander, pepper, black cumin and more originating in India. Here is what Wikipedia says about it : “The main spices found in most curry powders of the Indian subcontinent are coriander, cumin, and turmeric; a wide range of additional spices may be included depending on the geographic region and the foods being included (fish, lentils, red or white meat, rice, and vegetables). Curry powder, a commercially prepared mixture of spices, is largely a Western creation, dating to the 18th century. Such mixtures are commonly thought to have first been prepared by Indian merchants for sale to members of the British Colonial government and army returning to Britain.” The creamy sauce used for this recipe is composed of a curry sauce (made with onion and vegetable soup) cream and diced cucumber. These three elements together give the sauce a nice contrast of textures and flavors. This pasta salad should be served at room temperature. Not having to cool it in the refrigerator it can be prepared short time before serving.

INGREDIENTS:

350 g of penne
2 tablespoons curry powder
1 tablespoon flour
2 dl vegetable stock (also made with stock cubes)
1/2 cup heavy cream
1 small cucumber
1 onion
Extra-virgin olive oil
salt

PREPARATION:

In a saucepan, heat two tablespoons of olive oil and soften thinly chopped onion adding a tablespoon of water and a pinch of salt. Continue cooking until it becomes transparent. Add the curry powder and stir for a few seconds. Sprinkle with flour and stir. Pour the broth and let boil on low heat for about fifteen minutes, stirring often. Remove from the fire and let cool. Cook the penne al dente and drain. Pass the penne in the colander briefly under cold running water and put them in a serving dish. Stir in the cream. Clean the cucumber and cut it into very small cubes. Mix the penne with the curry sauce the diced cucumber and serve.



FRITTATA DI MACCHERONI

A preparation originally invented to use leftover pasta, cheese and meat has become over time a masterpiece of Neapolitan cuisine. Still you can prepare it also with leftover pasta, including sauce, with any cheese or cold-cut you have sitting in the fridge or adding vegetables, mushrooms or any ingredient you want and it will always be spectacular served both hot or cold

INGREDIENTS

300 gr spaghetti (but any other pasta will do)

125 gr mozzarella

4 eggs

4 sprigs parsley, minced

100 g spicy Italian salami

1/2 cup grated Parmigiano

2 tablespoons flour

1/2 cup milk

3 tablespoons olive oil

Salt and pepper to taste

PREPARATION

Set pasta water to boil.

Chop the mozzarella

Peel the casing from the salami and cube it

When the water boils add salt and cook the spaghetti.

Beat the eggs in a bowl with the flour and milk until frothy.

Add parsley and Parmigiano and season with salt and pepper to taste.

Drain the pasta and run it under cold water to cool.

Combine the spaghetti with the egg mixture, salami and mozzarella.

Heat the olive oil in a large non-stick pan, spread the pasta mixture over it.

Cook over a medium flame until a crust has formed at the bottom of the frittata.

To turn the frittata, grip the handle of the pan with one hand, and place a lid on the pan .

Using a potholder or you will burn yourself, holding grip and lid, flip everything.

The frittata will come free from the pan, resting with the unbrowned side down on the lid.

Turn the pan and slide the frittata into it, and return it to the fire to brown the other side.



GNOCCHI ALLA ROMANA - BAKED SEMOLINA DUMPLINGS ROMAN STYLE

Not your traditional potato gnocchi these semolina dumplings are baked in the oven and not boiled and do not need any sauce. They predate by far the better known potato gnocchi as potatoes have been introduced in Italy around the beginning of the 17th century. The father of modern Italian Cuisine Pellegrino Artusi gives this recipe in his book Science in the kitchen printed in 1891. It still works well for me. These gnocchi are meat free, very tasty, easy to prepare and can be frozen before baking. They will be ready in a few minutes when needed because they can be baked frozen without problems.

INGREDIENTS:

½ Liter milk.
140 grams Semolina,
60 grams butter
100 grams Grated Parmesan cheese
2 large Eggs
Salt, to taste.

PREPARATION:

Warm up the milk without letting it boil. When it starts simmering add the semolina flour and mix to dissolve any crumbs.

Add half of the butter and half of the Parmesan. Mix well. Turn off the fire. While the mixture is still hot add the eggs and stir well.

Pour the hot mixture on a slightly wet working surface and spread it with wet hands or the wet back of a spoon to the thickness of a finger.

Let it cool down. Dip the edge of a glass in cold water and use it as a cutter to cut discs of semolina. Place the disks in half overlapping rows in a buttered oven tray. Sprinkle with the remaining grated Parmesan.

Place on the top small butter pieces. Bake in a preheated oven at 220 C until the surface is browned. Serve hot.



GNOCCHI WITH GORGONZOLA SAUCE

The small town of Gorgonzola is near Milano and in an area renowned for its cheeses. There are two basic varieties of Gorgonzola, Dolce and Piccante. What you will need for this recipe is the soft and creamy Dolce. This recipe is probably not for the calorie-counters but it is pure creamy goodness. Homemade gnocchi are not heavy as the industrial ones but light and fluffy and can be frozen. If you made too many gnocchi with Gorgonzola sauce refrigerate them. On the next day just sprinkle some more Parmesan and butter on top of the gnocchi and put them for a couple of minutes in the oven at 180 C and you will have a wonderful Gnocchi Bake.

INGREDIENTS:

For the gnocchi

Ingredients:

1 kg of potato (approximately 4 large potatoes). Use old potatoes. New and watery potatoes are not good for gnocchi.

2 ½ cups all-purpose flour plus 1/2 cup or more for working the dough

1/2 teaspoon salt

1 egg (lightly whisked)

For the gorgonzola sauce:

Ingredients:

25g butter

200g gorgonzola cheese

200 ml cream

100g grated Parmesan cheese

Sage leaves

Salt and pepper

PREPARATION:

In a large pot with enough water to cover them, boil potatoes with their skins on.

Boil until fork tender. Do not over boil. Remove potatoes and allow them to cool in a colander.

Peel boiled potatoes, removing any brown spots. Using a potato ricer or a grater, shred the potatoes finely.

Make a flat mound of the shredded potato in the middle of a clean, dry countertop.

Add the flour on the top. Sprinkle with salt. Make a well in the middle of the potato and flour mound and fill it with the beaten egg. Using your hands and starting from the outside, slowly pull flour and potato to the middle of the mound. Combine all the ingredients and knead just enough to form a dough. Do not work the dough too much. It should have a light and airy texture. Cut the dough into 8-10 pieces and roll each piece into an even rope. Cut the dough ropes into 3 cm pieces keeping the working surface floured. Use a fork to create ridges on the surface of your gnocchi. Cook the gnocchi in a large pot of salted water. When they are cooked they will float to the surface. Remove them with a slotted spoon. In a large pan melt the butter. When it starts sizzling add the sage leaves and stir. Add the cream and lower the heat and add the crumbled gorgonzola cheese. Let it melt and add your just-cooked gnocchi and let them simmer for a minute to absorb a bit of the flavor. Add a generous amount of grated parmesan cheese. Adjust salt and pepper and serve immediately.



ITALIAN SUMMER PASTA SALAD

Pasta salad is a great summer favourite and has countless variations. This is how we prepared it when I was a kid and how I like to make it. To me it tastes of summer and of a time when humble things could still give great joy. It is simple, it is fresh, it works every time.

INGREDIENTS:

300 gr Penne
300 gr cherry tomatoes
3/4 Cup pitted and chopped black olives
1/4 Cup rinsed salted capers
1 Fresh Mozzarella, cut into small dice
1 tablespoon chopped fresh parsley
1/4 Cup chopped fresh basil
1 tablespoon oregano

Dressing Ingredients:

3 Tablespoons Red Wine Vinegar
9 Tablespoons Extra Virgin Olive Oil
1 Large Garlic Clove, Peeled
4 or 5 anchovies chopped
Salt and Peppe

PREPARATION:

Cook the pasta in a pot of salted water until "al dente".

Rinse in cold water and drain well.

Cut the cherry tomatoes in quarters.

Place all the ingredients in a large bowl and toss.

Blend together the dressing ingredients until almost smooth.

Mix the dressing with the pasta mixture and let rest in the fridge for one hour.

Take out of the fridge and leave at room temperature for 10 minutes before serving.



MINESTRONE

Autumn is here again and it is time for something hearty and healthy.

Minestrone is really flexible, resilient and magic. Throw in whatever vegetables you have, add all your broken pasta leftovers, freeze it and reheat it or pour wine in it.

The more violence you try to exercise on it, the better it will get.

It is a meal in itself. Lunch, dinner or even breakfast it is always a pleasure.

INGREDIENTS:

- 1 can cannellini or borlotti beans drained
- 1 can red beans drained
- 1 small cabbage thinly sliced
- 1 bay leaf
- 6 tomatoes, cubed
- 2 potatoes peeled and cubed
- Salt and pepper
- olive oil
- 4 slices smoked pancetta or bacon chopped
- 2 red onions, peeled and chopped
- 2 carrots, peeled and chopped
- 2 sticks celery, cleaned and chopped
- 3 cloves garlic, peeled and finely chopped
- 1 small bunch fresh basil leaves
- 1 glass red wine
- 2 small courgettes, sliced
- 1 cup trimmed and cubed green beans
- 200 gr spinach
- $\frac{1}{2}$ Lt Chicken, beef or vegetable stock
- Dry or fresh herbs according to taste

PREPARATION:

Heat some olive oil in a saucepan and add the chopped pancetta or bacon, onions, carrots, celery and garlic. Let it go on low heat until soft, but not brown. Add the red wine and let sizzle and evaporate.

This is called soffritto and is a basic Italian preparation used in many recipes.

Add the stock, the tomatoes, potatoes, beans and all the vegetables and herbs.

Simmer gently, half covered until the potatoes are soft. If the soup is looking too thick, add some more stock. Taste and season with salt and pepper.

Serve sprinkled with basil leaves, olive oil, grated parmesan and toasted bread slices.



PAPALINA SAUCE

The legend is that Cardinal Pacelli ,even after being elected Pope as Pius XII, used to call his favourite trattoria to order this dish to be delivered to the Vatican . In my opinion this sauce gives its best with some fresh egg fettuccine

INGREDIENTS:

1 cup mushrooms cleaned and sliced
1 cup cooked smoked ham cubed
1 cup green peas
2 tablespoons of white wine
125 ml. cream
1 tablespoon butter
2 tablespoons grated Parmigiano Reggiano
Salt and black pepper

PREPARATION:

In a pan melt the butter .
Add mushrooms and ham, sauté at medium heat for 2 minutes.
Add the wine
Add the cream and cook at medium heat until cream starts to boil.
Add salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste.
Add the Parmigiano Reggiano to pan, stir. Ready



PAPPA AL POMODORO – TUSCAN TOMATO AND BREAD SOUP

We have all eaten too much for Christmas and will eat and drink even more in the next days. Let us take a healthy but tasty break with this magnificent Tuscan tomato soup. It was born to use up stale bread and it is great served warm during the winter or lukewarm during the summer.

This soup has a cult status in Tuscany and there is a famous song from a musical about it derived from a classic children book.

As always the trick is to use first class ingredients. It keeps for a couple of days in the fridge and gets better every time you warm it up.

The consistency should be very thick and the bread should be completely dissolved.

INGREDIENTS:

2 cans of peeled tomatoes crushed or 1 bottle tomato puree

300 gr stale bread

1 lt vegetable or chicken broth (made with stock cubes will also do)

Basil

Freshly ground black pepper

Rosemary

Extra virgin olive oil

Peeled garlic cloves

Sugar

Salt

PREPARATION:

Cut the bread into thin slices. In a baking dish arrange the slices of bread without overlapping.

Bake at 200 ° C for a few minutes. Remove from oven and let cool before rubbing them with the cloves of garlic.

In a high-sided frying pan place the toasted bread reserving a couple of slices to garnish your soup later.

Pour in the crushed tomatoes or the puree sauce and the broth and cover completely the bread.

Add a pinch of sugar and cook over low heat for 40-50 minutes to reduce the liquid.

Stir occasionally to allow even cooking and reduce the bread to mush.

Season with salt and pepper then. When cooked, remove from the heat and garnish with basil rosemary and toasted bread pieces.

Serve in individual bowls or soup plates sprayed with plenty of olive oil.



PASTA E FAGIOLI

A great classic and perfect when the weather gets cold. This is comfort food at it's best. Super hearty, thick Italian soup loaded with flavours .

INGREDIENTS:

- 2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
- 3 thick slices pancetta, cubed
- 2 sprigs rosemary
- 1 pinch thyme
- 2 dried bay leaves
- 1 medium onion, finely chopped
- 1 small carrot, finely chopped
- 1 rib celery, finely chopped
- 4 large cloves garlic, chopped
- Salt and pepper to taste
- 2 cans cannellini beans
- 1 cup canned crushed tomatoes
- 2 cups water
- 3 cups chicken stock
- 1 1/2 cups small maccheroni
- Grated Parmigiano
- Crusty bread slices

PREPARATION:

Heat a pot over medium heat and add oil and pancetta cubes.
Brown the pancetta bits, add herb stems, bay leaf, chopped vegetables, and garlic.
Season vegetables with salt and pepper.
Add beans, tomato sauce, water, and stock and raise heat.
Bring soup to boil and add pasta.
Reduce heat to medium and cook until pasta is cooked al dente.
Remove rosemary and bay leaf from soup .
Let soup rest and begin to cool for a few minutes.
Ladle soup into bowls and top with olive oil and black pepper.
Sprinkle with parmesan and add crusty bread slices.



PENNE AL FORNO CON SALSICCIA - PENNE AND SAUSAGE PASTA BAKE

Pasta al forno is a typical Sunday dish together with Antipasto, Roast chicken and potato and some elaborated cake. Every family has a personal, secret recipe. Meat sauce, mushrooms, green peas, broccoli and other vegetables, all sorts of cheese, olives, even raisins or anchovies are added to the baked pasta and the result is always great. The secret is to keep the pasta very al dente and to let a nice crunchy crust form in the oven.

This is a very simple version with Italian sausage and fresh tomato

INGREDIENTS:

- 1 tbsp olive oil
- 1 onion, finely chopped
- 2 garlic cloves, chopped
- 8 Italian pork sausages, meat crumbled
- 5 tomatoes cubed
- 1 mozzarella cubed
- 1 cup grated Parmigiano
- 2 cups vegetable stock
- 50g butter
- 50g plain flour
- 500ml milk
- 400g penne
- salt and pepper

PREPARATION:

Preheat the oven to 200C Heat a large pan over medium heat.
Add the oil and gently cook the onion until soft and translucent.
Add the crumbled sausage meat and cook until coloured.
Add the tomatoes and vegetable stock, season with salt and pepper and turn down the heat.
Let gently simmer while you make the béchamel sauce. Melt the butter on low in a pan. Add the flour and stir to mix. Cook over medium until the mixture has taken a biscuit-colour.
Slowly add the milk, bit by bit, whisking as you add to avoid lumps from forming.
Season with salt and pepper and bring to a simmer. Cook to thicken slightly then remove from the heat. Cook the penne in a pan of salted boiling water. Cook very al dente and drain.
Pour into the pan with the sausage and tomato mixture. Mix well.
Add the cubed mozzarella and Parmigiano reserving a bit for the topping
Pour this into a medium-sized ovenproof buttered baking dish.
Pour over the white sauce and top with the remaining mozzarella and Parmigiano.
Place into the preheated oven. Bake until the top is nicely coloured.



PENNE ALL'ARRABBIATA

A classic with character (and a request from our friend Matt). Arrabbiata means angry in Italian .

INGREDIENTS:

1 peeled small yellow onion, chopped
1/4 cup olive oil
1/4 cup dry white wine (also red could do)
4 cloves of garlic chopped finely
1 kg ripe, fresh tomatoes peeled, chopped
1/2 cup tomato paste
1 1/2 Tablespoon (or more) hot red chili pepper sliced
Salt and ground black pepper
1 tablespoon chopped Italian Parsley
1 tablespoon Basil
1 tablespoon Oregano
500 gr Penne Rigate

PREPARATION:

- 1) In a medium pan on medium, heat the olive oil
- 2) Add onion and garlic to pan and sauté till it is soft and begins to brown.
- 3) Add wine and reduce to half.
- 4) Add the tomatoes, chili, oregano, tomato paste, salt and pepper to taste.
- 5) Simmer for 30 minutes, stirring occasionally.
- 6) Boil your Penne in plenty of salted boiling water, cook until very al dente.

The Trick

Drain the pasta, but do not rinse it, and add it to sauce in pan.

Raise the temperature, add the remaining herbs, stir to coat the penne.

Sauté for 30 seconds. Remove the Penne Arrabbiata from the heat, serve.



PENNE SHRIMP AND ZUCCHINI

A summer classic featuring an incredible flavour combination and very easy and fast to prepare. Ideal for a last minute one-dish meal on a warm summer evening with a distinctive Mediterranean touch. Pair with a nice dry white wine or something sparkling.

INGREDIENTS:

1 spring onion chopped
½ cup of olive oil
2 zucchini
200 grams shelled shrimps
½ glass Dry White wine
400 gr grams Penne
2 crushed garlic cloves
1 bunch of chopped parsley

PREPARATION :

In a pan warm up the olive oil and sauté the chopped spring onion in a pan
Add the sliced zucchini and keep cooking on medium fire until the zucchini are softened
Add the shrimps and the white wine. Keep stirring until the wine is evaporated and remove from fire.
In a pot of boiling salted water cook the penne until “al dente” and drain them.
Put the pan with the shrimps back on medium fire, add the garlic and parsley and the penne.
Stir and let it go for one minute adding a shot of wine if it gets too dry. Serve.



PENNE WITH BROCCOLI AND ARUGULA

Traditionally this is prepared, in Southern Italy, with Orecchiette, an ear-shaped dry pasta. If you want a totally vegetarian version simply skip the anchovies.

Broccoli and pasta are always a wonderful combination for example in pasta salads but here the combination of lemon juice and Pecorino adds a wonderful fresh and tangy touch.

INGREDIENTS:

- 2 cloves garlic thinly sliced
- 2 red chilli deseeded and finely chopped
- 4 anchovy fillets halved
- 2 heads broccoli
- extra virgin olive oil
- 100 gr pecorino, grated
- 400 gr penne (or other short pasta)
- 1 cup arugula
- ½ lemon juice
- Crusty bread, to serve

PREPARATION:

Bring a pot of salted water to boil.

Mix chillies and anchovies, and add to the garlic.

Cut the broccoli heads into small florets.

Add florets to boiling water and cook until almost tender but still crisp.

Using a slotted spoon, transfer to a bowl and keep water boiling.

Place half the florets in a food processor with 2 tablespoons oil and season with salt and pepper.

Add 40 gr pecorino to the food processor, and process until creamy.

Transfer to the bowl with the remaining florets.

Add pasta to boiling water and cook until al dente.

Drain the pasta reserving 1/2 cup cooking water.

Place 4 tablespoons olive oil, garlic, chillies and anchovies in a pan over medium heat.

Cook, stirring until garlic is fragrant and anchovies have broken up.

Add reserved cooking water, pasta, broccoli mixture, rocket and toss briefly.

Do not let the Arugula wilt.

Squeeze lemon over pasta and mix well to combine.

Sprinkle with remaining pecorino and serve.



PESTO ALLA GENOVESE

Pesto is my favourite sauce. To me it tastes of home.

Traditionally it is made in a marble mortar.

The consistency of real pesto is creamy but the ingredients are not completely dissolved.

It keeps, if properly sealed, for several days in the fridge maintaining a brilliant green colour.

It can also be frozen but it will become darker without changing quality.

Add a couple of spoons of the hot water used to cook your pasta and mix before using it.

INGREDIENTS:

100 gr. basil leaves washed and dried

40 gr. pine nuts

80 gr. grated Parmesan cheese

40 gr. pecorino

100 gr. extra virgin olive oil from the Ligurian coast

2 cloves of garlic

6 g coarse sea salt

PREPARATION:

Put in the mortar (or the food processor) the garlic and salt and reduce to a paste.

Add the basil leaves. It is important that the leaves are not pushed to the bottom.

If using mortar and pestle work slowly and gently, on the walls of the mortar, not on the bottom.

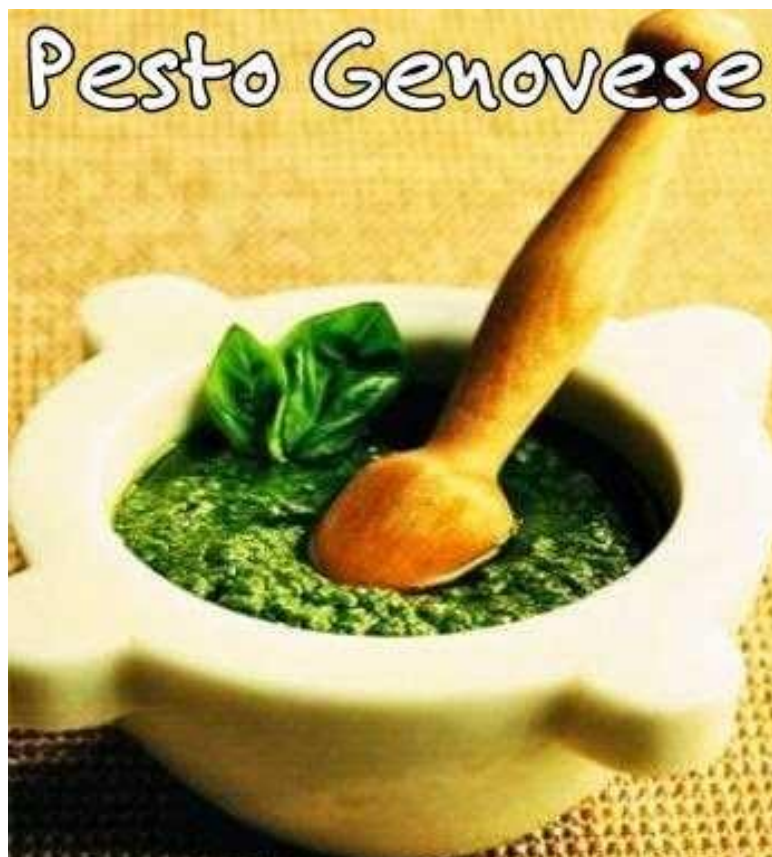
If you are using a food processor a very short spin not at top speed should be enough

Add the pine nuts, basil and cheese and give it another short pulse.

Finally add the oil, drop by drop, while processing.

Pour into jars and let it rest for a couple of hours with the mouth open, covered with a sheet of wax paper.

When the oil rises to the surface, isolating the pesto from the air, close adding, if needed a little oil.



POTATO GNOCCHI

To make gnocchi is easy and fun. This is the basic recipe. You can add to the dough cheese or vegetables like spinach or herbs, make them larger or smaller and use any sauce you like or make a wonderful gratin with béchamel sauce and cheese or serve them with fresh cubed tomato, mozzarella and basil ...

INGREDIENTS:

1 kg of potato (approximately 4 large potatoes). Use old potatoes. New and watery potatoes are not good for gnocchi.

2 ½ cups (300 gr) all-purpose flour plus 1/2 cup or more for working the dough

1/2 teaspoon salt

1 egg (lightly whisked)

PREPARATION:

In a large pot with enough water to cover them, boil potatoes with their skins on.

Boil until fork tender. Do not over boil.

Remove potatoes and allow them to cool in a colander.

Peel boiled potatoes, removing any brown spots.

Using a potato ricer or a grater, shred the potatoes finely.

Make a flat mound of the shredded potato in the middle of a clean, dry countertop.

Add the flour on the top. Sprinkle with salt

Make a well in the middle of the potato and flour mound and fill it with the beaten egg.

Using your hands and starting from the outside, slowly pull flour and potato to the middle of the mound.

Combine all the ingredients and knead just enough to form a dough.

Do not work the dough too much. It should have a light and airy texture.

Cut the dough into 8-10 pieces and roll each piece into an even rope.

Cut the dough ropes into 3 cm pieces keeping the working surface floured.

Use a fork to create ridges on the surface of your gnocchi.

Cook the gnocchi in a large pot of salted water. When they are cooked they will float to the surface.

Remove them with a slotted spoon and serve with your favourite sauce.



PUMPKIN GNOCCHI WITH BUTTER, SAGE AND PECORINO

It is pumpkin season again and this Northern Italian classic could be a welcome new way to serve this seasonal favourite. Try it and you will not be disappointed.

To prepare good pumpkin gnocchi, soft and compact, it is important to cook the pumpkin in the oven to dry the pulp. If your pumpkin contains a lot of water you can add to the mixture a potato, boiled and mashed. Its starch will make it easy to shape the gnocchi. Dress these pumpkin dumplings with a light sauce as you do not want to overwhelm their taste. Butter, sage and pecorino cheese are perfect.

INGREDIENTS:

For the Gnocchi

600 grams of cooked pumpkin pulp (about 1, 3 kg of fresh pumpkin)

300 g flour

1 egg

salt

sugar

For the sauce

80 g butter

sage

pecorino cheese

PREPARATION:

Divide the pumpkin into large wedges, remove the seeds, but leave the peel. Wrap them in a sheet of aluminum foil and place them in a hot oven at 200 ° C for about one hour. The cooking time depends on the size of the pumpkin.

After cooking the pulp of the pumpkin should come off easily from the peel and have a very smooth texture, so it can be easily reduced to puree in a food processor. Let it cool. In a bowl or on a floured work surface, mix the pumpkin puree with flour, egg and salt. Add a pinch of sugar.

Knead until you have a smooth dough. Divide the dough into pieces. Form in rolls and cut into pieces of about a centimeter and a half to form the dumplings. With the tines of a fork or simply with the hands, give to your gnocchi their typical shape.

Prepare the sauce for the dumplings: melt the butter with the sage in a frying pan on low fire.

Cook the gnocchi in salted water for a few minutes. They will be ready as soon as they rise to the surface. Take them out with a slotted spoon and toss with the melted butter, turning gently in the still hot pot or in a bowl.

Serve the pumpkin gnocchi with a generous spoonful of pecorino.



PUTTANESCA SAUCE

Spectacular and easy to prepare. Any pasta will do but, if you ask me, bucatini !!!
Literally whore-style sauce. The colorful name does not necessarily refer to a tart.
Puttana (and derivatives) is an all-purpose expletive used in Italian for a lot of things including anything messy ,undignified or hastily executed. The result shows,one more time,that Italians have a way of making a work of art out of a mess.

INGREDIENTS :

- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 2 cloves garlic (thinly sliced)
- 400 grams chopped tomatoes or halved cherry tomatoes
- 1 tablespoon capers
- 2 anchovies, chopped
- 1 handful black olives, halved
- 1 pinch of dried chili flakes
- 1 bunch fresh parsley roughly chopped
- 1 pinch oregano
- 1 pinch shredded basil leaves
- Salt and pepper

PREPARATION :

Heat the oil in a pan, add the garlic and cook until soft.
Add the tomatoes, capers, anchovies, olives and chili. Simmer for 10 minutes until thickened.
Add the herbs, stir and simmer for 1 minute. Add salt and pepper to taste



RAGU' ALLA BOLOGNESE

This is a work of art. A wonder. Magic, science and love.

Try it out, be very patient and you will be rewarded with a unique experience.

There are two kinds of Ragu, the Bolognese and the Napoletano (another work of art taking hours to prepare). Both of them do not have anything to do with the greasy tomato and meat mess served outside Italy as Spaghetti Bolognese. Ragu' alla Bolognese should be served with Egg Tagliatelle or Fettuccine and is a meat sauce not a tomato sauce. It takes very long time, has to be prepared in large batches and gets only better if kept in the fridge, frozen or reheated. Every family makes some small variations, adding herbs or mushrooms or other ingredients, using lard instead of oil and butter but this is the basic recipe guaranteed to deliver a fantastic gastronomic experience.

INGREDIENTS:

3 tablespoons olive oil
3 tablespoons unsalted butter
1 cup finely chopped onion
1 1/2 cups chopped celery
1 1/2 cups chopped carrot
500 grams ground beef
200 grams ground pork
300 grams finely chopped pancetta and/or
parma ham (from the end of the ham, the so
called gambuccio)

Salt

Freshly ground black pepper
2 cups milk
1/4 teaspoon ground nutmeg
2 bay leaves
3 cups beef stock
2 cups dry white wine (if you do not have it
also red will do but dry, to add acidity)
1 cup tomato paste
2 large ripe tomatoes peeled, seeded and cubed

PREPARATION:

In a large enameled or clay pot set over medium heat combine oil and butter and warm until the butter has melted. Add the onion and stir until it becomes translucent. Add the celery and carrot and cook, stirring the vegetables until softened. Add the meats, salt and pepper. Cook, stirring and crumbling until the meat has lost its red color. Add milk, lower the fire, and let it simmer, stirring frequently, until it has been completely absorbed. This will take one hour or more. Add the nutmeg and bay leaves and stir. When it starts sizzling add the wine and let it simmer until it has evaporated. Be patient and keep stirring and mixing. When it starts sizzling again add half of the stock and let it evaporate. Add the tomatoes and the tomato paste and stir. When the tomatoes start bubbling, turn the heat down to the minimum. Keep cooking the ragu', half covered, for 3 hours or more, stirring from time to time. Add 1/2 cup of stock, whenever necessary, to keep it from sticking. At the end there should be very little liquid left in the sauce and the fluidity should be given by fat and juices. Taste and adjust the salt, if needed. Ready



RED SICILIAN PESTO

Pesto alla Genovese is spectacular and rightfully world famous. There is an official institution to protect it, a D.O.P. (Protected origin denomination) and an official recipe for it. Its southern cousin, Red Sicilian Pesto, does not enjoy the same protection and popularity.

It comes in countless variations and this is my personal one. It makes a superb pasta sauce, a wonderful dip or spread, a surprising salad dressing and is fantastic mixed with ricotta or fresh goat cheese.

INGREDIENTS:

- 1 cup of basil leaves
- 60 gram Pecorino cheese grated
- 15 gram pine nuts
- 15 grams toasted and peeled almonds
- 1 hot chili pepper
- 2 garlic cloves
- 3 large fresh tomatoes peeled and seeds removed
- 1 cup sundried tomatoes
- 1 cup black olives
- 1 teaspoon Oregano
- 1 tablespoon Balsamic vinegar
- Extra virgin olive oil

PREPARATION:

Put all the ingredients into a food processor.

Blend until everything is fluid but a bit coarse.

Add some more olive oil if the pesto seems to dry for your taste.



RISOTTO ALLA MILANESE

In this book there is a recipe for ossobuco and risotto alla Milanese is the ideal companion for it. Risotto alla Milanese is also served as a main dish. In that case bone marrow and Porcini mushrooms can be added but,

being part of the ossobuco recipe, I have omitted them.

Rice has been grown in Italy since ancient times,

Pliny being the first to mention it and today Italy is the 1st producer of rice in Europe and 5th in the world.

Among the different qualities of rice, there are some particularly suitable for risotto, such as Arborio, Carnaroli, Maratelli, Vialone nano. They are short-grained and with high starch content.

The starch and the particular way of cooking, as you will see from the recipe, bind the grains together giving Italian risotto its exceptionally smooth and creamy consistency.

INGREDIENTS:

6 cups chicken stock

¼ teaspoon saffron powder or threads

4 tablespoons unsalted butter

1 small yellow onion, finely chopped

2 cups Arborio or Carnaroli rice

1 cup dry white wine

½ cup grated Parmesan

1 tablespoon chopped parsley

Salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste

PREPARATION:

Heat stock in a pan over medium heat, add the saffron and keep warm.

Heat 3 tablespoons of butter in a pan over medium heat.

Add the onions and cook until soft.

Add the rice and cook until lightly toasted and translucent. Add the wine and let evaporate stirring constantly.

Add ½ cup warm stock and cook, stirring, until absorbed.

Continue adding stock, ½ cup at a time, and cooking until absorbed before adding more, until rice is tender and creamy.

Add the remaining butter, Parmesan, season with salt and pepper and let rest for one minute.

Put in plates, sprinkle with chopped parsley and more Parmesan and serve.



RISOTTO WITH SPICY SAUSAGE, RADICCHIO AND BALSAMIC VINEGAR

Radicchio has a bitter accent perfectly completing the mild creaminess of risotto and the spiciness of Italian sausages.

This recipe is a classic of northern Italian cuisine and the addition of Balsamic Vinegar is the perfect finishing touch.

Keep your Radicchio in the fridge with the bottom part or the roots if they are still attached in a glass of water for a couple of hours and it will be perfectly crisp.

INGREDIENTS:

280 g Carnaroli or Arborio rice
200 g of spicy Italian sausage
1/2 onion
3 tablespoons grated Parmesan
2 tablespoons balsamic vinegar
2 red radicchio
4 tablespoons oil
Broth (made with stock cubes will do)
Red wine
salt
pepper

PREPARATION:

In a saucepan heat the oil and add the finely chopped onion.

When it is transparent, add the peeled and crumbled sausage. Let it brown for 3-4 minutes.

Pour the rice into the pan and stir well.

Let the rice absorb some of the fat released by the sausage and sprinkle with wine.

Let the wine evaporate and continue cooking for about 15 minutes, adding a little hot broth at a time, stirring.

When cooked withdrawn from the fire and add the radicchio cut into strips.

Add the grated cheese and salt and pepper.

While it's still hot, add the balsamic vinegar and stir the risotto.

Decorate with some Radicchio strips and serve.



RISOTTO WITH ZUCCHINI AND SHRIMPS

Simple,tasty and fast risotto.Once more the secret is top quality ingredients and patience.

The continuous stirring and adding broth is essential to the creamy consistency that makes Italian risotto so different.

Cooking is science and art and it requires love and attention.This preparation requires your presence and care.

Give it your attention and you will be rewarded.

INGREDIENTS :

300 g of risotto rice

3 medium zucchini

3 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil

20g butter

1 glass of dry white wine

30 g parmesan cheese

1 clove of garlic

½ liter of vegetable stock

2 cups of shrimps shelled and deveined

Salt

Chopped parsley

PREPARATION:

Pour the olive oil in a pan .Peel the garlic

Wash and trim the zucchini. Cut into small cubes.

Heat the oil and add the garlic and zucchini . Remove the garlic when it is golden.

Wet the zucchini with half a cup of broth and cook over moderate heat.

As soon as the broth is absorbed pour in the rice and let it toast briefly

When the rice gets translucent pour the wine and a ladle of hot broth and stir with a wooden spoon.

Let the rice absorb the liquid stirring constantly.

Continue cooking gradually adding broth only when the previous one is absorbed

Add the shrimps and stir for a couple of minutes adding all the remaining broth

Remove from heat and stir in the Parmesan cheese and butter.

Sprinkle with chopped parsley and serve hot.



SALMON RISOTTO WITH LEEKS AND DILL

This salmon risotto is a classic, a quick and easy dish for any occasion and very fast to prepare if you have unexpected guests.

It requires very few ingredients. An Italian short grain rice such as Arborio or Carnaroli is used because it can take a lot of liquid.

The secret to a good risotto is to constantly stir it while the rice cooks to keep a creamy consistency and avoid the rice to dry.

If you want to make it a bit more interesting and unconventional add a pinch of poppy seeds or a couple of broken walnuts.

INGREDIENTS:

320 g Carnaroli or Arborio rice

200 g smoked salmon

1 leek

Extra virgin olive oil

40 g of butter

Parsley

Dill

1 glass of Grappa or Vodka

Broth (also made with stock cubes)

Salt

Pepper

PREPARATION:

Clean the leek and slice it finely.

Sauté the leeks gently in a saucepan together with olive oil.

When it becomes transparent, add the rice and toast it for a few minutes until translucent.

Add the grappa or vodka and let evaporate over high heat.

Add a couple of ladles of hot broth and cook lowering the flame and adding more broth a little at a time.

Keep cooking on a low flame stirring constantly.

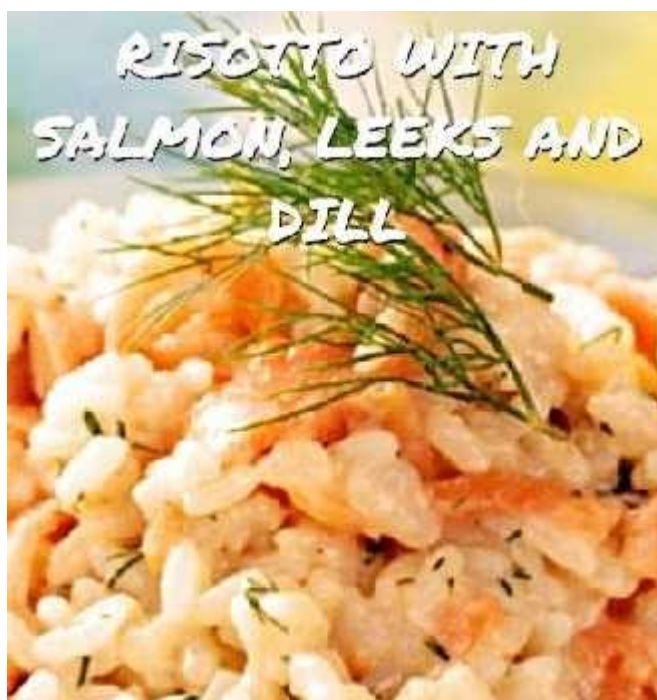
When the risotto is creamy and cooked remove from heat and add butter and the salmon cut into small pieces.

Add half of the chopped parsley and dill.

Lay aside one third of the salmon cut into strips that you will use for decoration.

Stir, add salt and pepper decorate with the remaining salmon and parsley and dill. Serve immediately.

All the ingredients are available in our shops



SPAGHETTI AGLIO, OLIO E PEPERONCINO

Just four simple ingredients of great quality and a few minutes and that's one of the most famous first courses of traditional Italian cuisine.

Spaghetti with garlic, oil and hot peppers are a simple and inexpensive recipe that everyone likes and a great way to fix dinner for unexpected guests.

As always the secret is just ingredients of great quality and a bit of care and love.

INGREDIENTS

320 g of spaghetti
4 cloves garlic
2 chillies
1 bunch of parsley
Extra virgin olive oil

PREPARATION

Heat the oil in a pan with the garlic, peeled and cut in quarters

Sauté over medium heat, and being careful not to burn the garlic

Add the chillies cut into strips and cook for a few seconds and remove from the fire

Cook the spaghetti very “al dente” in salted water.

Drain the pasta and keep a glass of the cooking water

Put again the pan on the fire and add the spaghetti and little by little the cooking water, stirring until they are cooked.

Serve the spaghetti adding fresh parsley



SPAGHETTI ALLA CAPRESE

Very simple and fresh. Ideal for the summer. The real secrets of Italian cuisine are simplicity and ingredients of superb quality. And a dash of love for what you are doing.

INGREDIENTS:

300 gr spaghetti
3 firm tomatoes
1 mozzarella cubed (buffalo is better)
1/2 cup extra-virgin olive oil
1 teaspoon oregano
1 garlic clove
1 whole small chili pepper
5/6 fresh basil leaves chopped
Salt and pepper

PREPARATION :

Cut a cross on the bottom of the tomatoes and drop them for a few seconds in boiling water.
Remove the tomatoes from boiling water and put them under cold running water .
Now they will be very easy to peel. Cut them in cubes.
Heat the oil in a pan. Sauté the peeled, lightly crushed garlic and chili.
Remove the garlic and chili and add the tomato cubes and oregano.
Lower the heat and cook for approximately 2 minutes.
They will release a bit of fluids but keep firmness and shape.
Add salt and season with pepper.
Cook the Spaghetti in boiling salted water, drain, and pour into the sauce.
Add cubed mozzarella and basil and mix .Ready.



SPAGHETTI ALLA CARBONARA

On the 4th of June 1944 allied troops entered Rome. There was not much left to eat in town. British officers asked the owner of the Trattoria del Carbonaro, not far from the Vatican, to cook for them.

He had only spaghetti and Parmesan cheese. They handed him their breakfast rations :condensed milk, dry bacon and dehydrated eggs. The result was to become a classic of the Roman cuisine.

INGREDIENTS:

1 Tablespoon olive oil
200 gr bacon, diced
4 eggs
1 cup grated parmesan
400 gr. spaghetti pasta
Salt and black pepper to taste
2 tablespoons milk or cream
1 dash wine

PREPARATION:

- 1) Heat the olive oil in a pan over medium heat.
- 2) Add the bacon and cook until crispy adding a dash of wine just before turning off the fire.
- 3) Beat the eggs and mix in the cheese and the cream or milk .
- 4) Cook the spaghetti in boiling salted water.
- 5) When the pasta is al dente (still a little firm) drain it.
- 6) Put it back in the warm pot, add the bacon and the egg mixture.
The heat of pasta and pot will turn the eggs into a creamy sauce.
- 7) Mix rapidly to coat the spaghetti and keep the sauce fluid. Ready



SPAGHETTI WITH ANCHOVIES, CAPERS, OLIVES AND BREADCRUMBS

This is known also as White Puttanesca, Spaghetti con la mollica, Spaghetti alla Calabrese and so on. The truth is that this preparation is common to all the Tyrrhenian coast, from north to south and was, probably, something prepared on board of fishing boats.

Inexpensive ingredients that can be stored for long time, a very easy and fast preparation and a superb result

INGREDIENTS:

400g spaghetti
Salt and pepper
 $\frac{3}{4}$ cup olive oil
100 gr taggiasca, nicoise or small green olives
2 garlic cloves, crushed
2 small red chilies, finely chopped
2 tablespoons salted capers, rinsed
6 anchovy fillets
60g breadcrumbs

PREPARATION:

Add the spaghetti to a large pan of boiling salted water and cook until al dente.

Heat half of the olive oil in a pan, add the olives, chilies, garlic, capers and 4 anchovies.

Stir to dissolve the anchovies.

Add the breadcrumbs and the remaining oil.

Cook, stirring constantly, until the breadcrumbs are golden and crunchy and coated in oil.

Drain the pasta as soon as it is ready and toss this into the sauce.

Add the parsley, the remaining anchovies thorn in small pieces and mix to coat.

Mix one more time and serve.



SPAGHETTI WITH CLAMS

This is the sea in a plate. It is all about timing. You have to prepare the clams while the pasta is cooking. Do not let anything get cold. Above all prepare some bread to mop up the juices, it is the best part. It can be prepared also without the tomatoes. One more time, simplicity and top class ingredients are the key.

INGREDIENTS:

350 spaghetti
1 kg clams, scrubbed
100 ml extra-virgin olive oil
1 glass dry white wine
15 cherry tomatoes quartered
3 tbsp. chopped fresh parsley
2 cloves garlic, chopped
1 or 2 red chili pepper chopped
Salt and pepper

PREPARATION:

Bring a pot of salted water to a boil.

Heat 1 tbsp. of the oil in a large skillet.

Add the garlic, 2 spoons of parsley, salt and pepper and the tomatoes.

When the garlic starts colouring add the clams and the wine.

It will sizzle and splutter so cover and give it a good shake.

Keep shaking and the clams will be open after 2-3 minutes.

Remove the skillet from the heat.

Meanwhile, cook the spaghetti in the boiling water until al dente. Drain.

Add the pasta to the clam mixture, adding a little pasta water.

Sautee' and mix for 10/15 seconds.

Transfer to plates and serve with all the juices, sprinkled generously with pepper and parsley.



SPAGHETTI WITH GARLIC, ANCHOVIES AND BROCCOLI

Easy, tasty, healthy and inexpensive. A recipe could not be better

Ingredients:

500 gr. spaghetti
400 gr. broccoli florets
1 cup grated Pecorino Romano
6 cloves garlic, minced
4 anchovies, deboned and chopped
1/2 teaspoon chili flakes
1/3 cup extra-virgin olive oil
salt

Preparation:

Bring a pot of water and salt to a boil
Add the broccoli and cook for 5 minutes.
Remove the broccoli.
Keep the water to cook the spaghetti.
In a pan heat the olive oil.
Add garlic, anchovies, and chili and simmer 2 minutes.
Add the broccoli, cook for 10 minutes over medium.
Bring the reserved water to a boil.
Cook the spaghetti al dente.
Drain, keeping 1 cup of the cooking water.
Mix the Spaghetti with the broccoli in the pan.
Add the cooking water, season with salt.
Cook for 1 minute.
Remove from pan and dust with Pecorino. Ready



SPAGHETTI WITH LEMON, PINENUTS AN SPRING ONIONS

These spaghetti always lift my mood. This recipe has somehow become a classic. Spaghetti al Limone was a sort of novelty in the late sixties. It was often prepared with a deluge of cream and vodka, caviar, smoked salmon or prawns and all the fancy things so popular at the time. I have cleaned a bit the recipe keeping just the basics and in my opinion it works very well.

INGREDIENTS

2 spring onions
4 lemons
6 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
30 g butter
350g spaghetti
100 gr coarsely grated pecorino
100 gr crumbled pecorino
2 tablespoons pine nuts
black pepper

PREPARATION

In a tall pot bring water to boil add salt and the spaghetti.

Wash the lemons, dry them and grate the rind avoiding the white part. Squeeze all the juice out of the lemons.

In a skillet melt the butter and 2 tablespoons oil. Add the lemon zest and cook for a minute.

This step is crucial: make sure not to overcook it. You should not darken it, otherwise it will give the sauce a bitter taste.

Add the pine nuts, half ladle of pasta cooking water and half of the lemon juice. Let evaporate half of the liquid.

In a bowl mix the pecorino with the remaining lemon juice. Add the remaining oil and stir.

Clean the spring onions, cut into thin slices, and mix with pecorino cheese, olive oil and lemon juice.

Drain the spaghetti al dente, pour into the pan with the sauce of lemon and pine nuts.

Stir for 10 seconds. Turn off the heat and add the cheese and spring onions mixture.

Stir and serve sprinkling with a generous grinding of black pepper.



TORTELLINI

Labour intensive but not difficult, Tortellini are traditionally served with chicken or beef broth for Christmas. They can also be served with any number of sauces, from a simple butter and sage to an elaborate meat sauce and the result is always wonderful. Tortellini are said to be shaped like the bellybutton of Venus and the first written recipe for this delicacy is nearly 1000 years old. There is a lasting rivalry between Bologna and Modena about the paternity of this recipe and about who makes the best ones. Let them dry for a couple of hours before cooking them for an optimal result. Frozen they will keep for several months.

INGREDIENTS

For The Dough:

800 g flour

8 eggs

50 g mortadella

Celery, carrot and onion

1 egg

150 Grated Parmesan Cheese

2 tablespoons breadcrumbs

30 butter

salt

nutmeg.

For The Stuffing:

150g minced pork

150g minced beef:

100 gr ham

Mix the beef with pork and sausage. Chopped the vegetables very finely. In a food processor mince ham and mortadella. Melt butter in a pan and add vegetables and ground beef and cook for a couple of minutes until browned and soft. When cooked, add salt, then drain the water that eventually the ground meat has released during cooking and let cool. In a bowl mix the cooled meat and vegetables with raw ham and mortadella, parmesan, breadcrumbs, egg, a little salt and grated nutmeg. Mix well and refrigerate for 1 hour. Prepare the dough: Sift the flour carefully, and make a mound. Add the eggs in the middle and a pinch of salt. Mix the eggs with a fork breaking the yolk, then start to incorporate the flour with your fingertips, starting from the edges. Knead by hand taking care to sprinkle once in a while the pastry with a little flour. Continue until the dough is firm and smooth. Form a ball. Let it stand for half an hour. With a rolling pin or pasta machine roll out a thin sheet of dough. Cut the dough into small squares. Place at the center of each square of dough a little filling then fold the dough into a triangle pressing the edges well. Tighten between your thumb and forefinger the corners of the longest side and press together the two corners until they stick together. Your tortellini are ready to be cooked in a good chicken or beef broth and served with grated Parmesan and chopped parsley.



VEGETARIAN BOLOGNESE SAUCE

Yes it is possible. This is an excellent vegetarian sauce very closely resembling in taste and texture the classic meat Bolognese. Personally I like to add also mushrooms. In this recipe I have omitted them because they add a very strong and distinctive taste. With this sauce you can also prepare a beautiful vegetarian lasagna. I know the soy sauce may seem incongruous but it is a beautiful browning agent and gives the sauce a bit of extra taste bringing it extremely close to the meaty version.

Ingredients :

2 Onions	4 tablespoons of Extra virgin olive oil
1 clove Garlic	1 small hot Chili pepper
3 Celery sticks with leaves	1 teaspoon Oregano
2 carrots	1 teaspoon Rosemary
2 Eggplant	6 Basil leaves
2 Zucchini	2 bay leaves
6 large Tomatoes ,peeled and cubed	1 tablespoon soy sauce
1 glass of red wine	Pepper and salt.

Preparation:

Chop finely the onions, celery, zucchini, eggplant and carrots.

Put the oil in a pot and heat adding the halved garlic clove.

Add the vegetables and a few tablespoons of water.

Cook at low heat until the vegetables are transparent and soft.

Add the olive oil and all the herbs and sauté stirring constantly with a wooden spoon.

Add the tomatoes and chili and cook on low never letting it boil or stick to the bottom of the pan.

When the sauce has reduced by about a third and appears thick add the wine.

Raise the heat for a minute or two, stirring constantly.

Lower again the fire, season with salt and pepper. Add the soy sauce.

Keep stirring and continue cooking for another twenty minutes.



WALNUT SAUCE

This venerable Ligurian sauce probably predates any other sauce used in Italian Cuisine and is traditionally used for ricotta and spinach ravioli called “Pansotti” but is great with any other kind of pasta. It makes also a very tasty dip and I have seen it and tasted it as a superb filling for crepes.

INGREDIENTS :

50g walnuts
200ml cream
1 tablespoon of butter
50g finely grated parmesan
Salt and pepper

PREPARATION :

Put the walnuts in a food processor until coarsely ground.
Melt the butter in a pan and add the cream over medium heat.
Gently heat through, making sure not to boil.
Add ground walnuts, parmesan, black pepper and salt to taste.
Mix over medium heat for 30 seconds. Ready.



4. MEAT AND FISH



ARISTA – TUSCAN STYLE ROAST PORK LOIN

I spent several years in Florence, long time ago. This was one of the inexpensive delicacies one could buy from small Rosticceria shops and eat on the spot or get in a sandwich. They would also cook the most spectacular roast potatoes I ever tasted in the same tray with the remaining herbs and juices.

INGREDIENTS:

800 g pork loin. Cut in the middle to be filled with herbs.

A bottle of white wine

Sage, oregano and rosemary

8 cloves of garlic

3 teaspoons fennel seeds

Extra-virgin olive oil

Salt and pepper

String to tie the roast

PREPARATION :

Preheat your oven to 220°C

In a food processor finely grind sage leaves, oregano, rosemary, garlic, fennel seeds, salt and pepper.

Push half this mixture, in the cut in the middle of the meat.

Tie the meat with string and brush it with olive oil.

Roll the joint in the remaining seasonings, coating well.

Put in oiled oven tray and cook turning a couple of times until a crust forms on the meat.

Lower the heat to 180°C and cook for a further 40-50 minutes

Add glasses of wine periodically

Check that that no blood runs out of the roast. If it does, cook it a little longer. Remove from tray and slice.

Add the remaining wine to the tray and mix with juices to make a sauce. Let reduce for 2-3 minutes.

Pour over roast. Done



BEEF FILET WITH BALSAMIC, OLIVES AND BASIL

Easy, fast and tasty way to prepare beef filet with a distinctive Italian touch. I add also some oregano but I am an oregano maniac and would put it also in my coffee.

INGREDIENTS:

3 tablespoons olive oil
3 tablespoons balsamic vinegar
1 teaspoons strong mustard
2 garlic cloves, crushed
4 thick slices beef tenderloin
1 cup Kalamata olives, pitted and halved
½ cup basil, chopped.

PREPARATION:

1. Mix oil, balsamic vinegar, mustard and garlic. Cut parallel lines in the meat on both sides then put into a dish. Pour over the balsamic mixture and leave to marinate for 10 minutes.
2. Heat a pan until very hot. Cook the beef for 2 minutes on each side. Remove the meat and keep warm. Pour the marinade into the pan with the olives, cook for 2 minutes, then stir in the basil. Pour any juices from the meat into the pan, drizzle the sauce over the beef. Ready.



CHICKEN ALLA ROMANA WITH BELL PEPPERS

Another Roman classic . In the past it was a summer favourite but it is very tasty at any time of the year. It can also be eaten cold or reheated. According to some it even tastes better when consumed reheated. This is the basic version but you can add oregano, capers or black olives if you like.

INGREDIENTS:

1 whole chicken cut in pieces
4 green, yellow and red peppers cut in stripes
6 ripe tomatoes
2 garlic cloves minced
½ red onion chopped
Extra-virgin olive oil
1 cup dry white wine
salt and pepper

PREPARATION:

Saute' peppers in a pan with oil, salt and onion until soft.
Sauté chicken pieces in another pan with olive oil.
Get it brown and add salt, pepper, minced garlic and wine.
When the wine is evaporated add tomatoes cut into pieces.
Add the peppers with oil, salt and onion.
Saute' for some minutes and serve.



CHICKEN BREAST WITH LEMON AND OLIVES

When days get longer and warmer this recipe, inspired by a traditional Moroccan preparation, is a perfect introduction to summer (or a pleasant reminder of it during the long winter).

INGREDIENTS:

4 chicken breast halved
Salt and pepper
3 tablespoons olive oil
2 lemons
2 onions, chopped
4 cloves garlic, minced
1 cup green olives, pitted and halved
2 cups chicken stock
1 teaspoon dried thyme
2 tablespoons drained capers
1/2 teaspoon crushed pepper

PREPARATION:

Sprinkle chicken with salt and pepper.
In a pan, heat 2 tablespoons oil over medium heat.
Sear chicken until golden brown on both sides.
Transfer chicken to a plate.
Cut lemons into thin slices.
Cook onions and garlic over medium heat until soft.
Stir in lemon slices, olives, capers, stock, and 2 cups water.
Bring to a boil, reduce heat, and simmer for 10 minutes.
Put chicken on top, pour in juices from the plate.
Sprinkle with olive oil, thyme and pepper.
Cover, and simmer about 15 minutes.



CHICKEN CACCIATORA

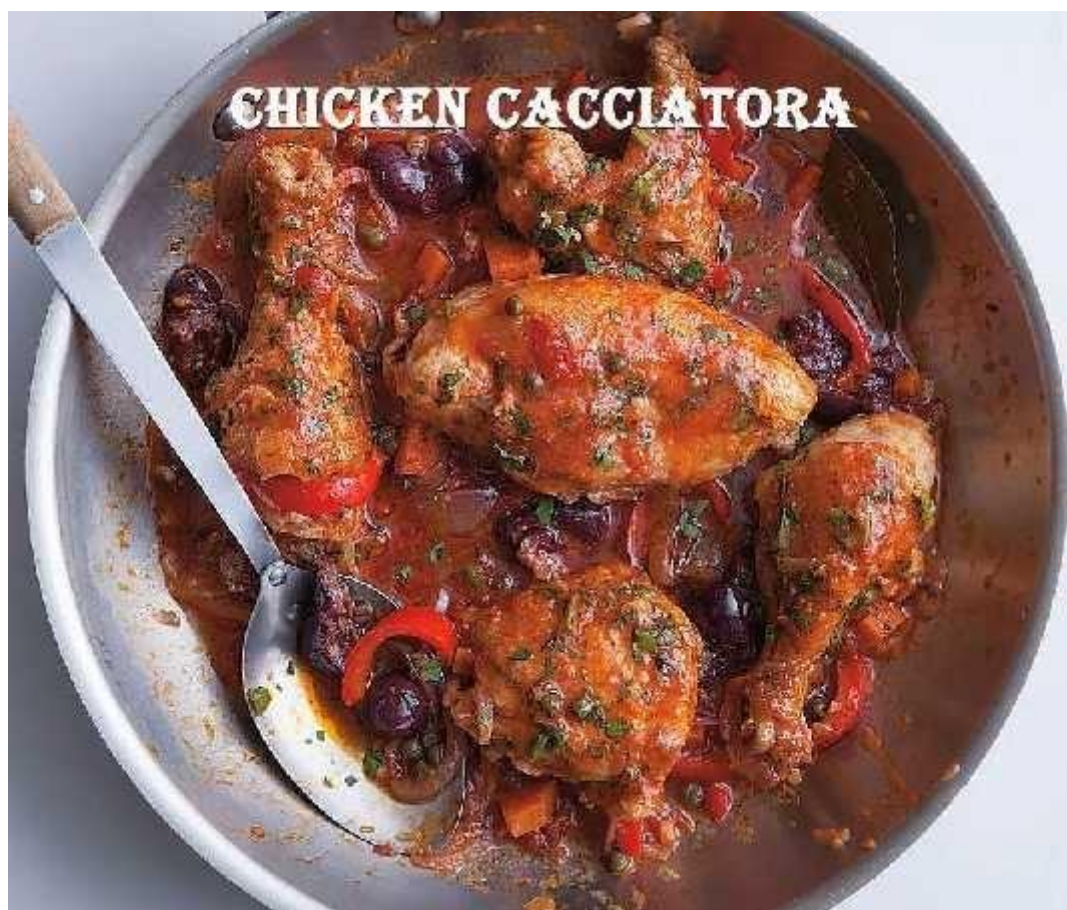
A lot of ingredients, I know, but so easy to prepare and ideal on cold days. It is a great Italian classic . Cacciatore means “Hunter” and rabbit, pheasant ,quail and hare can be prepared the same way with equally tasty results.

INGREDIENTS :

3 tablespoons olive oil
400 g chicken in large pieces
2 cups flour
2 cups black olives
1 onion, chopped
2 garlic cloves, crushed
2 large tomatoes peeled and chopped
1 carrot sliced
200g mushrooms sliced
2 cups red wine
2 tablespoons tomato purée
Thyme ,rosemary, oregano, parsley as needed
2 bay leaves
3 cups chicken stock
Salt and black pepper to taste

PREPARATION :

In a bowl, combine flour, salt, and pepper. Coat the chicken with the flour mixture.
Heat oil in a saucepan over medium. Add the chicken . Cook until browned. Transfer to a plate.
Add onion to the pan, cook for 2 minutes. Add carrot, garlic, herbs and bay leaf. Cook for 10 minutes.
Add tomatoes and tomato paste. Add chicken stock, adjust salt and pepper and bring to a simmer.
Add chicken, wine, olives and mushrooms, reduce heat, and cover. Simmer for 45 minutes. Remove the bay leaf. Stir in parsley. Ready



DUCK BREASTS WITH HONEY AND BALSAMIC SAUCE

Duck is something closely associated with Christmas for me. This preparation is easy, elegant and extremely tasty. The very simple sauce made with honey and balsamic complements perfectly the distinctive taste of the duck. Do not overcook the sauce or you will end up with a sticky caramelized and unusable goo.

INGREDIENTS:

2 boneless duck breasts
½ yellow onion, finely chopped
1 clove garlic
3 tbsp. (approx. 60 g) honey
3 tbsp. balsamic vinegar
Fresh rosemary, sage and bay leaf, as needed
salt and pepper

PREPARATION:

Heat the oven to 180°.

Cut diagonally the skin and fat on the duck breasts without cutting into the meat and season with salt and pepper.

Heat a heavy pan until hot and cook the duck skin side down first, until crisp. Preheat the oven to 180°.

Transfer the duck breasts to a baking pan (setting the heavy pan aside with all the juices), and add garlic, clove, onion and herbs.

Roast in the oven for about 10 minutes. The duck breasts should still be soft and pink inside.

Let them rest for a few minutes, covered with aluminum foil.

Spoon back the fat from the baking pan in the heavy pan you have set apart and then add the honey and the balsamic vinegar.

Bring to a gentle boil and, when you have obtained the desired thickness, strain the sauce through a sieve.

Serve the duck breasts sliced and covered with the honey and balsamic sauce.



FISH FINGERS

If you miss them there is a way to make them at home and they are much, much better than anything from a box.

INGREDIENTS

1/2 cup flour

1 egg, beaten

1/2 cup dry bread crumbs

1/2 teaspoon salt

1/2 teaspoon paprika

1/2 teaspoon lemon-pepper seasoning

500 gr salmon, tuna or other any boneless and compact white fish

PREPARATION

Clean the fish removing any bones, skin and innards. cut the fish meat in square sticks. Place flour and egg in separate shallow bowls. in another shallow bowl, combine bread crumbs and seasonings. dip fish in the flour, then egg, then roll in the crumb mixture. Vacuum pack and freeze immediately. Fry frozen.



GRILLED PORK CHOPS WITH SCAMORZA

Scamorza, or Provolone affumicata, is a stretched paste cheese, a bit similar to a hard mozzarella. The smoking process gives to the cheese an elastic, brown skin. The skin is edible. Never discard it but keep it, both if you are eating the cheese fresh or if you are using it to cook as in this recipe.

INGREDIENTS:

Pork chops
Smoked Scamorza cheese sliced
Cubed tomatoes
Sliced green chilies
Basil
Butter
Flour
Salt and Pepper

PREPARATION:

Preheat the oven to 200 C.
Mix salt, pepper and flour and coat the pork chops.
In a pan warm the butter.
Brown the meat on one side, turn and brown on the other side.
Place the meat in one layer in an oven tray.
Cover each pork chop with cheese and sprinkle with tomato, green chilies and basil.
Place in the oven until the cheese is melted. Done



OSSOBUCCO

A magnificent way to cook a humble cut and a classic of the Northern Italian cuisine, Ossobuco is wrongly believed to be a difficult preparation. In fact it is easy, it just takes a bit of time and patience. The first recipe recorded, to my knowledge, is in an 18th century cookbook and it is a white version, with no tomatoes. Nowadays it is mostly prepared as in my recipe if paired with polenta, or without tomatoes if paired with risotto.

INGREDIENTS:

- 15 gr dried porcini
- 4 thick cut veal shin bone slices, complete with marrow, about 4 cm high.
- 1 cup plain flour
- 50g unsalted butter
- 3 tbsp olive oil
- 1 large carrot, diced
- 1 large celery stick, trimmed and diced
- ½ cup onion finely chopped
- 2 cups dry white wine
- 2 cups tomatoes pureed
- 2 cups beef broth (also made with stock cubes)
- 2 bay leaves
- 1 tablespoon of chopped parsley

PREPARATION:

Soak the porcini for at least 15 minutes in 200ml lukewarm water.
Trim off fat or lumpy bits from the meat. Dust both sides of the meat with the flour seasoned with salt and pepper. Heat the butter and oil in a very large pan over a medium heat.
Put in the veal and brown the slices for 2-3 minutes on each side until golden.
Transfer the meat to a plate. In the hot pan over a low heat cook gently the carrot and celery for 5 minutes until they have softened. Raise the heat and pour in the wine. Let reduce for 2 minutes, then remove the pan from the heat. Take the porcini out of the water. Squeeze out the excess moisture and reserve it. Chop the porcini and add to the pan, together with the soaking liquid.
Add the tomatoes, onions, bay leaves and broth, then stir. Put the veal back into the pan and cover. Immediately reduce the heat and simmer very gently for 1 hour, turning the veal until the meat is very soft. The liquid will reduce to a thick sauce. If not, half remove the lid to allow evaporation.
Serve sprinkled with parsley and paired with polenta or saffron risotto.



POLPETTE AL SUGO – ITALIAN MEATBALLS

In Italy you will never find Spaghetti with Meatballs. It is an American invention (and not a great one, in my opinion). The closest you will find are small sausage paste balls in some pasta sauces, but that is something different. Meat balls, or better Polpetta, are a main course. The traditional Italian meal is composed by a starter (**Antipasto**), a pasta or soup (**Primo Piatto**), a meat or fish main course (**Secondo Piatto**) with a vegetable side (**Contorno**) and finally a dessert and coffee and, why not, a shot of something very alcoholic to wash the whole thing down. This on normal days. On Sundays or special occasions things get more complicated. We like it a bit Baroque. This means that Polpetta (meat balls, if you insist) should be served with their tomato sauce, much better than ketchup, and a side of salad and pureed potato. There is a fantastic Neapolitan version of this recipe with soaked raisins and pine nuts added to the meat mixture. First try the recipe given here under and then, if you are really feeling adventurous try the Neapolitan version for a spectacular experience.

INGREDIENTS:

For the Polpetta:

300 gr lean ground beef and 200 gr ground pork

2 or 3 slices of bread, crust removed

1 cup milk

1 cup of grated Parmesan

1 egg

Extra virgin olive oil

Parsley

1 cup of flour

Salt and Pepper

2 garlic cloves finely chopped

For the sauce:

500 g of tomatoes, peeled and cubed

1 small onion

3 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil

Basil leaves

PREPARATION:

First prepare the sauce.

Finely chop the onion and cook gently in a pan with 3 tablespoons of olive oil without letting it brown.

When the onion is transparent add the tomatoes, a pinch of salt and some basil leaves.

Cook the sauce for about 20 minutes until reduced of 1/3 .

For the meatballs: crumble the bread in a bowl, add the milk and let it soak well.

Wash, pat dry and finely chop a handful of parsley.

Mix the two meats in a bowl with the egg, Parmesan, parsley and the garlic.

Squeeze the bread to remove excess milk and mix with the meat and the other ingredients.

Mix all the ingredients until well amalgamated.

Divide the mixture into equal parts, more or less the size of an egg.

Place them in a plate dusted with flour. Roll the meat balls in flour shaking off the excess.

Heat a little oil in a frying pan and quickly cook meatballs, 5 or 6 at a time.

Roll them around until completely browned, approximately 2 minutes.

Remove from the pan and place them in the pot with the tomato simmering tomato sauce.

Let them cook on low for 15 minutes turning them a couple of times. Ready.



SALTIMBOCCA ALLA ROMANA

This is a traditional Roman recipe. The name means hop-in-my-mouth. The traditional size is approximately 50 gr but making them smaller will produce a wonderful bite-sized finger food. As with most Italian recipes the secret here is simplicity, few ingredients of top quality and the magic is done.

INGREDIENTS:

- 8 thin veal cutlets
- 8 slices Parma Ham
- 2 tablespoons sage, chopped plus
- 8 leaves sage
- 1/2 cup flour
- 1 tablespoon butter
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 3 tablespoons dry white wine
- 3 tablespoons chicken broth
- Salt and pepper

PREPARATION:

- Pound veal between sheets of baking paper until thin and even.
- Dredge the meat in flour and coat lightly shaking off the excess
- Place one slice of Parma ham on each slice of meat
- Put a leaf of sage on top of the ham and secure with a toothpick.
- Heat frying pan to hot, but not smoking, add butter and olive oil.
- Sauté veal on the side without the prosciutto 2 minutes.
- Turn and sauté the other side 1 more minute.
- Remove meat from pan and set aside.
- Add wine, chicken broth and chopped sage to the pan.
- Cook one minute to thicken the sauce.
- Check seasoning and add salt and pepper to taste.
- Return the veal to the pan and re-warm briefly. Ready



SCALOPPINE ALLA PIZZAIOLA

Scaloppine alla Pizzaiola are tasty,easy to prepare and enjoyed by adults and children. The combination of the freshness of tomatoes and the aroma of oregano give it a distinct Mediterranean taste.

For this recipe you can use veal,particularly suitable for its tenderness,a very lean beef or even pork loin.

Put the meat between sheets of parchment paper before you beat them with a mallet to avoid damaging the fibers.

INGREDIENTS

600 gr Veal or tender beef slices
500 gr tomatoes
½ glass of dry white wine
1 garlic clove, crushed
Salted capers
100 g Black olives, pitted
2 tablespoons butter
2 tablespoons Extra virgin olive oil
Oregano
Basil
Salt and pepper

PREPARATION

Wash the tomatoes, cut a cross in the skin on the bottom and blanch for 1 minute in boiling water. Drain and pass under cold water Peel them and remove the seeds and cut into cubes.

Cut the olives in half. Rinse the capers to remove excess salt. Keep everything aside.

Arrange the meat between two sheets of wax paper and flatten with a meat mallet. Add salt and pepper.

Melt the butter in a pan butter and add the meat.

Add the wine and let evaporate.

Sauté the slices, turning them, until they are golden.

In the same pan heat the oil, sauté the garlic and remove it.

Add the tomatoes, olives and capers; add salt and cook for 1 minute.

Add the meat covering it well with the sauce.

Reduce heat and simmer for a couple of minutes without letting the sauce reduce too much.

Place the scaloppine on a serving plate, add the sauce, sprinkle with plenty of oregano and garnish with basil leaves.



VEAL IN TUNA SAUCE – VITELLO TONNATO

Directly from a hot summer day of the Sixties a memorable Italian classic. I am not talking about music but about a preparation originating in Piedmont. Pairing meat and fish may seem a bit odd but the result is without equal.

INGREDIENTS:

For the Veal

600 g Veal (any lean cut)

1 Carrot

1 Stalk of Celery

1 Onion

1 Clove

$\frac{1}{4}$ Lemon

1 cup White Wine

Salt

For the Sauce

2 cups Mayonnaise

$\frac{1}{4}$ cup white wine

1 can Tuna in olive oil

2 Anchovies (cleaned)

2 tbsp Capers

Some lemon wedges

PREPARATION:

Place all the ingredients in a pot with salted water and bring to a boil.

Turn down heat to low. Cover and simmer for 1.5 hours.

Turn the heat off and let the meat cool in the broth. Do not remove until at room temperature.

Stir the wine into the Mayonnaise

Place tuna and anchovies, in a food processor and process.

Transfer to a bowl.

Stir in the Mayonnaise mixture very gently.

Add half the capers.

Cut the Veal into paper thin slices.

On a serving platter lay the meat. Completely cover with the sauce.

If you make two layers cover also the second layer with sauce .

Cover with aluminium and put in the fridge until servings.

Sprinkle the remaining capers and some lemon wedges on top of the sauce.

This dish is served slightly cooler than room temperature.



5. SALADS, VEGETABLES, VEGETARIAN AND VEGAN



ASPARAGUS MILANESE STYLE

Once more simplicity and superb ingredients create a classic of the Italian cuisine. There is a little trick though. The way one prepares, cleans and cooks the asparagus makes the difference. It is all explained in the recipe. I like my egg a bit soft but not liquid so I do not give cooking times. This is the recipe for one person.

INGREDIENTS:

A small bunch of asparagus (6 to 8 should be enough)

1 egg

salt and pepper

1 tablespoon butter

2 tablespoons grated Parmesan cheese

PREPARATION:

Before cooking the asparagus you have to clean them, removing the last part of the stem which is tough.

With a vegetable peeler scrape each asparagus gently turning it and avoiding the tip and the first 3 cm of stem.

After these operations place the asparagus for a few minutes in cold water. Dry them without breaking.

Tie the asparagus in a bunch using kitchen twine, then put them, points up, in a high and narrow pot, with boiling water covering only the stem.

Let the tips out of the water and cook them, half covered. The stems will get cooked by the water and the stems by the steam.

Usually it takes around 15 minutes but it depends on the thickness of the asparagus.

Once cooked, drain the asparagus and arrange on a hot serving dish.

Prepare the eggs: in a small pan, melt a tablespoon of butter.

As soon as the butter is foaming break an egg into the pan.

When the egg reaches the desired consistency slide it over the asparagus, add the melted butter, salt and pepper, sprinkle with Parmesan cheese and serve.



CALIFORNIA COLE SLAW

INGREDIENTS:

1/4 cup sour cream
1/4 cup mayonnaise
2 tablespoons white sugar
2 teaspoons apple cider vinegar
1/4 teaspoon salt
Fresh ground black pepper, to taste
1 green cabbage shredded
1 red cabbage shredded
1/2 small white onion, diced
1 green bell pepper, chopped
1 red bell pepper, chopped
1/2 cup shredded carrot

PREPARATION:

Combine the sour cream, mayonnaise, sugar, vinegar, salt and pepper in a small bowl.

Set aside.

In a large mixing bowl combine the 3 color coleslaw, diced onion, chopped bell peppers, and shredded carrot. Pour about half of the dressing over the top and toss to combine well.

Add as much of the remaining dressing to dress the coleslaw to your liking.

Cover and refrigerate any remaining dressing.

Cover the bowl with plastic wrap and refrigerate for at least 1 hour or till ready to serve.

Just before serving, toss with reserved dressing, if desired.



CHEESE AND POTATO GRATIN

There are countless variations of this popular dish. This version is basic, fast and easy.

INGREDIENTS :

- 2/3 cup sliced onion
- 3 Tablespoons butter
- 2 cups peeled and sliced raw potatoes
- 1 cup smoked bacon, cubed or sliced
- 3 eggs, beaten
- 1 1/2 cups cream
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1 pinch pepper
- 1/2 cup Gruyere or Emmental cheese, grated

PREPARATION :

Preheat oven to 190 degrees C.

Cook onion in a pan with butter, about 5 minutes, until tender.

Drop potatoes in boiling salted water for 6 to 8 minutes, until barely done. Drain.

Butter a baking tray. Spread half of the potatoes in the tray, then half of the onions, then 3/4 of the bacon, the rest of the onions and finally the rest of the potatoes.

Mix eggs, cream, salt and pepper. Pour over the potato, shaking gently to distribute.

Sprinkle with the grated cheese and the remaining bacon.

Bake 30 to 40 minutes in the oven until top is well browned.

Allow to sit in the warm oven for 10 minutes. Ready.



CHRISTMAS VEGETARIAN LASAGNA WITH SPINACH,POTATO, WALNUTS AND GORGONZOLA

Lasagna is a symbol of Italian cuisine and is often served, in many rich regional variations, at the endless Christmas banquets that every self-respecting Italian family stages during the festive season. Lasagna is almost always a triumph of meats or seafood but this vegetarian version preserves the richness of the traditional lasagna thanks to the perfect balance of its ingredients.

INGREDIENTS:

250 gr lasagne
150 grams gorgonzola
50 grams flour
50 grams butter
40 grams walnuts
2 potato
1 bunch of spinach
6 dl whole milk
nutmeg
salt
pepper

PREPARATION:

Peel the potatoes, cut them into thin slices and boil until soft but not crumbly ,drain and keep aside. Prepare the Bechamel sauce : melt the butter in a saucepan on low fire. Combine with flour and mix on low until light brown. Pour slowly the milk and mix until the sauce has thickened and has no crumbles. Add salt,pepper, sprinkle with nutmeg and chopped walnuts.

Clean the spinach and wash them. Cut the leaves into smaller pieces ,cook in salted water for 6-7 minutes and drain.

Put very briefly the lasagna in salted boiling water and drain. Spread a thin layer of sauce on the bottom of a baking dish, continue alternating layers of pasta, bechamel sauce, gorgonzola cheese into slices and coasts. Bake in oven at 180 degrees for 30 minutes.



SICILIAN EGGPLANT CAPONATA

A superb starter, to be served cold. It makes also a fantastic spread for garlic bread, a great side dish and is an essential part of a Mediterranean buffet.

INGREDIENTS:

olive oil
2 large aubergines, cut into large chunks
1 teaspoon dried oregano
salt
black pepper
1 small red onion, finely chopped
2 cloves garlic, finely sliced
1 small bunch fresh flat-leaf parsley chopped
2 tablespoons capers
1 cup black and green olives, stones removed
2-3 tablespoons vinegar
5 large ripe tomatoes, roughly chopped
2 tablespoons slivered almonds, lightly toasted

PREPARATION:

In a large pan, pour a couple of spoons of olive oil, and place on medium heat .
Add aubergine and oregano, season with salt and toss to coat the with the oil.
Cook on high for around 4 or 5 minutes, shaking every now and then.
When the aubergines are golden, add onion, garlic ,parsley and cook for two minutes.
Add drained capers and olives and sprinkle with vinegar.
When the vinegar has evaporated, add tomatoes and simmer until tender.
Taste before serving and season with salt, pepper and a little more vinegar.
Drizzle with olive oil and sprinkle with chopped parsley and almonds



EGGPLANT PARMIGIANA

Comfort food at its peak. Eggplant Parmigiana is therapeutic, a solution to all problems. This is the Italian version, common to the whole country. The eggplant is not breaded, there is no ham, no olives or no pasta like in the international imitations. Again simplicity and top quality ingredients are the key. Just remember that eggplant absorb oil easily so do not use too much or you will end up with a greasy and unrecognizable mess. A good Parmigiana looks a bit like a lasagna and the eggplant has to retain a bit of crispiness from the frying process.

INGREDIENTS:

- 4 eggplants
- flour for dusting the eggplant
- oil for frying
- 500 ml of tomato purée
- extra virgin olive oil
- 1 clove of garlic
- 2 tablespoons of finely chopped onion
- a pinch of oregano
- a few basil leaves
- 150 g mozzarella chopped
- 3 eggs, beaten
- 100 g of grated Parmesan cheese

PREPARATION:

Wash the eggplant and cut them into 5 mm thick slices.
Arrange the slices in a colander with a good sprinkle of salt between layers.
Leave the eggplant on the sink for about 30 minutes, they will lose water and bitterness.
Rinse all your slices under running water and pat them dry. Scoop some flour on a plate and coat the slices, shaking off the excess flour. Heat the frying oil in a large pan. Deep fry the slices in batches. Let them brown on both sides. When they are golden and crisp, place them in a dish layered with kitchen paper to absorb the excess oil. Heat a few tablespoons olive oil in a pan with a clove of garlic and the chopped onions. When the onions and garlic turn golden pour the tomato purée, add a cup of water, basil leaves and oregano. Cook for about ten minutes, until it becomes a savory and thick sauce. On the bottom of a baking dish spread a few tablespoons of tomato sauce. Reserve half cup of tomato sauce. Mix the remaining tomato sauce with beaten eggs. Make a layer of eggplant, pour over some tomato sauce with eggs, sprinkle with mozzarella and Parmigiano. Spread the tomato sauce and egg mixture on top and keep making layers, until you run out of ingredients. Top with the reserved half cup of tomato sauce without eggs, pieces of mozzarella and Parmigiano. Bake in preheated oven to 180°C, until golden brown on the top. Let the Parmigiana cool down completely and warm it again before serving.



GLUTEN FREE GNOCCHI WIITH VEGETARIAN BOLOGNESE SAUCE

Yes it is possible. An excellent vegetarian sauce very closely resembling in taste and texture the classic meat Bolognese paired with spectacular gluten free Gnocchi. Personally I like to add also mushrooms. In this recipe I have omitted them because they add a very strong and distinctive taste. With the same sauce you can also prepare a beautiful vegetarian lasagna or a Gnocchi bake__ I know the soy sauce may seem incongruous but it is a beautiful browning agent and gives the sauce a bit of extra taste bringing it extremely close to the meaty version. _ You can freeze both sauce and Gnocchi _ The Gnocchi should be frozen after cooking them or they will crumble. When needed just put the frozen Gnocchi in boiling water. Once they are ready they will float to the surface exactly as fresh ones.

FOR THE SAUCE

INGREDIENTS :

2 Onions
1 clove Garlic
3 Celery sticks with leaves
2 carrots
2 Eggplant
2 Zucchini
6 large Tomatoes ,peeled and cubed

1 glass of red wine
4 tablespoons of Extra virgin olive oil
1 small hot Chili pepper
1 teaspoon Oregano
1 teaspoon Rosemary
6 Basil leaves
2 bay leaves
1 tablespoon soy sauce
Pepper and salt.

PREPARATION:

Chop finely the onions, celery, zucchini, eggplant and carrots. Put the oil in a pot and heat adding the halved garlic clove. Add the vegetables and a few tablespoons of water. Cook at low heat until the vegetables are transparent and soft. Add the olive oil and all the herbs and sauté stirring constantly with a wooden spoon.

Add the tomatoes and chili and cook on low never letting it boil or stick to the bottom of the pan. When the sauce has reduced by about a third and appears thick add the wine. Raise the heat for a minute or two, stirring constantly. Lower again the fire, season with salt and pepper. Add the soy sauce. Keep stirring and continue cooking for another twenty minutes.

FOR THE GLUTEN FREE GNOCCHI

Ingredients :

900 g of potatoes
300 g of rice flour
3 eggs
a pinch of salt
a pinch of nutmeg

Preparation:

Boil the potatoes and, when they are still hot, peel them and put them in a potato masher or food processor. Add the rice flour, eggs, salt and nutmeg. Knead until you've got a kind of ball (similar to that of pizza dough). Flour a work surface and take a piece of dough. Work it with floured hands, until you get long and tight cylinders. Cut them in pieces with a wet knife. Repeat until the dough is finished. With the back of a fork give the Gnocchi their characteristic ridged design. It will help them to cook better and to better retain the sauce. Throw the dumplings in salty boiling water. When they float to the surface they will be cooked.



GLUTEN FREE PIZZA

If you do not have a gluten intolerance, you should absolutely not be on a gluten-free diet as it will not benefit you in any way and it could also cause problems. On the other hand, particularly in Hanoi, if you are gluten intolerant eating can be a problem. Here is a recipe for pizza made with ingredients easily found also in Vietnam. Gluten-free pizza is tasty as traditional pizza , although the ingredients are different from those used in the classic pizza dough .The common wheat flour is replaced by rice flour and cornstarch. The dough is therefore crisp on the outside but maintains a soft interior thanks to the double leavening.

INGREDIENTS:

Rice flour 350 g
Corn starch 250 g
Honey 1 teaspoon
Water 350 ml
Salt 10 g
Yeast 25 g

Extra virgin olive oil 2 tablespoons
Topping:

Mozzarella 500 g
Tomato puree 350 ml
Salt
Basil
Extra virgin olive oil 2 tablespoons
Oregano

For the baking trays:
Extra virgin olive oil q.b.

PREPARATION

Sift the rice flour and cornstarch and place them in a bowl forming a hole in the center. In a small bowl, dissolve yeast and honey in a glass of lukewarm water. Mix until everything is completely dissolved. Dissolve 10 g of salt in another glass of lukewarm water and add the oil. Mix the yeast and honey with the flour and starch compound. Incorporate the mixture of water and oil and the remaining lukewarm water, until you reach the desired texture, which must be soft and elastic. Knead until you get a smooth consistency, form a ball and place it into a large oiled bowl (the dough will double its volume). Cover the bowl and place it in a warm place . Wait until the dough has doubled in volume. In the meantime, put the tomato puree in a bowl and season with oil, salt and. Place the dough in a low oiled , oven tray and flatten it until the whole surface of the tray is covered. Brush the surface of the pizza with more olive oil and let it rise again for about half an hour. After the second leavening, cover the pizza with tomato puree sprinkled with a little extra virgin olive oil and bake in the oven for about 10 minutes at 200 degrees. Take the pizza briefly out of the oven. Cover with sliced mozzarella. Put back in the oven for another 5 minutes. Remove the pizza from the oven, sprinkle it with fresh basil leaves and serve



GLUTEN FREE TAGLIATELLR WITH BRUSSELS SPROUTS AND SPECK

The gluten free part is a bonus but these tagliatelle(or fettuccine if you are Roman)are something special and perfect for the cold weather.

Guaranteed to improve your mood.Speck is a Northern Italian smoked and salted cured meat.If you cannot find it(but we always have it)*Smoked Bacon or Black forest Ham are good alternatives.*

Chickpea flour is available in our shops and is gluten-free and rich in minerals,calcium,phosphorus and iron.

INGREDIENTS:

For the tagliatelle:

200 grams of chickpea flour

2 eggs

½ teaspoon of baking soda

1 pinch of salt

rice flour for dusting

For the sauce

200 grams of Brussels sprouts

100 grams of Speck (Black Forest Ham or smoked Bacon are good alternatives)

1 clove of garlic

20 g of butter

2 tablespoons grated Parmesan cheese

1 tablespoon broken walnuts

PREPARATION:

Sift the chickpea flour and mix with salt and baking soda in a bowl.Break the eggs in the bowl and begin to knead until it reaches a smooth and homogeneous texture.If it is too wet or dry add a few tablespoons of chickpea flour or a few tablespoons of water.Dust a work surface with rice flour.Roll out the dough until you reach a thickness of approximately 2 mm. Remember to sprinkle abundantly the dough so it does not stick to the work surface.

Cut the dough with a sharp knife into stripes.Cover them with a kitchen cloth and let them rest and dry at room temperature for about half an hour.Meanwhile, prepare the sauce.Slice the Brussels sprouts thinly.Cut the bacon into strips.In a saucepan melt the butter and sauté the garlic.When the garlic begins to sizzle, add the Brussels sprouts and sliced speck or bacon.Cook all covered, on low heat for about ten minutes.Bring salted water to boil and cook the chickpea flour noodles.They will cook in about 6 minutes.Drain and sauté in a pan with the sauce you have prepared.Season with Parmesan and add the chopped walnuts.

Stir and serve hot.



GRILLED EGGPLANT, TOMATO AND GOAT CHEESE SALAD

This is a fast preparation perfect for a light meal and all the ingredients match perfectly. If you have time let it rest 30 minutes in the fridge before serving.

INGREDIENTS:

- 6 Small, Firm Eggplants
- 1/3 Cup Olive Oil
- 2 Cloves Garlic, Minced
- 1 1/2 Cups Ripe Cherry Tomatoes Cut In Half
- 1 Cup crumbled Goat Cheese
- 2 Green Onions, Finely Chopped
- 2 Tablespoons Chopped Capers
- 3 Tablespoons Chopped, Fresh Herbs.
- Lettuce Leaves to Garnish
- 2 Tablespoons Balsamic Vinegar
- Salt and Pepper to taste

PREPARATION:

- Slice the eggplants. Brush lightly with olive oil.
- Grill about 2 minutes on each side, or until they are soft and browned.
- Mix the eggplants, tomatoes, onions, garlic, herbs and capers.
- Mix remaining oil with balsamic, and sprinkle over the dish.
- Add the goat cheese crumbles
- Season with salt and pepper, and mix.
- Garnish a plate with lettuce and place the salad in the middle
- Ready



PANTESCA SALAD (VEGAN VERSION)

When a salad is not anymore just a side dish but takes the leading role.

This is a clear case of “we must do with what we have” as Pantelleria is a tiny island south of Sicily and closer to the Tunisian coast than to Italy. For thousands of years the inhabitants of Pantelleria had to survive on what they could grow on their rocky island and fish in the sea. It happens that the unique position of the island and the composition of the soil, while not allowing great variety and quantities, produced spectacular quality. Olives and oil, capers, tomatoes, oregano, basil and thyme of world class. The original recipe calls for anchovies or tuna but, also without fish, if you use good ingredients the result will be unforgettable.

INGREDIENTS:

500 grams of potatoes
250 g cherry tomatoes
3 tablespoons capers
1 large red onion
4 tablespoons pitted black olives
4 basil leaves
1 teaspoon dried oregano
1 teaspoon thyme
4 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
1 glass of red wine vinegar
sea salt
black pepper

PREPARATION:

Wash the potatoes and cook them in their skins in a saucepan with cold salted water.

Continue cooking until a fork easily goes into the potatoes without crumbling them.

Peel the onion and cut it into thin slices. Put the onion slices to soak for 20 minutes in vinegar to mitigate the flavor. Cut the tomatoes and let them drain in a colander for 20 minutes. Peel the potatoes while still slightly hot. Cut into pieces one centimeter thick and place in a bowl. Add the capers and onion slices drained of the vinegar. Add the tomatoes with the olives and the roughly chopped basil. Season with salt, pepper, oregano, thyme and olive oil. Mix and place in refrigerator for two hours before serving.



SICILIAN ORANGE AND FENNEL SALAD

Real peasant fare. Frugal and sublime. Elio Vittorini, a great writer, in his book “Conversazioni in Sicilia” left us an unforgettable page about this dish. Try it and you will be surprised. Use sour oranges and mop up the juices with some good bread. The origin of this dish, as many other Sicilian preparations, is probably North-African and sometimes Cardamom is added. In Sicily this salad was prepared during the orange season so in Winter but now oranges can be found all over the year and it makes a great starter or side dish in Summer. Prepare it and serve it immediately as fennel tends to get hard and fibrous when cut.

INGREDIENTS:

3 oranges
2 fennel bulbs
1 red onion
1 cup black olives
Small fresh mint leaves, torn in half (Keep some whole for garnishing)
½ glass orange juice
½ glass extra virgin olive oil
2 tablespoons lemon juice
Salt and pepper

PREPARATION:

Peel the oranges, making sure that no white part or membrane is left.

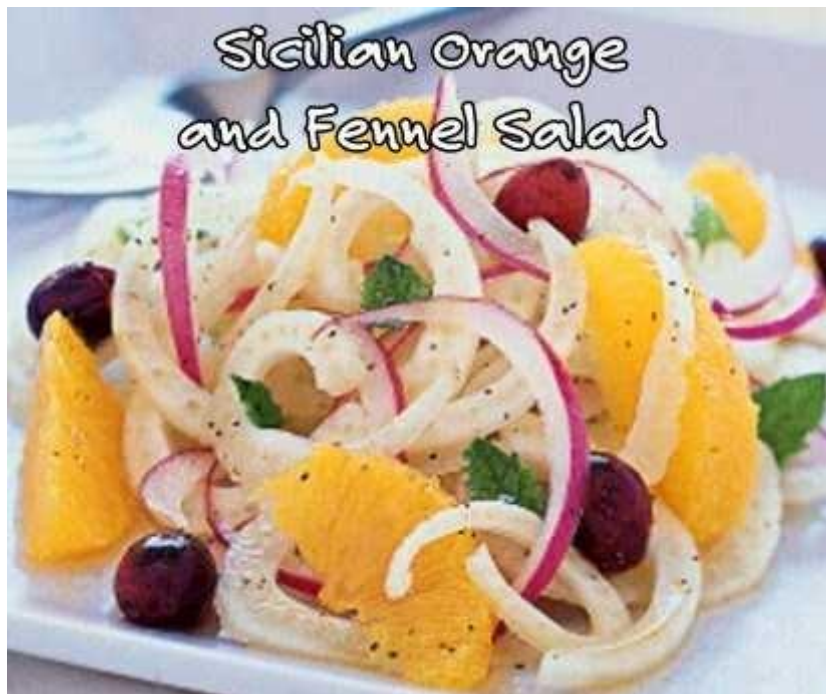
Cut between the internal membranes into wedges.

Slice the fennel and the red onion very finely.

Toss orange segments, fennel, onion, mint, olives, salt and pepper in a large bowl.

Beat the olive oil, orange and lemon juice until perfectly amalgamated and thickened.

Pour over the salad, mix and garnish with some mint leaves. Ready.



VEGAN MAYONNAISE (NO EGGS, NO DAIRY PRODUCTS)

This mayonnaise is perfect for vegans or people with a lactose and eggs intolerance. It is a delicate sauce made with soy milk and sunflower oil, flavored with a pinch of salt and acidulated with a tablespoon of vinegar or lemon juice. White wine or balsamic vinegar will work perfectly instead of vinegar or lemon juice for a more intensely flavoured version. This is the basic version and you could add herbs or other ingredients to your liking. I added some mustard and chopped chives and the result was extremely pleasant.

INGREDIENTS: Soy
milk 50 ml
sunflower oil 100 ml
1 pinch salt
1 tablespoon Vinegar or lemon juice

PREPARATION :

Pour into a tall mixing glass the soy milk and sunflower oil. Add a pinch of salt and finally a spoon of vinegar or lemon. Dip the blender into the glass and blend the ingredients at medium speed until the mixture has thickened; it will take a few seconds. Remember that, keeping the same proportions, you can also use whole milk, instead of the soy milk and olive oil instead of of sunflower oil.



VEGETABLES AND HERBS LOAF ITALIAN STYLE

Long time before the current craze for Vegan and Vegetarian diets,superfoods,0 km ingredients and so on,Italians ,purely out of economic reasons, used to prepare a whole series of dishes simulating the rarely affordable meat,poultry or fish using what was cheap and available locally.The result in this case is a healthy loaf of goodness with a distinctive Mediterranean taste.Should you want to add an extra realistic touch and simulate the colour of meat simply add some drops of soy sauce to the mixture as a browning agent.

INGREDIENTS:

800 grams of potatoes
1 carrot
2 zucchini
1 celery
1 onion
100 grams ricotta
2 eggs
1 egg yolk
100 grams of breadcrumbs
40 grams of grated parmigiano cheese
1 teaspoon of thyme
5 basil leaves
½ teaspoon nutmeg
extra virgin olive oil
200 grams of cherry tomatoes for the side

PREPARATION:

For the preparation of the vegetable loaf cook the potatoes for 40 minutes in plenty of water. Clean the vegetables and cut the celery, carrot and zucchini in small cubes. Chop finely the onion and mix with four tablespoons of olive oil. Add salt and cook until transparent, then chop again and reduce to a paste.

Mash the potatoes, mix with the grated Parmigiano, eggs, ricotta and a pinch of thyme, all the vegetables, the cooked onion, nutmeg, 50 g breadcrumbs, salt and mix well. Form in a loaf and smoothen the surface with the wet backside of a spoon.

Brush the surface of the loaf with the yolk beaten with a little bit of cold water. Sprinkle it with the remaining breadcrumbs and cook in the oven at 180 ° for 35 minutes. Serve with a side dish of halved cherry tomatoes, seasoned with extra virgin olive oil, salt, pepper and oregano



VEGETARIAN CHRISTMAS LOAF

It does not have to be always meat. Maybe some of your guests do not eat meat. Maybe for one time you want to do something different. This loaf is a very easy and tasty alternative to the usual festive meat bacchanalia. I wanted to do something with a distinctive Christmassy taste but vegetarian. The addition of nutmeg to this recipe definitely did the trick.

INGREDIENTS

800 grams potatoes
1 carrot
2 zucchini
1 celery heart
200 grams cherry tomatoes
1 spring onion
100 grams ricotta cheese

1 egg
1 egg yolk
80 grams breadcrumbs
40 grams grated parmesan cheese
thyme
basil leaves
nutmeg
extra virgin olive oil

PREPARATION

Boil the potatoes for 40 minutes in plenty of water.
Clean and chop roughly celery, carrot, spring onion and zucchini.
Sauté the spring onion in 4 tablespoons of oil. Add vegetables and cook for 20 minutes until soft.
Mash the potatoes and combine with breadcrumbs, egg, egg yolk, cheese and a pinch of thyme.
Add all the vegetables, and the nutmeg. Adjust salt and mix until homogeneous.
Transfer the mixture to a buttered loaf tin and smoothen the top with the back of a wet spoon.
Sprinkle with the remaining breadcrumbs and bake in the oven at 180 degrees for 35 minutes.
Serve with cherry tomatoes sautéed with a little olive oil and basil.



VEGETARIAN CREAM OF CAULIFLOWER AND PAPRIKA

Here is the recipe for a healthy and tasty vegetarian creamy soup that will warm you up during the coldest winter days. A detoxifying preparation definitely welcome after the culinary excesses of past holidays. The preparation of this recipe follows the steps of the classic creamy soups. After boiling the cauliflower we blended it with a mixer and added milk and vegetable stock. In this way we obtained a creamy and tasty soup, to which we added the paprika for a spicy note and the almonds for the crispness. If you do not like spicy, you can, however, choose sweet paprika, or other spices such as turmeric or cumin.

INGREDIENTS

250 ml of vegetable stock (also of broth cube)
500 ml of milk
250 g of broccoli in florets
300 g of cauliflower in small flowers
100 g of grated Parmesan cheese
1 tablespoon of cornstarch
1 shallot
sweet or semi-spicy paprika
extra virgin olive oil
1 handful of almonds
salt

PREPARATION:

Heat the broth and milk in separate saucepans over low heat.

Boil the white and green florets, for 10 minutes in a pot with water and a pinch of salt.

In a saucepan let the oil warm up, add the chopped shallot, when it has become transparent add the tops of cauliflower and broccoli well drained, mix gently.

After 2 minutes, withdraw only the green florets and keep aside. Then pour the hot broth into the container and continue cooking for 5 minutes. Withdraw, blend with the mixer until you have a cream, adjust the salt.

At the end, add the hot milk and the cornstarch, stirring well. If you do not have cornstarch you can stir in very carefully some sieved flour until you reach the desired consistency and texture. Put the on medium fire and add the Parmigiano stirring constantly so that it melts completely until the cream is slightly thickened.

Serve with toasted bread croutons.



VEGETARIAN MUSHROOM GRAVY

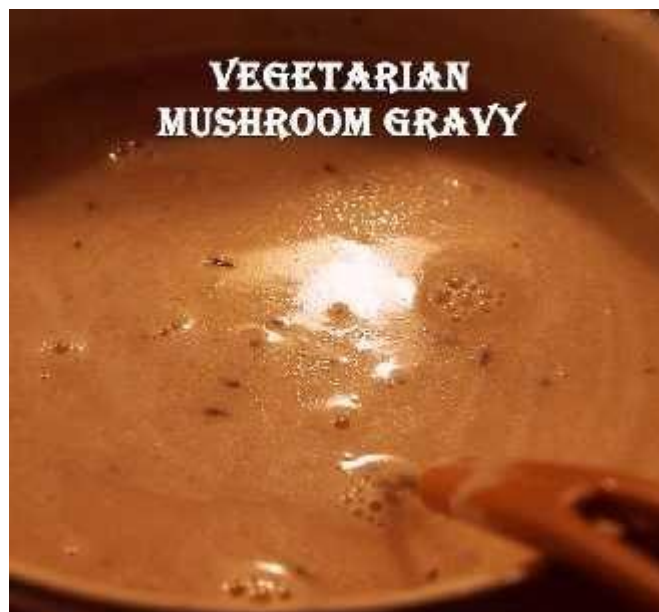
Yes, Vegetarian Gravy Is Possible (and Delicious) if you are willing to spend ten minutes preparing it. Use this recipe for any dish that calls for a gravy and you will be surprised. This gravy can be frozen and used when needed. An added benefit is that this gravy is prepared from scratch with no preservatives, colourings or chemicals added.

INGREDIENTS:

- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 3 tablespoons unsalted butter
- 2 tablespoons onions, finely diced
- 1 crushed garlic clove
- 5 or 6 Shiitake mushrooms
- 1 shot dry wine
- 3 cups vegetable stock
- 2 tablespoons of flour
- Salt and black pepper to taste
- 3 tablespoons soy sauce
- 1 pinch of Thyme

PREPARATION:

Heat the olive oil and butter in a large heavy pan over medium heat. Add the onions and cook until they turn a deep brown, stirring often, about 10-15 minutes. Add the crushed garlic and finely sliced mushrooms reduce the heat to medium, and cook a few minutes until the mushrooms have given up most of their liquid. Add the wine to the pan and mix scraping the bottom carefully. Add the stock and bring to a boil, then reduce the heat to low and let it go uncovered for 10 minutes. Add a pinch of salt, a few grinds of black pepper and the thyme. Add the flour passing it through a sieve and let the gravy thicken. Add two tablespoons of the soy sauce as a flavouring and browning agent. If you want the gravy to be a darker brown, add another tablespoon or two. Pour the mixture into a blender and blend until smooth if you do not want the mushroom slices. Taste and season with salt and pepper if needed.



EASY HOMEMADE BAGELS

We bake our bagels daily and often they are not enough to match the requests. It is very easy to make them at home and it is a great activity to do with children. The secret is to dip them in simmering water for a short time. A lot of bakeries nowadays skip this step and use steam ovens instead getting a sort of round and elastic baguette-textured bagel. In other cases the water is too hot and the bagels are kept in it too long and the result is chewy and rubbery. Experiment by yourselves and have fun.

INGREDIENTS:

- 7 grams active-dry yeast
- 1 1/2 cups water, lukewarm
- 3 Tablespoons sugar
- 1 Tablespoon salt
- 4 cups all-purpose flour
- 1 teaspoon baking soda

PREPARATION:

In a mixing bowl, dissolve yeast and sugar into warm water. Let stand for 10 minutes. Stir in salt and flour. Knead the dough until soft, smooth and comes away from the side of the bowl. If dough is sticky, add more flour. Cover the dough with a cloth or plastic film. Leave in a warm place until doubled in volume. Punch down the dough. On a floured surface, roll out balls of dough to thick rectangles. Roll each rectangle into a 1 and 1/2 cm thick log. Moisten ends and press together to form a bagel. Place on a floured piece of baking paper. Cover with a cloth. Leave in a warm place for 20 minutes. Heat water in a large pot until simmering but not fully boiling. Add 1 tsp sugar and 1 tsp baking soda. Place a few bagels at a time into the hot water. Simmer, uncovered, for 30 seconds turning one time with a wooden spatula. Do not use metal tools. Drain on a towel. Repeat with the remaining dough. Place the boiled bagels on a greased baking tray. If you like give them a shine by brushing them with a mixture of egg yolk and water or sprinkle with your favourite seeds. Bake at 200 degrees C until golden.



HERBED YOGHOURT MOZZARELLA

Try your hand at making fresh mozzarella with this easy recipe. Can be eaten as is or added to any salad or pasta. Can be eaten immediately, can be preserved like feta cheese in a 50% whey and 50% salty water mixture or can be put in a jar, covered with extra virgin olive oil and kept in the fridge for later consumption.

INGREDIENTS:

1 liter milk
120 ml fresh yoghurt
oregano and thyme

PREPARATION:

Mix the ingredients and heat mixture to 80 C constantly and gently stirring.

Sieve the formed curd (preferably using a towel or cheesecloth) and knead and stretch until creamy but firm. Form in to round shapes and place for 30 minutes in very cold water with a little salt added for taste. Ready.



HOMEMADE 10 MINUTES PEANUT BUTTER

Sometimes we all get lost and think that things are complicated when ,in reality, they are very simple. Peanut butter is just a cream made with roasted peanuts. The ingredients are few, and the recipe is ridiculously simple and fast. Most commercial peanut butters have a label with a long list of obscure chemical ingredients.

Peanut butter made at home is much better and above all does not contain preservatives or additives. Be just very careful because this stuff is extremely addictive and your waistline will be at risk.

INGREDIENTS:

300 g of shelled peanuts (500 grams with the shell)

1 teaspoon brown sugar

1 teaspoon honey

20 g of peanut oil (or flaxseed oil)

salt

PREPARATION:

Shell the peanuts and discard the film that covers them.

Transfer the shelled and cleaned peanuts to a baking tray lined with baking paper checking that they are not overlapping.

Toast them in the preheated oven at 220 ° C for 5 minutes

Remove from the oven and allow to cool.

Put in a blender along with brown sugar and honey.

Add the peanut oil and blend it all with a pinch of salt.

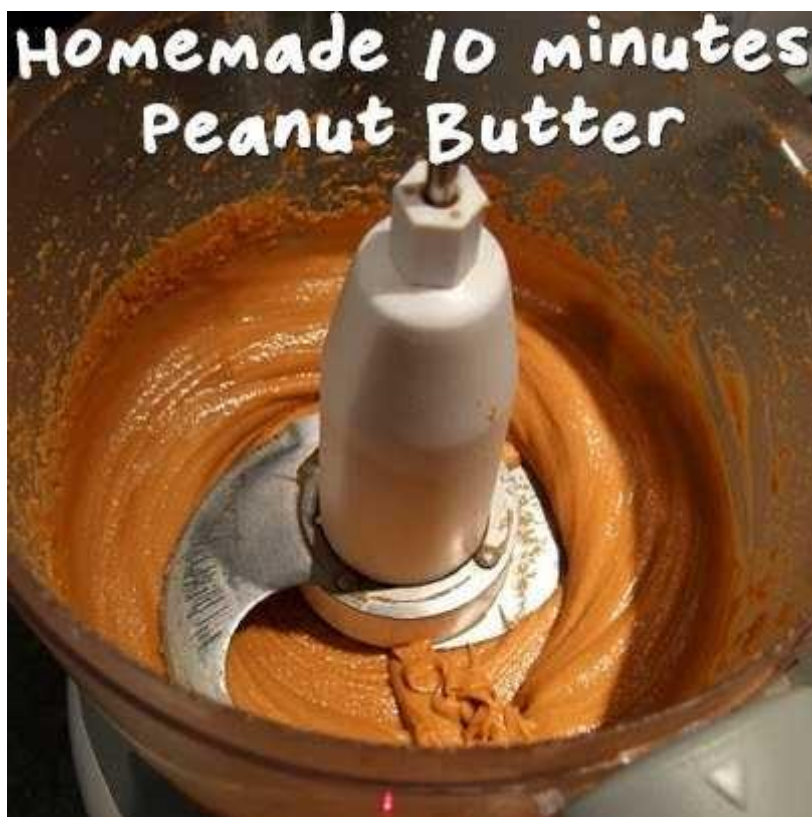
You will get a soft and creamy mixture.

If you want a peanut butter even softer add a little more oil.

Adjust the salt. Put in glass jars and let rest in the refrigerator for 3 hours before using.

Peanut butter can be kept this way for about 10 days.

If you prefer a crunchy version just add coarsely chopped peanuts.



HOMEMADE BUTTER AND BUTTERMILK

The characteristic of buttermilk is its acidic flavor, which gives to baked products a pleasant, bitter note, and its ability to give a very soft texture to many baked goods. In addition to sweet preparations, buttermilk is also used to marinate meat and game to soften it (for example, American fried chicken should be marinated in buttermilk). Although the fat part is eliminated, buttermilk still contains lactose, so it is NOT indicated for intolerants. Among its properties is certainly its lowcaloric intake, since all the fat is eliminated. Any cream will do . The only difference between whipping cream, cooking cream, heavy cream or whatever the commercial definition is you find on the package is the fat content. Often the . difference is really negligible but the higher the fat content is the more butter you will get. Your buttermilk will be exactly the same whatever cream you use.

INGREDIENTS:

250 ml cream

PREPARATION:

Pour fresh cream into a clean bowl, and use an electric mixer to whip the cream. You can also use a food processor with the whipping accessory or a hand whip but this will take a longer time. Continue until the cream becomes solid. At this point the buttermilk and the fat part will be separated. (To get this result you have to whip the cream for about 20 minutes.

Put the fat part in a narrow mesh strainer and press it with a spatula so that all the liquid is drained. Press the fat part in a bowl and place in the fridge. This is your homemade butter. The remaining liquid is Buttermilk. With 250ml of fresh cream, you will get about 100 grams of butter and 125 ml of milk.



HOMEMADE CHILI OIL

Chili oil is great on pizza, it's a perfect flavour enhancer and compliments the other ingredients without killing their aromas. A drizzle brightens up any pasta dish or salad, is the perfect companion for many cheeses, adds life to any meat preparation and is surprisingly good on a humble bread crouton. The key to making proper chili oils is to prevent the oil from getting too hot because it will burn your peppers and other ingredients and give everything a bitter and unpleasant taste. If your oil begins to smoke you need to reduce the temperature. The longer you leave the infusion to rest the hotter it will be. To make chili oil with fresh chilies take fresh red hot peppers and partially cut them lengthwise. Place in a glass jar or bottle adding a garlic clove and sprig of fresh rosemary. Completely cover with olive oil. Seal and set aside for one to two months before using.

INGREDIENTS:

- 2 cups extra virgin olive oil
- 3 tablespoons crushed dried red chili peppers
- 1/4 cup whole dried chili peppers
- Some black peppercorns
- 2 crushed garlic cloves
- 1 sprig rosemary

PREPARATION:

Place the chilies in a clean and dry glass jar. In a heavy pan heat the oil over medium. Just before the oil begins to smoke add garlic, rosemary and peppercorns and remove the pan from the heat. Slowly pour the oil over the chili pepper making sure that the oil completely covers the chilies. Let the oil cool for at least an hour or two. Once cooled taste the oil. You can leave the crushed chili on the bottom of the jar and use it with the oil as a condiment if you need a bit more kick or filter the oil and keep it in a bottle.



HOMEMADE COTTAGE CHEESE

Cottage cheese is not available in Vietnam because the extremely short shelf life of real cottage cheese makes it impossible to import it. The dairy industry in Vietnam is at a very early stage and dairy products are not part of the Vietnamese tradition and taste. However, it is extremely easy to prepare your own cottage cheese. This version made with skimmed milk is very light and delicate, ideal for those who want to enjoy a fresh cheese and it is vegetarian, since the coagulating agent is of vegetal origin. Homemade cottage cheese can be prepared without thermometer or any particular equipment. All you will need is a scale and to carefully follow the recipe.

INGREDIENTS (yield about 200 g)

1 l skim milk

6 g salt

20 g white wine vinegar

PREPARATION

Pour the milk into a saucepan. Add salt and cook over medium heat, stirring occasionally to prevent the coagulation of the surface. When the milk reaches a boil, turn off the heat and add the vinegar. Mix for thirty seconds and then cover the pan with a lid. Let it rest for 30 minutes. Bring to a boil again the mixture, this time on high heat, stirring often. When the milk coagulates turn off the heat and cover the pan again with the lid, letting it rest for another 30 minutes. With a ladle collect the milk clots and pour into a container on which you placed gauze, a towel tightly woven or a paper filter for the coffee. Let it drain and then squeeze the filter eliminating the excess fluid. You can serve the cottage cheese in small bowls and garnish with basil, tomatoes, or herbs. Cottage cheese keeps in the refrigerator for 2-3 days covered with plastic wrap. If it becomes too dry add more serum, milk or cream.



HOMEMADE CRACKERS

It is possible to make crackers at home. It is fast, cheap and healthy. These easy homemade crackers are the perfect pair for cheese and wine and are a healthy alternative to packaged snacks. Industrial crackers often use trans fats and polyunsaturated oils and have high salt content. Once you have made them one time following the recipe play around. Add cheese or thyme to the dough. Top with pepper or top with minced garlic or onion, sesame or poppy seeds, or whatever is on your favorite industrial cracker. Use different flours like whole-wheat. In every case, you are going to make it better.

INGREDIENTS:

4 cups flour

1 Tablespoon Baking Powder

1/4 cup butter or olive oil

1 1/3 cup milk

Sea salt

Rosemary, oregano, any other herb, or any other seasoning as desired

PREPARATION:

Mix the flour, baking powder, and butter or oil until mixture forms coarse crumbs.

If you are adding herbs or seasonings mix with the dry ingredients.

Add the milk and knead to form a ball. Roll out paper-thin on a floured surface.

Cut the dough into squares (with a pizza wheel if available)

Place on an ungreased cookie sheet and prick with fork.

Sprinkle with salt (or cracked pepper) and herbs.

Bake at 160 C about 20 minutes until golden brown.



EASY HOMEMADE MANGO CHUTNEY

I have been asked for this recipe and here it is, simple and fast to prepare. If you like it of a darker colour use brown sugar. If you like a creamy consistency process the fruit to a paste. One popular addition to this recipe are raisins but there are countless variations with different fruits, herbs and spices.

INGREDIENTS

- 2 large apples
- 3 mangoes
- 300g sugar
- 2 red onions, chopped
- 125ml vinegar
- 3 tablespoons grated root ginger
- 1 tablespoon lemon juice
- 2 teaspoons mustard powder
- 2 teaspoons crushed chilli flakes
- 2 teaspoons curry powder
- 1/2 teaspoon salt

PREPARATION

Peel, core and grate the apples.
Peel the mangoes, remove the stone and chop roughly the fruit pulp.
In a saucepan combine the apples, mangoes, sugar, onions, vinegar and ginger.
Bring briefly to a boil, then reduce the heat to a simmer.
Allow to simmer uncovered for 15-20 minutes until tender.
Add lemon juice, mustard powder, chilli flakes, curry powder and salt.
Continue to simmer for 5 more minutes.
Transfer to hot clean jars and seal.



HOMEMADE GARAM MASALA

An easy recipe for homemade Garam Masala spice blend made with ground spices .
Garam Masala is a blend of savory Indian spices.

INGREDIENTS:

2 tablespoons ground cumin
3 teaspoons ground coriander
3 teaspoons ground cardamom
1-1/2 teaspoons ground black pepper
2 teaspoons ground cinnamon
3/4 teaspoon ground clove
3/4 teaspoon ground nutmeg

PREPARATION:

Combine spices in a small dish.

Heat a small skillet over medium-low and add in spice blend. Stir and toast for 5 to 6 minutes until very fragrant. Transfer back to bowl and cool before storing in an airtight container for 2 to 3 months.



HOMEMADE GRAVY

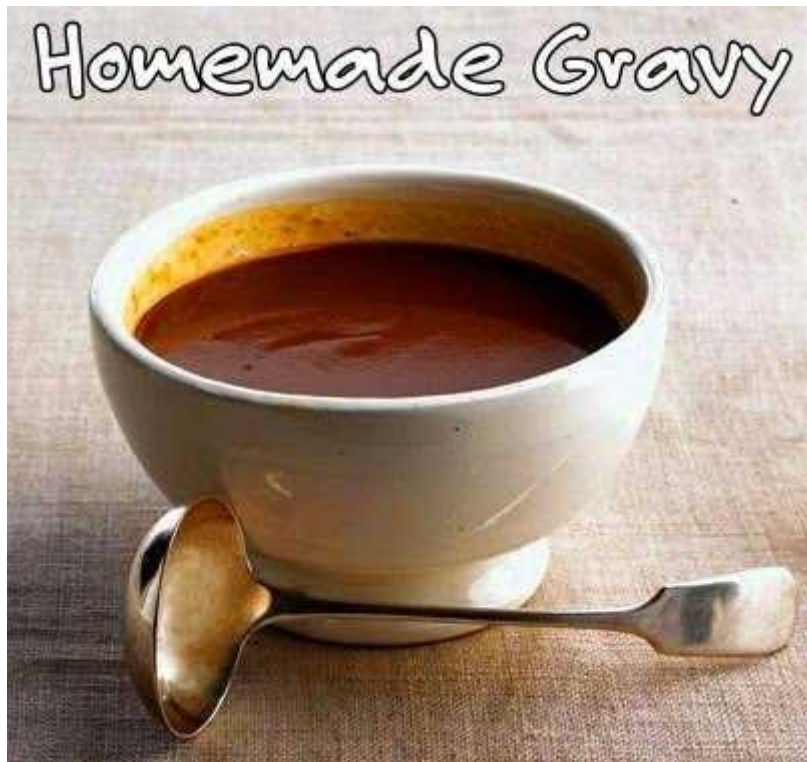
Gravy is traditionally made by thickening the juices of a roast
And if you do not make a roast but need gravy ?
It is something from a bag or a box or this
And this is easy, fast and much better than anything out of a packet

INGREDIENTS :

2 tablespoons butter
1 tablespoon all-purpose flour (more if you want a thicker gravy)
1 and 1/2 stock cube (beef, chicken ... anything goes)
Soy sauce (as browning agent)
Dry herbs (rosemary, sage, oregano...whatever you like. I use rosemary, sage and oregano but I would put oregano in my coffee or on the ice cream)
2 cups water or 1 cup of water and 1 cup wine (any wine)

PREPARATION :

Crumble down the stock cube.
Heat a saucepan and put-in the butter. Let the butter melt under low heat.
Add all-purpose flour and cook in low heat while continuously stirring for 1 to 2 minutes or until the color turns medium brown. Flour might burn when overcooked or if high heat is applied. Be extra cautious.
Gradually add the stock cubes while stirring. Continuous stirring is needed to prevent lumps from forming.
Add the water, wine, soy sauce and herbs
Cook for 2 minutes more while stirring once in a while until the texture thickens. Gravy !!
If I have some pieces of leftover bacon or ham or giblets or any meat I sauté' them in the butter to add extra taste.



HOMEMADE GREEK YOGHOURT CAKE

We have just received a new homemade Greek style yogurt in the shop and I have started experimenting with it. It is wonderful on as it is, makes a great salad dressing and is perfect as basic ingredient for this cake. Soft and light, this cake is ideal for breakfast or a snack and can be eaten plain or filled with a cream, a fruit coulis or even Nutella. The Greek yogurt adds freshness and moisture to the texture and makes it perfect for a children's school snack. Preparation it is quick and easy and the ingredients are easily available.

INGREDIENTS:

250 g flour,
320 g Greek yogurt,
180 g sugar,
150 g butter,
80 g corn starch,
grated rind of one lemon,
a pinch of salt,
4 eggs divided
1 teaspoon baking powder

PREPARATION:

In a food processor mix butter and sugar to obtain a soft and fluffy cream.

Whip the egg whites in a bowl until stiff.

Add the egg yolks to the butter and sugar mixture.

At this point add the yogurt, salt and grated rind of a lemon.

Continue blending the ingredients until homogeneous.

In a separate bowl mix the cornstarch with flour and baking powder.

Add them to the mixture stirring constantly. Add the mixture to the egg whites in the bowl and whip quickly so as not to deflate the egg whites. Grease with butter a baking dish, sprinkle with flour and pour in the mixture. Level with a spatula and bake in the preheated oven and cook for 50 minutes at 180 ° or probe the cake in the center with a toothpick until it comes out dry. Let cool before serving.



HOMEMADE HOT CHILI SAUCE

The simplest way to make your own chili sauce and add kick to your favourite dishes. Much better than any bottled sauce. Depending on the kind of chilies you use the result will be different without losing the character and essence of an excellent hot sauce. If you use Cayenne, for example you will get very very close to Frank's Red Hot Sauce. If you use Jalapenos the sauce will get the full flavour and colour of this variety. For your safety use gloves and keep your face away from the vapours as capsaicin, the compound giving hotness to chilies, can irritate your eyes and is not pleasant to inhale. If you do not have fresh chilies of your favourite variety, dry ones, also in flakes, will work. Should you get a sauce that is too vinegary adding a little bit of baking soda and reheating the sauce briefly will remove the excess of vinegar taste. You can adjust the quantity of any ingredient according to your taste and the spiciness you want to reach or add herbs and flavourings but following this procedure will guarantee always an excellent result.

INGREDIENTS:

- 3 cups of your favourite chili peppers (or more if you want)
- 1 and ½ cups White vinegar
- 4 tablespoons tomato paste
- 2 tablespoons chopped onion
- 2 garlic cloves chopped
- 3 tablespoons lime juice
- Olive oil
- 1 tablespoon Sugar
- 1 teaspoon Salt

PREPARATION:

Cut the stem off the chili peppers. Cut them in half lengthwise and put them in a hot pan with a drop of olive oil. Saute' briefly until just a little toasted but not dry. Add 1 ½ cups of water and bring to boil. Reduce the fire and let simmer until softened adding a little water if needed. Put the chilies and the remaining liquid in a blender, add half the volume of white vinegar, a teaspoon of salt and blend to a homogeneous paste. In a pan (no need to use a clean one, just use the one you used for the chilies) soften the chopped onions and garlic in olive oil until translucent. Do not let them get brown. Add to the mixture in the blender. Combine with the tomato paste, lime juice, and sugar. Blend until really smooth. Pour back in the pan and let it reduce on a low fire until you get the consistency you like. If you want to eliminate the seeds pass through a sieve or cheesecloth. Pour the mixture in a clean jar, cover with a thin layer of olive oil and keep in your fridge. It is immediately ready for consumption but the more you keep it the better it will become.



HOMEMADE HUMMUS

My last recipe was Tahini. The next logical step is Hummus. Hummus is a delightful chickpea dip found all over the Mediterranean. In order to obtain a Hummus with excellent consistency and texture there is a little trick. Before adding the other ingredients whip together tahini and lemon juice. It really makes a big difference. Hummus is naturally gluten free and rich in proteins.

INGREDIENTS;

- 1 can (425 grams) chickpeas, also called garbanzo beans
- 1/4 cup fresh lemon juice
- 1/4 cup tahini
- 1 large garlic clove
- 2 tablespoons olive oil, plus more for serving
- 1/2 to 1 teaspoon salt, depending on taste
- 1/2 teaspoon ground cumin
- 2 to 3 tablespoons water
- Pinch of ground paprika

PREPARATION:

In a food processor, combine tahini and lemon juice. Process for 1 minute. Turn off. Scrape the bowl then turn on again and process for additional 30 seconds. This helps to whip the tahini, giving the hummus a smooth and creamy consistency. Add olive oil, garlic, cumin and salt to the whipped tahini and lemon juice mixture. Process 30 seconds, scrape sides and bottom of the bowl then process another 30 seconds. Open the can of chickpeas, drain the liquid and then rinse with water. Add the chickpeas to the food processor then process until thick and smooth. Most likely your hummus will be too thick or still have tiny bits of chickpea. Scrape the bowl of the food processor, turn it on and slowly add 2 to 3 tablespoons of water until the consistency is perfect. Transfer to a bowl and sprinkle with a pinch of paprika before serving.



HOMEMADE MASCARPONE CHEESE

Mascarpone is an Italian cheese and is a basic ingredient of the famous Italian dessert Tiramisu. It can be used to add creaminess to a Risotto, to prepare a rich cheesecake or as a wonderful topping for berries. It is very close in flavor and texture to a British clotted cream, so it's perfect on scones and biscuits too. Both whipping cream or cooking cream will do. If you want your mascarpone thicker let it drain longer and if you like it a bit more creamy add a couple of spoons of milk when you get it out of the fridge.

INGREDIENTS:

2 cups cream
1 tablespoon lemon juice

PREPARATION:

Heat the cream in a pan until it simmers, just below boiling point.

If you have a thermometer it should be around 88 C

Gently stir with a wooden spoon while it's heating to avoid burning or sticking to the pan.

Add the lemon juice and continue to cook at the same temperature for 5 – 10 minutes, stirring all the time.

It will be ready when it thickens up, sticks to the spoon and looks and smells a bit like bechamel sauce.

Remove from the heat and allow the cream to cool to room temperature.

It will thicken up even more as it cools.

Pour the cream into a sieve lined with a couple of sheets of cheesecloth .

If you do not have cheesecloth use paper coffee filters folding the edges exactly as you would do for coffee.

Put the sieve over a bowl and cover with food wrap film.

Refrigerate overnight to allow the cheese to drain a bit.

The longer you leave it to drain, the firmer your cheese will be but don't be surprised if you only get a very small amount of whey (yes this is whey).

At the end of this time whisk quickly to eliminate any lumps.

Store in an air-tight container in the fridge. It will last for a week .



HOMEMADE OAT MILK (OR RICE MILK)

One of those ingredients mysteriously appearing and disappearing in Vietnam and also something absolutely easy to prepare at home, in case you cannot find it in the shops.

INGREDIENTS (for 1 liter of milk)

90 g of oat flakes

1 pinch salt

PREPARATION

Soak the oatmeal (or rice), in a bowl with 1 liter of cold water after adding a pinch of salt.

Cover with a cloth, store in the fridge and let the flakes to soak overnight (alternatively, you could soak them in lukewarm water for 2 hours).

Using a blender, carefully homogenize the mixture working for about 2 minutes.

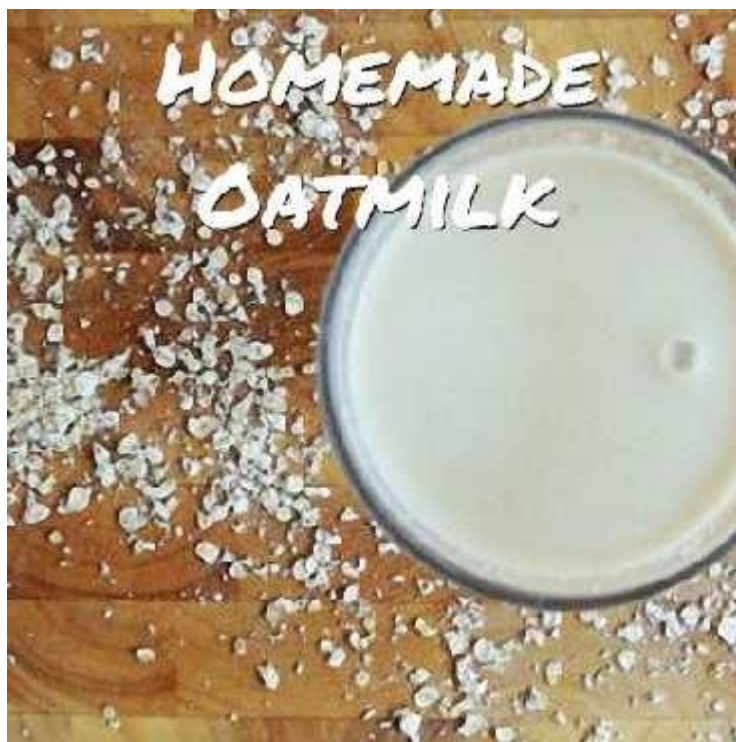
Filter the liquid through a fine sieve or, if you prefer a completely fiber-free milk, through a cheesecloth or coffee filter.

It keeps in the refrigerator for 2-3 days, in closed container. It can be used as a beverage or as an ingredient in baking or cooking.

You can add cinnamon, vanilla, honey or any other ingredient to sweeten it up and give it flavor.

Leave it plain to use for cooking. The unfiltered version will thicken if warmed up, just below boiling point, for a couple of minutes.

It works perfectly also using rice flour. Obviously what you will get in this case is rice milk.



HOMEMADE PANCETTA (ITALIAN BACON)

Pancetta and guanciale are the Italian takes on bacon(or probably it is the other way around).Making your own Pancetta is the first step into preparing your own charcuterie and once you have mastered this the rest will be easy. But we will come to that in the future.It takes as always some patience and love but the result will be extremely rewarding and your pancetta will be extremely tasty and absolutely preservatives free.And that is no small achievement.

INGREDIENTS:

2.5 kilograms of fresh pork bellies including the skin

1.5 kg of coarse salt

Spice mixture (I use black pepper, paprika,chili powder,thyme,rosemary,bay leaves and fine salt but you can prepare your own according to your taste but keeping in mind that the quantity of black pepper has to be equal or more than all other ingredients)

More ground black pepper

red wine

vinegar

PREPARATION:

Take the meat and with a sharp knife clean and shape it into a rectangle.

Take a large flat container like a baking tray and completely cover the bottom with salt.In a bowl prepare your spice mixture.On a cutting board sprinkle the bacon with some extra pepper,salt and spice mixture. Massage the meat on both sides.Place the meat in the container and completely cover with salt. You should not leave uncovered parts.Cover the container with a clean towel and let stand for 3 days in the lower part of your fridge. During these three days turn the bacon every day draining excess liquid if any has formed and cover again adding fresh salt if needed

After these three days wash your pancetta under running water then place it in a large bowl with vinegar and wine (3 parts of wine and 1 part vinegar) and leave to soak for 1 hour .The bacon should be covered by the liquid. After this time, take it and dry well with paper towels or napkins, and let it dry for one day, wrapped in a clean cloth in the lower part of your fridge.

After this day of rest cover again the meat with your pepper and herbs mixture covering completely the meat. If you have a large enough refrigerator hang your pancetta in the lower part of it and leave it there for about two weeks or until firm to the touch. If you do not have enough space let it rest on a layer of kitchen paper and change the paper whenever you see that it has absorbed some humidity. All the ingredients are available in our shops



HOMEMADE PRETZELS

Having a German mother I have spent a lot of time in Germany and Switzerland and Pretzels have always been at the top of my favourite snacks list.

Pretzels are made in many ways, with different recipes and toppings, from Northern Italy to Sweden and have spread to other continents. This recipe is simple and a reasonable compromise between the different variations. The important thing is to dip them in boiling water with baking soda before baking.

It really makes the difference and you will have fun preparing them and get a final product completely different from the usual rubbery shopping mall variety.

INGREDIENTS:

- 1 teaspoon instant yeast
- 1 tablespoon sugar
- 3 cups flour
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1 cup lukewarm milk
- 4 teaspoons baking soda for the boiling water

PREPARATION:

Dissolve the yeast in the milk

Combine all the ingredients in a bowl (except the baking soda) and mix together until it forms a ball.

Remove it from the bowl and knead it by hand until the dough begins to get smooth and satiny.

Preheat the oven to 220 C.

Cut the dough into 6 pieces. Roll each one into a pencil-shaped piece.

Cover with a towel, and let the dough relax for 5 to 10 minutes.

After it has risen you will be able to roll it out again and stretch easily.

Let them rise again and give each a third roll and stretch session

They will double in width while baking, so roll them out quite thin.

Place a rope of dough on the work surface in front of you.

Take each end in a hand, loop the dough away from you, and bring the ends back toward your body, crossing them in the middle.

Apply a little bit of pressure to make the loops stick together, but not too. You don't want them to flatten out.

Bring a pot of water to a boil and add the baking soda.

Dip each pretzel in boiling water for 5 seconds, then place them onto a baking sheet.

Hold the pretzel in place with a spatula or spoon while holding it under water.

Brush them gently with an egg that has been whisked with some drops of water or milk.

Sprinkle with coarse salt or other toppings.

Place the baking sheets into the oven and bake until golden brown.



HOMEMADE QUARK CHEESE

After the last recipe for Cottage Cheese I have been asked about the difference between it and Quark and how to prepare Quark at home. Here is a recipe. Quark is a soft and fresh cheese very popular in all German speaking countries and in Northern Europe. It has a texture similar to a thick sour cream and a mild tangy taste. Quark is a very versatile creamy cheese use for cake recipes and dips and low fat spreads or as a salad dressing and much more. Like low fat yoghurt or fromage frais quark contains less fat than most creamy cheeses. It is used as an ingredient or as it is often mixed with herbs or fruit or honey. Kefir is available in Vietnam and the one produced by Vinamilk works perfectly.

INGREDIENTS

2 cups whole milk
1/2 cup kefir

PREPARATION

In a heavy saucepan, bring the milk to a simmer over medium heat. Remove from heat and set aside until the milk is cooled. Whisk in the kefir. Transfer the mixture to a glass or ceramic container, and set aside at room temperature for one day or until it thickens to the consistency of yogurt or crème fraîche. If you want a creamier (and fatter) version of Quark you can add a couple of spoons of cream. Transfer the mixture to a strainer lined with cheesecloth or filter paper set over a bowl. Keep overnight in the fridge to drain the whey from the cheese. Cover and refrigerate up to four days.



HOMEMADE SAVOIARDI (LADYFINGERS OR SPONGEFINGERS)

Savoiardi are light, and dry sponge biscuits roughly shaped like a large finger. They are a principal ingredient of Tiramisu' and many dessert recipes such as charlottes or Zuppa Inglese and Zabaione. Most industrial made Savoiardi are extruded and use some sort of starch to prevent them to absorb humidity and get limp. This recipe uses Cream of Tartar instead. Cream of Tartar is a byproduct of winemaking and a natural ingredient known and used since ancient times. We always have it at The Oasis but it can be substituted with good results by some drops of lemon juice. You will be surprised by these Savoiardi and by how tasty they are compared to the industrial product.

INGREDIENTS:

3 eggs
Icing sugar
75g caster sugar
75 grams flour (the Italian 00 is perfect)
½ teaspoon cream of tartar
A few drops of vanilla essence
salt

PREPARATION:

Get 3 large fresh eggs and separate the yolks from the whites placing them in two different bowls. Add the sugar to the yolks and whisk until you get a soft and frothy cream. Add the sifted flour and vanilla essence and unite it to the cream, mixing well. Add a pinch of salt and the cream of tartar to the egg whites and whisk until stiff. Add the egg whites little at a time to the mixture of egg yolks and mix with a spatula from the bottom to the top, to prevent the mixture from deflating. Pour the mixture into a pastry bag with a flat nozzle. Line with parchment paper a baking pan and shape the biscuits, creating strips of about 10 cm length. Put the biscuits in preheated oven at 180 degrees for 10 minutes. The cookies should become golden brown. Remove from the oven and arrange them on a rack to cool. Sprinkle the Savoiardi with powdered sugar. They can be preserved for several days in an airtight container.



HOMEMADE SOUR CREAM

Sour cream is very delicate and has an extremely short shelf life. For this reason it is difficult to find fresh sour cream in certain countries (Vietnam is an example) Used in many preparations and recipes in France is called "Crème fraîche" while in the English speaking world it takes the name of "Sour cream".

Crème fraîche is slightly thicker and Sour Cream just a bit thinner but they are the same thing and have the same uses. Once prepared this sour cream can be stored in the fridge for a couple of days.

INGREDIENTS:

Cooking cream 250g (if you want a thinner cream use whipping cream)

Plain Yogurt 70 g

PREPARATION:

Started pouring the cream in a bowl. Then add the yogurt and whisk gently to mix all the ingredients. Cover with a clean cloth and let stand at room temperature for 24 hours.

After this time take your sour cream, quickly mix it with a spoon and transfer it to a glass jar.

Keep your sour cream in the refrigerator in an airtight glass jar for up to 6 days. It cannot be frozen. Because there are no artificial thickeners your homemade sour cream may be thinner than commercial brands you may be used to. That is perfectly fine.

If you want a thicker cream just before the use whisk it vigorously. Stop as soon as the cream reaches the desired consistency.



HOMEMADE SOY CREAM CHEESE

Not exactly a cheese but a healthy and easy alternative to dairy products. Lactose-free and animal protein free, contains a high percentage of calcium, iron and Omega 3. It can be easily flavoured with the addition of herbs and spices and used as you would use cream cheese.

INGREDIENTS:

- 1 liter of soy milk
- 1 teaspoon lemon juice
- 1 teaspoon salt

PREPARATION:

Heat over low heat the soy milk, without boiling.

Turn off the stove and add the lemon juice.

Stir slowly with a wooden spoon.

The soy milk, in contact with the lemon juice, separates, forming lumps.

Place the mixture in a strainer lined with cheesecloth or a paper coffee filter

Put inside a bowl. Allow to drain excess liquid for about half an hour.

Put the soy cheese in a saucepan, add the salt.

Warm up gently in a double boiler, until creamy and smooth.

Stir constantly with a wooden spatula.

As soon as it reaches the consistency of a cream cheese, turn off the stove.

Let cool and then refrigerate. Enjoy as is or flavour to taste.



HOMEMADE SUN-DRIED TOMATO CHUTNEY

The summer in a jar. A chutney made with both sun dried and fresh tomatoes, white wine and fresh herbs is a terrific topping for grilled chicken, fish and lean pork. It has an intense tomato flavor best enjoyed on its own with crusty bread if you like culinary simplicity. Serve also to complete easy sides like roasted potatoes and sautéed spinach.

INGREDIENTS:

200 gr sun-dried tomatoes chopped
200 gr fresh tomato (chopped,no seeds)
1/2 cup white wine
1/2 cup sugar
3/4 cup fresh orange juice
2 Tablespoons fresh lemon juice
2 Tablespoons extra-virgin Olive Oil
1/2 teaspoon sea salt, plus more to taste
2 finely chopped garlic cloves
pinch of chili pepper powder or more if desired
Finely chopped herbs, such as thyme, basil and oregano, as desired

PREPARATION:

Combine all of the ingredients except for the herbs and oil in a medium saucepan over medium heat, stirring well to combine. Bring to a low boil, then turn down the heat to low and let the mixture simmer, covered, for about 1- 1 hour and 15 minutes. Turn off the fire. Stir in the olive oil, the finely chopped herbs, add salt and chili pepper to taste. Sun-dried tomato chutney will keep in an air-tight container in the refrigerator for 1-2 weeks.



HOMEMADE TAGLIATELLE

You do not need a pasta machine to make Tagliatelle, Ravioli or Lasagne at home.

A machine makes it easier but what you really need is a good old-fashioned rolling pin.

In fact I do not remember seeing a pasta machine in a private home until the late '70's.

As a kid, when I was helping doing Tagliatelle at home, I was always given a bottle instead of a rolling pin and it would work perfectly. Use normal flour as durum wheat flour (semola di grano duro) is for dry pasta like spaghetti or penne. The surface has to be porous to absorb the sauce. Tagliatelle and Fettuccine are the same thing, one being the definition used in the North and Fettuccine being used in the South. This is the basic recipe but this dough can be flavoured and coloured with spinach, herbs, mushrooms or squid ink or chilies or any ingredient you like. An added bonus is that rolling out pasta by hand is much more effective than a gym session.

INGREDIENTS:

400 gr flour

4 eggs

Salt

PREPARATION:

Make a mound with the flour and break the eggs in the center

Add a pinch of salt and push some flour towards the centre.

Start kneading with your hands and work the dough until it gets firm.

If the dough gets too hard sprinkle some water on your hands and keep kneading.

Roll the dough into a ball, wrap it in a damp cloth and let rest for about 30 minutes, in a cool place.

With an open hand flatten the ball of dough and, using a rolling pin, roll out on a floured surface.

Roll out, fold and roll out again until you get a uniform thin sheet, being careful not to tear it.

As you roll out the dough, sprinkle with flour the table and a rolling pin to prevent sticking.

Once the dough is ready make a roll and using a sharp knife cut slices of about 1 cm.



HOMEMADE TOFFEE CANDIES

Chevy toffee candies are a confectionery preparation found all over the world with different names but always with an intense flavour of milk. In Italy they are called caramelle Mou and are one of the fondest memories of my childhood. It is easy to buy them, but to prepare them at home is easy and fun, especially if you prepare them with your children and above all they will be healthier as in your candy, unlike in industrial ones, there will be no preservatives, additives and colourings.

INGREDIENTS:

100 grams of sugar
30 g whipped cream
1 mould for ice cubes.

PREPARATION:

Put the sugar in a saucepan with a thick bottom over low heat.

Stir with a wooden spoon.

In another saucepan put the previously whipped cream and heated over a low heat.

The sugar will begin to crystallize and then to melt slowly and will take on an amber color.

When the sugar has completely dissolved, you can slowly add the cream, stirring carefully, in order to obtain a very fluid cream without lumps. Now take the mold and pour the mixture. Place the mold in the fridge and leave it for two hours, or in the freezer for half an hour, so the candy will solidify. You can then remove them from the mold and eat them. If you decide to prepare a larger quantity, you can wrap them individually in plastic wrap or store in glass jars. Silicon moulds are easier to handle but if you do not have a mould handy just spread and flatten the mixture on a large plate or on baking paper, let the temperature go down a bit and cut your candies with a large, sharp and oiled knife.



HOMEMADE VEGETARIAN BURGERS

I have been experimenting for a while with meat substitutes. There is a growing demand and, while I do eat meat, I had the desire to offer a tasty alternative. I was not able to find any soy based product in Hanoi having the texture and flavour needed to prepare western recipes. I came up with this recipe and made burgers and loafs with it with excellent results. I experimented with different beans and practically any bean will do. I used several combinations of chickpeas, black beans, lentils, kidney beans and cannellini and they always worked. So just use your favourite beans. At one point of my experiments I added also some black olives to this recipe. I found the result exceptionally tasty but it adds a very Mediterranean touch to the recipe so here I have omitted it.

INGREDIENTS:

- 1 can of beans, drained and rinsed (if you do not like beans, substitute with grilled eggplant)
- 1/2 cup chopped onion
- 1 minced garlic clove,
- 2 cups diced carrots, celery, mushrooms, corn, zucchini and potato
- 3 tablespoons oil for frying (suggestions: olive, coconut, grapeseed)
- 3 tablespoons of soy sauce, balsamic vinegar and tomato paste mixture
- 4 teaspoons paprika, cumin, chili, oregano and pepper mixture
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1 cup dry bread crumbs
- 1/2 cup cooked rice

PREPARATION :

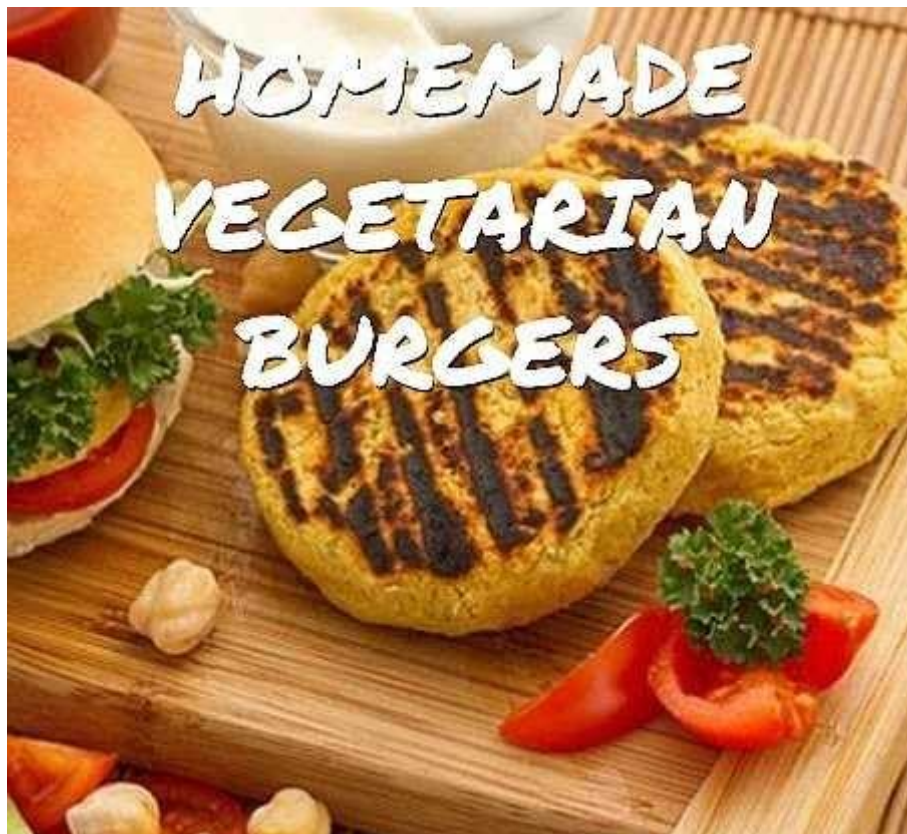
Heat 2 teaspoons oil in a pan over medium heat. Cook the onions, vegetables and garlic until softened.

Transfer to a food processor and add all the other ingredients. Process for a very short time to get a texture similar to minced meat. If needed add more breadcrumbs or rice.

Put the mixture in a bowl and let it rest for one hour in the fridge

Form into golf ball size and flatten into patties. Small patties are better as larger ones tend to crumble.

These vegetarian burgers can be cooked as usual or placed in the oven at 180 C , on a piece of parchment paper without fats, until browned.



HOMEMADE VEGETARIAN SAUSAGE ROLLS

This very popular party bites are called Sausage rolls, Pigs-in-a-blanket, Sausage bites and so on. This is an extremely tasty vegetarian version and the illusion is nearly perfect. If you do not have puff pastry also a thin pizza dough will do the trick. The addition of herbs and garlic give to the filling a distinctive Mediterranean taste and can be skipped or substituted with your favourite herbs and flavouring.

Ingredients :

- 3 eggs
- 1 cup cream cheese or ricotta
- ½ cup crushed walnuts
- 2 ½ tabs. Soy sauce
- 1 small onion, chopped
- 2 crushed garlic cloves
- 1 ½ cups breadcrumbs
- 1 ½ cups rolled oats
- 1 crushed vegetable stock cube
- 2 tbs. Grated Parmesan cheese
- 1 tablespoon of your favourite herbs (I use Oregano and Rosemary)
- Frozen puff pastry in sheets

Preparation:

In a blender mix walnuts, eggs, cheese, onion and soy sauce together.

Add rolled oats, breadcrumbs, Parmesan ,herbs and all the other ingredients

Taste the mixture and add salt and pepper as needed

Roll out the puff pastry sheets, cut them in stripes and spoon a layer of mixture in middle

Roll up the puff pastry stripes and seal brushing milk on the ends.

Cut each roll into smaller pieces and brush with a milk and egg yolk mixture

Place on a tray lined with baking paper and bake at 180 C for about 30 minutes or until golden



INSTANT HOMEMADE RICOTTA (AND OVEN BAKED RICOTTA WITH HERBS)

This time two recipes in one. How to make instant ricotta at home and how to use it for a delicious preparation. You may have been told that UHT milk should not be used to make ricotta. Not true. There will be a minimal difference in the amount of ricotta you produce but you may not even notice it. The difference between Pasteurized milk and UHT milk is in the time and temperature the milk is exposed to heat and both processes kill the pathogens but keep the nutritional values of milk (and the fat content) intact. To make ricotta I prefer to use vinegar because the results are stable and constant but lemon can also be used or citric acid. For home use, if you do not need large quantities, this microwave method works perfectly and is very fast. If you do not have cheesecloth paper coffee filters are perfect. If you do not even have a colander your coffee percolator will do. The leftover liquid is whey and has amazing nutritional properties and several other uses. The time you let your ricotta drain influences the thickness of the texture and the workability of the ricotta.

HOMEMADE INSTANT RICOTTA

INGREDIENTS

2 cups whole milk

1/4 teaspoon table salt

2 tablespoons distilled white vinegar (or lemon juice)

PREPARATION

Line a colander with cheesecloth or paper coffee filter and set over large bowl.

Combine milk, salt, and vinegar (or lemon juice) in a microwave-safe bowl.

Microwave on high heat until lightly bubbling for 2 to 3 minutes.

Remove from microwave, and stir gently for 5 seconds.

Milk should separate into solid curds and a translucent liquid (whey).

If not, microwave again for 30 seconds longer.

Using a slotted spoon or skimmer, transfer curds to the colander and allow to drain until desired texture is reached.

OVEN BAKED RICOTTA WITH HERBS

INGREDIENTS

1 1/2 Cups Ricotta

1/2 Cup Grated Parmesan Cheese

1 Egg

1 Tablespoon Olive Oil

Pinch Of Salt & Pepper

3 tablespoons finely chopped basil and oregano

FOR TOPPING

Freshly Grated Parmesan Cheese and Tomato Sauce

PREPARATION

Preheat the oven to 200 C

Mix together the ricotta, parmesan, egg, olive oil, herbs and seasonings, until smooth and creamy.

Place the mixture into a non-stick muffin baking pan, then bake for 25 to 30 minutes.

Remove from the oven and let sit for 15 minutes.

Top with grated parmesan cheese, tomato sauce and basil.



LIMONCELLO

Not exactly the way it is traditionally made but the result is more than acceptable and the recipe is easy and perfect if not all the traditional ingredients and equipment are available

INGREDIENTS:

zest of 6 or 7 large lemons
1 liter of vodka
5 cups (1250 ml) water
3 cups (700 gr) sugar

PREPARATION:

Peel the yellow zest from the lemons and place into a large jar.
Add the vodka to the jar with the lemon zest.
Cover the jar with plastic and store it in a cool place for 7 days.
Boil the water and add the sugar.
Stir the sugar until it is dissolved.
Set the syrup aside to let it cool.
Strain the lemon peels from the alcohol and discard.
Pour the syrup into the jar with the vodka and stir well.
Transfer to clean bottles and seal.
Serve chilled, from the refrigerator or freezer.



MEXICAN SALSA

Very simple to prepare and always a hit. Unlike the industrial ones this version does not contain fats, sugar, additives or preservatives. You can add herbs and spices to your liking but this is the basic recipe. It is a very versatile preparation. Great with chips or tortillas it works very well also for eggs, chicken or grilled meats and as a dip for vegetable crudités.

INGREDIENTS

- 6 large tomatoes
- 1 medium onion chopped
- 3 garlic cloves, minced
- 3 hot peppers seeded and halved
- 1/2-1 cup fresh cilantro leaves
- 1 1/2 teaspoons salt
- ground pepper, to taste
- 1 Tablespoon olive oil
- 1/2 teaspoon ground cumin
- juice of one lemon or lime

PREPARATION

Place tomatoes, hot peppers and cilantro into a blender.

Blend until you reach the desired consistency. I like it a bit chunky.

Heat 1 Tablespoon of oil in a pan over medium-high heat. Sauté onions and garlic in hot oil for about 10 seconds. Just let them soften but not burn.

Add blended tomato mixture to the pan with the onions and garlic and stir.

Season with salt and ground pepper to taste. Add cumin if desired.

Simmer on medium-low for about 2 minutes until salsa has reduced and thickened. Cook a bit longer if the tomatoes are very juicy.



QUICK PICKLED CAPSICUM

Quick and easy. An essential part of an Antipasto platter , a nice side and a perfect topping for sandwiches and Pizza

INGREDIENTS:

1 kg red, green and yellow capsicums
2 cups white vinegar
2 cups water
1 cup sugar
2 cloves garlic, sliced
1 teaspoon salt
Dried oregano and black peppercorns to taste
Glass jars

PREPARATION:

Wash the capsicums and quarter them
Remove stalk and seeds and cut into wedges.
Scorch the wedges over a flame on the skin side.
Remove the skin scraping with a knife
Place wedges in a pot and pour in boiling water.
Leave them in the water for 3 minutes. Drain thoroughly.
In a pan mix remaining ingredients until the sugar has dissolved.
Bring to boil and then simmer for 5 minutes.
Pack the drained capsicum into jars leaving room at the top.
Pour the boiling vinegar over the capsicum until covered.
Seal the jars immediately. Done



QUICK PICKLED CHERRY TOMATOES

Any kind of cherry tomato will do. Stored in the fridge they will keep several weeks.

INGREDIENTS :

- 1 cup vinegar
- 1 cup water
- 4 teaspoons rock salt
- 2 teaspoons sugar
- 1 strip lemon peel (yellow part only)
- 500 gr cherry tomatoes
- Chopped fresh dill
- Basil and oregano
- 4 garlic cloves halved
- 1 teaspoon crushed black pepper

PREPARATION :

Put vinegar and water into a pan, add salt, sugar, and lemon peel.

Bring to a boil, dissolve sugar and salt. Remove from heat and let cool .

Make two hole in the tomatoes, top and bottom, with a toothpick

Mix in a bowl with dill, basil, oregano, garlic, and crushed pepper.

Add the cooled vinegar mixture. Let stand for 2 hours or more.

Put in a large jar cleaned with boiling water, seal and store in the fridge.



TAHINI FROM SCRATCH

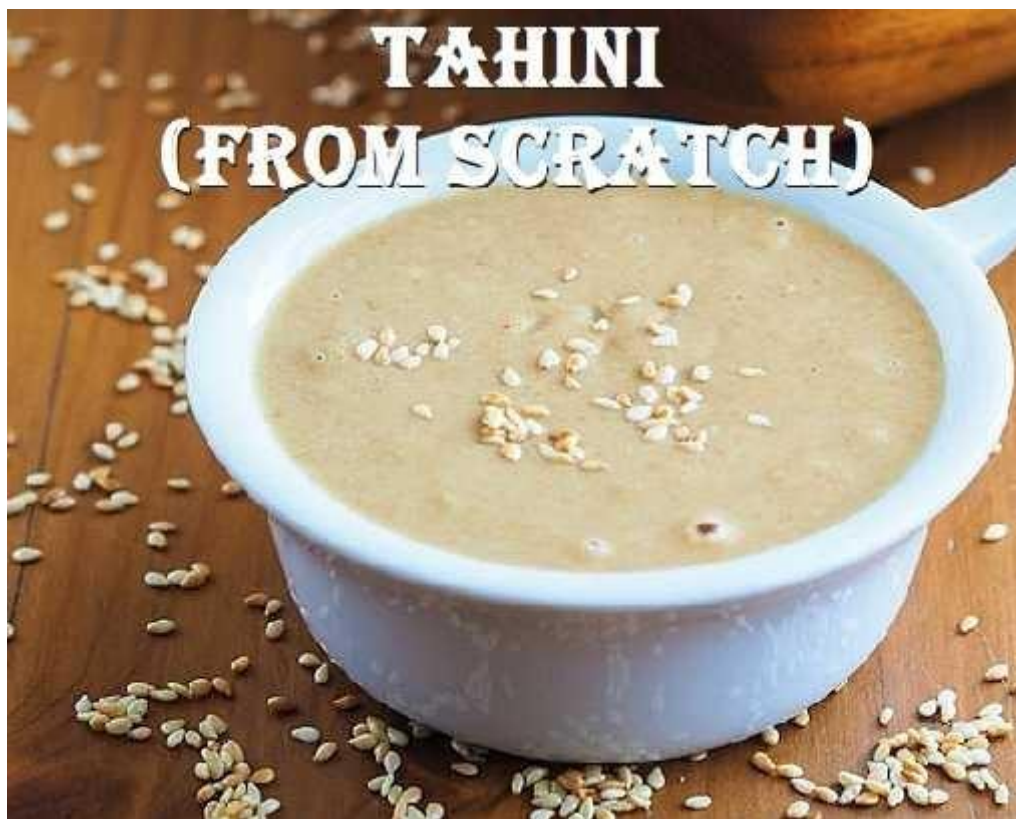
Tahini is a basic ingredient for Hummus or Baba Ganoush (and those will be my next recipes) and many other preparations and, particularly in Vietnam, it is not always available in shops. Homemade Tahini is anyway better than the industrial made one and keeps for long time in the fridge. Tahini is also excellent on its own as a dressing.

INGREDIENTS:

1 cup sesame seeds, hulled is better
4 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
Pinch of salt

PREPARATION:

Put the sesame seeds in pan over medium-low heat and toast stirring constantly for about 4 minutes. The seeds will become fragrant and very lightly colored but do not let them become brown. Transfer toasted seeds to a large plate and let cool completely. Add the toasted sesame seeds to the bowl of a food processor then process for 1 minute until a crumbly paste forms. Add 3 tablespoons of the oil then process more stopping to scrape the bottom and sides of the food processor a couple times. Your Tahini paste should become smooth and should be pourable. You may need to process for another minute or add one additional tablespoon of oil. Taste the tahini for seasoning and add salt to taste. Process 5 to 10 seconds to mix the salt. Store your tahini in a jar or a covered bowl in the refrigerator for one month. The oil could separate over time like peanut butter would. If this happens, give the tahini a good stir before using.



TZATZIKI

Tzatziki, a very versatile and fresh creamy dip and all its countless variations found all over the Mediterranean and Balcanic area, is so easy to prepare and much better when prepared at home than the mild and sterile industrial versions. It takes only minutes to prepare and can be served with croutons, pita, as a salad dressing or a sauce for grilled meats, souvlaki, sandwiches or kebabs. Always serve it cold. My version uses lemon juice but a good vinegar can also be used if you like an acid note in the taste. If you do not have Greek Yogurt, also a Kefir or a thick plain yogurt will do. You can also add or change hers according to your taste and use basil, chives, oregano or other herbs and Tzatziki will adjust perfectly to your wishes.

INGREDIENTS

- 3 cups Greek Yogurt
- Juice of one lemon
- 1 garlic clove, chopped
- 2 medium cucumbers, seeded and diced
- 1 Tablespoon salt
- 2 Tablespoons finely chopped fresh dill and mint leaves
- Ground black pepper to taste
- Extra virgin olive oil

PREPARATION

Peel the cucumbers, cut in half and scrape out seeds. Put in a colander, sprinkle with salt. Let stand for 30 minutes to draw out water. In a food processor, add cucumbers, garlic, lemon juice, dill, mint and black pepper. Process until coarsely blended. Stir this mixture into the yogurt. Taste and add salt, if needed. Place in a bowl and refrigerate for at least two hours. Just before serving top with a bit of olive oil.

All the ingredients and finished preparation available in our shops



VEGETABLE STOCK CUBES

Vegetable stock cubes are very easy to prepare. This recipe will show you how to make Vegetable Stock Cubes with a distinct Italian flavour but you can change the vegetables or herbs to your taste. If you like the traditional brown colour of the commercial stock cubes a few drops of soy sauce will do the trick. Just remember that some soy sauces contain Msg. Stock cubes are used to flavor many recipes like pasta dishes and side dishes or meat or to make a vegetable broth. If you have kids they will come in very handy for soups and baby food. The preparation is very simple and lasts a long time. With few healthy and simple ingredients you will get a great stock cube without preservatives, msg or fats.

INGREDIENTS:

- 150 grams of celery
- 150 grams of carrots
- 100 grams of onions
- 100 grams of tomatoes
- 100 grams of zucchini
- 30 g of Parsley
- 300 grams of coarse salt
- 4 peeled garlic cloves
- 80 milliliters of white table wine
- 2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
- 10 grams of Sage
- 10 grams of Rosemary

PREPARATION:

Clean, wash and coarsely chop all the vegetables.

Put in a pot all ingredients except the oil

Bring to a boil and simmer on low heat for 30 minutes, stirring occasionally.

Put the boiled vegetables with all the liquid in a food processor and process until you get a homogeneous paste.

Add the oil, mix well and put again in the pot on low flame.

Let reduce until very thick.

Spread the mixture on cooking paper and let it cool completely.

With a very sharp knife cut into cubes and wrap in aluminum foil.

If you prefer you can pour the mixture in an ice-cube tray and keep them in the freezer or pour it in a jar and top it with olive oil before closing it.



7. SWEETS



APPLE CROSTATA-CROSTATA DI MELE

In a more civilized age, every self-respecting Italian mother would always have one of these at the ready to stuff up whoever came close. Nobody was safe. Kids, relatives, neighbors, visitors and also, I have seen it happen, the postman. Try it. It is easy to prepare and the house fills up with a wonderful aroma of times past. Apple crostata is the classic but it can be prepared with plums, peaches, grapes or whatever fruit you like and is able to withstand 20 minutes in the oven.

INGREDIENTS:

For the topping:

4 green apples
2 tablespoons of Apricot jam
The juice of a half a lemon

For the crust:

3 cups flour
3/4 cup butter
1/2 cup sugar
2 egg yolks
Grated lemon zest (just yellow part)

For the cream

2 egg yolks
2 tablespoons flour
1 cup milk
1/2 teaspoon vanilla extract
1/2 teaspoon cinnamon
4 tablespoons sugar

PREPARATION:

Make the crust first: combine all the ingredients until smooth. Wrap the dough ball in plastic and let rest for 30 minutes in the fridge. Roll the dough out into a thick sheet. Line a buttered and floured baking pan with the dough. Press the dough up around the rim to form a border.

Prepare the cream: mix all the ingredients. Heat them stirring gently over a low flame until the mixture thickens but do not let it boil.

Peel and core the apples. Slice them thinly. Sprinkle the slices with lemon juice to keep them from getting brown. Preheat your oven to 200 C. Pour a layer of cream over the dough, and arrange the sliced apples over it. Mix the apricot jam with an equal amount of water and brush the apples. Dot the apples with bits of unsalted butter. Dust the crostata with sugar, and bake it for at least 20 minutes.



CARROT CAKE

Nice, tasty and simple to prepare this cake with its unusual texture will please everybody. My daughter loves it and it is a good way to get her to eat carrots.

INGREDIENTS:

200g carrots, peeled
175g brown sugar
200g self-raising flour
1 tsp bicarbonate of soda
2 tsp cinnamon
zest 1 orange
2 eggs
150ml sunflower oil
For the icing:
50g softened butter
75g icing sugar
100g cream cheese

PREPARATION :

Preheat the oven to 180C. Line a baking tin with baking paper. Grate the carrots finely putting them into a large bowl. Place the sugar, flour, bicarbonate and cinnamon on top of the carrots. Add the orange zest and mix well. Break the eggs and add them in the bowl along with the oil. Mix everything together well a second time. Transfer the mixture to your tin and level the top. Bake it in the oven for 30 minutes or until the cake is cooked. Let it cool.

To make the icing, mix butter and icing sugar together, then stir in the soft cheese until smooth. When the cake is cool, spread the top with the icing and cut into squares.

The cake tends to get hard in a short time. The sunflower oil addition keeps it moist for several days. Glycerin (no problem it is a natural ingredient) is often used to keep cakes soft and moist for longer time. I avoid it because it adds a long lasting sweet note to the flavor but, if you want to keep any cake for longer periods of time it is an option.



CHEESECAKE

Believe it or not cheesecake was already popular in ancient times in Greece and promptly adopted by the Romans (like so many things originating in Greece).

It was not prepared with a cookie crust and sugar but with a dough crust and honey as sweetener.

Nowadays it is prepared in cooked and uncooked versions. This is a basic uncooked one.

It is very easy to prepare and can be flavoured according to your taste with lemon or coffee or chocolate or any other ingredient you like. It could be prepared in two layers, for example, one with chocolate and the other plain. The important thing is to press well the cookie crumbs and to refrigerate the finished cake until really firm.

INGREDIENTS:

Crumb Crust

1 1/2 cups fine dry cookie crumbs
2 tablespoons sugar
5 tablespoons margarine or butter, melted
Preheat the oven to 190 degrees C.
In a bowl, with fork, stir all ingredients until evenly blended and moistened.
Press firmly the mixture on bottom and sides of a pie pan. Bake the crust for 10 minutes. Let

cool.

Filling

3 spoons unflavored gelatin
1 large lemon
1/2 cup water
250 gr cream cheese, softened
3/4 cups sugar
1 teaspoon vanilla extract
1/2 cup plain yoghurt

PREPARATION:

In a small bowl, evenly sprinkle the gelatin over 3 tablespoons water. Let stand 5 minutes.

Grate 2 teaspoons of yellow rind from the lemon in a pan and squeeze 1 tablespoon juice.

Add the remaining water.

Heat the juice and water to boiling on medium-high. Remove from heat.

Immediately add gelatin mixture and stir until dissolved. Return to small bowl and let cool.

In a large bowl beat cream cheese and sugar until fluffy and smooth.

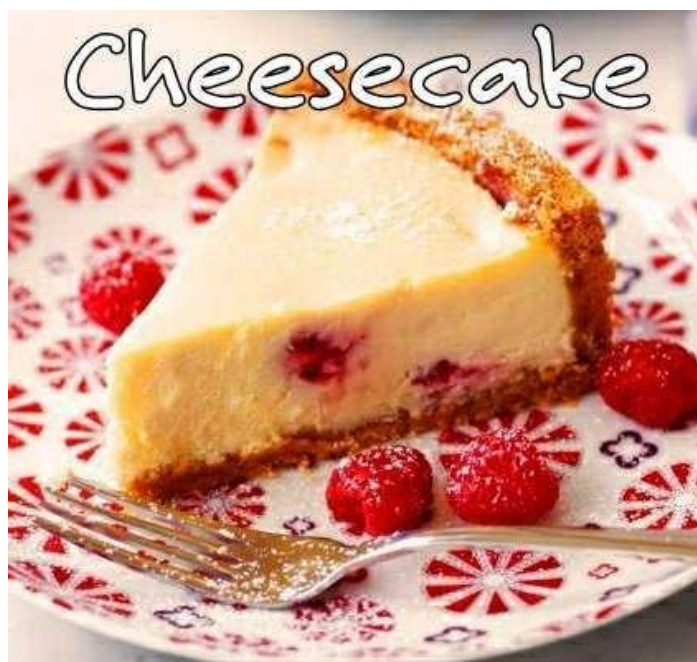
Beat in more grated lemon peel and vanilla.

Add the yoghurt, then the gelatin mixture and beat on low speed until well combined.

Pour in the prepared crust. Refrigerate uncovered until set.

Run a knife around the side of the pan and remove from the pan.

Serve with raspberries, strawberries or other fruit



CHOCOLATE CHILI TART

This tart will definitely make a superb treat for Valentine's Day.

Dark chocolate and chili is a fantastic pairing and this tart is very easy to prepare and looks irresistible.

The added bonus is that both chilies and chocolate are well known for their aphrodisiac properties.

INGREDIENTS

For the dough:

200 g flour

100 g of butter

2 egg yolks

50 g of icing sugar

1 pinch of salt

For the filling:

200 g of dark chocolate

25 cl of fresh cream

20 g of butter

1 pinch of chili powder

For garnish:

long red chilies

40 g of sugar

PREPARATION

Mix the flour with the icing sugar and a pinch of salt. Add the cold butter cut into small cubes and blend to a crumbly consistency. Add the egg yolks and blend for a few seconds more. Wrap the dough in plastic wrap and store in the fridge. Finely chop the chocolate and mix it in a bowl with the cream and chili powder. Melt the chocolate putting the bowl in a pot of gently boiling water. Add the butter mixture and stir until it has melted. Stir the mixture until homogeneous. Roll out the pastry to 2-3 mm and put it in a buttered baking tin cutting the excess border. Prick the bottom with a fork and cover the dough with a sheet of baking paper previously dipped in water and patted dry. Fill it with small stones or rice or beans to avoid pops up. Put in the oven at 180 C and bake for about 15 minutes. Remove paper and weights and continue cooking for another 5-6 minutes. Let the pastry case cool, pour the chocolate cream and hot pepper in it and let cool in refrigerator for at least two hours. Clean the long red chilies and remove the seeds and inner stalk and cut in strips. Pour the sugar in a saucepan, add the same weight of water and bring to a boil. Add the peppers and cook until they are transparent and the syrup is thick but not caramelized. Strain the syrup and let the chilies dry. Decorate the cake with red pepper strips and syrup. Serve with your favorite ice cream.



CHOCOLATE BISCOTTI WITH RUM CREAM

It is cold and humid and the miserable weather makes us all feel a bit depressed.

These cookies should help. They always do for me and I do not have the slightest guilty feeling about eating them.

They are extremely easy to prepare and fast and the result is always great.

It is a basic recipe and it is very simple to make changes to it if needed.

For example substitute the rum with Vanilla or add chocolate shavings to the cream or sprinkle the biscuits with icing sugar.

INGREDIENTS

For the cookies:

220 g flour

160 g of butter

80 g of sugar

40 g of cocoa

2 egg yolks

1 teaspoon cinnamon

For the cream:

90 g of butter

50 g of sugar

1 tablespoon rum

PREPARATION:

Preheat the oven to 180 C. Line a tray with baking paper.

In a bowl mix the egg yolks with the sugar until creamy. Stir in the sifted flour and cocoa, the butter and cinnamon.

Mix well. Roll out the dough to a thickness of approximately four millimeters.

Cut an even number of disks. Mix and roll out the pastry trimmings to get more disks.

If you do not have a cutter use a shot glass with the edge moistened.

Put the cookies on the baking tray and bake for 10-15 minutes.

Prepare the cream: in a bowl mix the butter with the sugar, adding it a little at a time.

When you reach a creamy consistency add the Rum. Put the cream in the fridge.

Take the cookies out of the oven and let them cool down (This will obviously be the most difficult part). Join two cookies placing among them some cream. Eat and be happy.



CINNAMON SWIRLS

It is nearly Christmas and everybody seems to be baking. Whatever includes cinnamon, to me, tastes like Christmas. These Cinnamon Swirls are a classic and so easy to prepare. They require only 8 ingredients and all of them are easily available. If you want to give them an extra special Christmas touch add raisins soaked in rum or brandy. Makes about 50

INGREDIENTS:

180 g butter
1 1/4 cups brown sugar
1 teaspoon vanilla essence
1 egg
3 cups plain flour
1 1/2 teaspoons baking powder
2 teaspoons ground cinnamon
2 tablespoons sugar

PREPARATION:

Beat butter and sugar in a bowl with an electric mixer until light and fluffy.
Beat in vanilla and egg. Sift the flour and baking powder, mix well.
Roll out to form a rectangle 4 mm thick.
Combine cinnamon and caster sugar and sprinkle over dough.
Roll up like a Swiss roll. Wrap in plastic film and refrigerate until firm.
Unwrap and slice. Place on greased baking trays. Bake at 180 C for 10-15 minutes or until golden. Cool on trays. Transfer to a wire rack to cool completely.



COCA COLA CAKE

Just one of those things... An American friend gave me this recipe several years ago. For a European making a cake this way and with these ingredients is heresy
And, at first I did not even want to try but I must admit that the result is absolutely outstanding

INGREDIENTS:

1 cup Coca-Cola
1/2 cup Yoghourt
1 cup butter softened
1 3/4 cups sugar
2 large eggs, lightly beaten
2 teaspoons vanilla extract
2 cups all-purpose flour
1/4 cup cocoa
1 teaspoon baking soda
1 1/2 cup gelatin

For the frosting:

Ingredients:

1/2 cup butter
1/3 cup Coca-Cola
3 tablespoons cocoa
2 cups sugar
1 tablespoon vanilla extract

PREPARATION:

Combine Coca-Cola and yoghurt
Beat butter until creamy. Gradually add sugar until blended.
Add egg and vanilla; beat at low speed until blended.
Add cola and yoghurt mixture and mix at low speed.
Combine flour, cocoa, and soda and add, beating just until blended.
Stir in gelatin and mix.
Pour batter into a greased and floured pan.
Bake at 180° for 30 to 35 minutes. Remove from oven; cool 10 minutes.
Pour Coca-Cola Frosting over warm cake

Coca Cola Frosting

Make the frosting just before pouring over the cake.

Preparation:

Bring first 3 ingredients to a boil in a pan over medium heat.
Stir until butter melts.
Remove from heat and whisk in sugar and vanilla.
Decorate with walnuts or pecans , if desired.



GERMAN STYLE PLUMCAKE

When it is the right season one you can find beautiful plums in Hanoi and I decided to make this cake because it is easy and because when I was a child we made it very often at home. As for any traditional recipe nearly every family has its own recipe. I tried to recreate the taste and aroma of my childhood and the result is really not bad.

Ingredients:

1/2 cup Butter

1/2 cup Sugar

2 Eggs

1 1/2 Cup Flour

1 tsp Baking Powder

500 gr Plums

1 small Package Vanilla Pudding

Preparation:

Preheat the oven to 180 degrees C

Grease a cake pan. Slice and pit the plums and set them aside

In a mixing bowl prepare a cream with butter and sugar until light and fluffy.

Add the eggs one at a time and beat the mixture.

Add the baking powder to the flour in a mixing bowl and slowly add the flour mix to the butter mixture.

When the mixture is homogeneous spread the batter into the pan.

Sprinkle the dough with a few teaspoons of Vanilla Pudding Powder.

Lay the plums onto the batter. Sprinkle them with a few more teaspoons of vanilla pudding powder.

Bake for 40 minutes. The cake will begin to brown at edges and will rise up and around the plums.

Take from the oven and sprinkle with a few tablespoons of sugar. Let the cake cool on a rack.



ITALIAN RICOTTA CAKE

A sweet and moist Ricotta Cake with a lovely scent of almonds and lemon.

INGREDIENTS:

1 tablespoon butter
3/4 cup ground almonds
1/4 cup flour
3/4 cup butter, softened
1 cup sugar
4 eggs, separated
3/4 cup ricotta cheese
Zest of 3 lemons
1/4 cup lemon juice
Icing sugar for dusting

PREPARATION:

Preheat oven to 160°C.
Grease a springform pan with the tablespoon of butter.
Line bottom of pan with baking paper.
In a bowl, combine the ground almonds with the flour.
Using a mixer, beat 170 grams of butter with sugar until fluffy.
Add the egg yolks. Continue beating until smooth.
Add the ricotta, lemon zest, and lemon juice. Mix well.
Add the almond-flour mixture and combine. Set aside.
In a bowl, beat the egg whites until stiff peaks form.
Slowly fold the whites into the cake mixture.
Pour into the prepared pan.
Bake 45 minutes until lightly browned and still slightly soft.
Remove from oven and allow to cool in the pan.
Dust top with icing sugar.



MARRON GLACÉS (CANDIED CHESTNUTS)

I have started to see nice chestnuts around and it is the right time to prepare this wonderful treat. It takes a bit of time but it is easy and the result is superb. It is controversial if Marron Glacés originated in Italy or in France but the first mention of them is in an Italian cookbook written more than 700 years ago. Fruit candied the same way was well known in the Arab world and probably returning crusaders took the recipe back and adapted it to use chestnuts. The chestnuts from the area around Cuneo are very large and particularly suited for this preparation. If you end up with a lot of broken pieces do not worry. You can puree them, add some whipped cream to make a beautiful dessert or use a spread for breakfast or a filling for a pie. A funny thing I remember from my childhood is that the water used to boil the chestnuts before peeling them was used as a hair colouring. Rinsing one's hair with it would give beautiful deep dark brown-reddish reflexes to the hair. For free.

INGREDIENTS

500g Chestnuts (choose large ones)
300g Sugar
3/4 cup Water
1 vanilla bean

PREPARATION

Drop the chestnuts into boiling water for 10 minutes.

Drain the chestnuts and peel them as quickly as you can while they are still hot. Remove also the inner membrane. Keep the unpeeled chestnuts in hot water because if they cool down the skin will adhere to the chestnut. If you break some chestnut do not worry and go on processing them. They will taste as good as the whole ones? In a large pan cook the sugar, water and the vanilla bean over low heat until the sugar dissolves. Simmer gently for 5 minutes, and then add the chestnuts. Bring to a boil and cook for 10 minutes. Remove from heat and discard the vanilla bean. Cover the saucepan and leave over night in the syrup. Bring again to the boil and cook 1 minute more. Again allow to stand this time for 24 hours. Repeat again and let cool down. When cold if all the syrup has not been absorbed drain the chestnuts. Do not overcook or the chestnuts will crumble and the crystallization process will not happen. Preheat your oven to 65°C. Cover an oven rack with baking paper. Distribute the chestnuts evenly on the paper and allow to dry out for 2 hours with the oven door open a few centimeters until they are firm. Put the chestnuts into little paper sweet cases, and keep in an airtight container. Eat within one week.



MARZIPAN (AND MARZIPAN POTATOES)

Marzipan is wonderful. It can be shaped, coloured or flavoured. It can be used as it is or flattened and used to cover a cake.

It tastes like Christmas. It is easy to prepare and to store. It makes a wonderful filling for chocolates or cakes.

One can find Marzipan all over Europe but the historical production centers are in Northern Germany (Luebeck and Koenigsberg producing the most famous Marzipan) and in Sicily, particularly Palermo.

It is no surprise as both areas have always been the northern and southern gates of Europe and many products and ideas of Middle and Far Eastern origin have entered Europe from these two points.

What is surprising is to find exactly the same round-shaped delicacies, albeit with different names, to be Christmas specialties both in Sicily and in Germany.

The first part of this recipe gives instructions on how to make Marzipan and the second one on how to shape and flavour it into a wonderful Christmas treat.

You will be surprised by the taste and aroma of Marzipan made this way. A lot of commercially produced Marzipan is bland and sticks to your palate.

That is because it is not made with real almonds but soy or other nuts, it is artificially flavoured and the binding agent is, if you are lucky, molasses or artificial caramel.

INGREDIENTS

1 $\frac{3}{4}$ cups ground almonds

1 cup granulated sugar

$\frac{1}{4}$ cup honey

2 Tbsp water

2 Tablespoons raisins

3 tablespoons rum

PREPARATION

Place the ground almonds into a food processor.

Stir the sugar, honey and water in a small pan over high heat until it reaches a full boil and the sugar has completely dissolved.

Pour this into the food processor while it's running.

Blend until the marzipan comes together.

While it's still warm, shape this into a log and wrap in plastic wrap.

Leave at room temperature to cool and store wrapped until you are ready to use it.

Soak raisins in rum and mix with the marzipan

Form small balls with the marzipan

Roll the balls in cocoa powder

Let set in the fridge for at least 2 hours



MOJITO CHEESECAKE

If you like Mojitos try this refreshing no-bake cheesecake and beat the heat with the flavour of tangy limes and smooth rum. Use good-quality white rum and the result will be superb. Substitute the Rum with Tequila and Triple-Sec or Cointreau and you will have a spectacular Margarita Cheesecake.

FOR THE STUFFING:

- 300 gr ricotta
- 150 ml fresh cream
- 130 gr sugar
- 3 lime
- 60 ml rums
- 4 sheets of gelatin
- Mint

FOR THE BASE:

- 300 g dry biscuits (Digestive are perfect but any dry biscuit will do)
- 150 gr melted butter

FOR DECORATION:

- lime
- Mint leaves
- Brown sugar

PREPARATION:

Reduce the cookies to fine crumbles in a food processor. Add the melted butter and mix again. Use this compound to line a cake mold. Start at the edges and finish with the center carefully pressing and leveling with the back of a spoon. Place it in the fridge.

Soak the gelatin in cold water for 10 minutes. In a bowl, prepare a cream mixing the ricotta cheese, sugar, finely chopped mint leaves, one lime peel and the filtered juice of three more limes. Work until you get a homogeneous compound. In a separate bowl, whip the cream until stiff peaks form.

Incorporate it to the cheese-based compound mixing gently from bottom to top.

Dissolve the gelatin with the rum in a small casserole on low fire. Combine everything with the prepared mixture and gently blend with a spatula.

Pour the mixture into the shell of cookies that you have pulled out of the fridge in the meantime. Level and let solidify in the fridge for at least 3 hours. Just before serving, decorate the mojito cake with slices and lime slices, fresh mint and dark sugar.



ORANGE MASCARPONE MOUSSE

A very simple but elegant dessert. Can be prepared in the same way with any citrus fruit. Dusting it with dark chocolate shavings and cinnamon powder adds a wonderful touch.

INGREDIENTS:

- 250 gr. mascarpone cheese
- 4 tablespoons sugar
- Juice of 2 oranges, strained
- 1 peeled orange sliced
- 3 eggs, separated

PREPARATION:

- Beat the egg whites until they form soft peaks
- Beat the egg yolks with the sugar until thick and creamy.
- Add the mascarpone and beat until foamy.
- Still beating, add the orange juice until blended, about 30 seconds.
- Fold in the egg whites being careful not to deflate them.
- Distribute the mixture among cups and refrigerate.
- Chill for 3 hours.
- Serve the mousse garnished with slices of orange.



PANNACOTTA WITH RASPBERRY COULISSE

Panna cotta, literally translated as cooked cream, is a traditional Italian dessert. It is very delicate and the raspberry coulis perfectly compliments the freshness and the elegant texture of Panna Cotta.

INGREDIENTS:

1 cup whole milk
1 tablespoon powdered gelatin
3 cups whipping cream
1/3 cup honey
1 tablespoon sugar
1 pinch of salt

Pannacotta

PREPARATION:

- 1) Put the milk in a bowl. Mix with the gelatin.
- 2) Wait 3 minutes to soften the gelatin.
- 3) Pour into a pan over medium until gelatin dissolves but the milk does not boil.
- 4) Add cream, honey, sugar, and salt. Stir.
- 5) Remove from the heat. Pour into small glasses so that they are 1/2 full.
- 6) Refrigerate until hard but not frozen.

Raspberry Coulisse

INGREDIENTS:

180 grams sugar
180 ml water
180 gr Raspberries

PREPARATION:

- 1) Place 180 grams sugar, 180 ml water (add brandy if you want) into a pan and bring to boil.
- 2) Reduce the heat and simmer until the sugar has dissolved.
- 3) Take the pan off the heat and add 120 gr Raspberries (or any fruit).
- 4) Using a blender, blend the sauce until smooth.
- 5) Pass the sauce through a sieve into a bowl and stir in remaining fruit. Done.

Pannacotta with fruit coulis is great but if you want something different skip the fruit, add some coffee to the pannacotta mixture and when you serve it top it with cold coffee with a splash of brandy and sprinkle with grated dark chocolate.



SICILIAN CANNOLI

Sicilian Cannoli are a wonderful dessert showing how deep the Arab influence is in Sicilian cuisine. As usual there are many local variations but for sure Cannoli are never made with a custard or chocolate filling or puff pastry as I have sometimes seen.

Cannoli are not difficult to prepare and the most important thing is to serve them immediately after filling or they will lose their wonderful crispiness.

INGREDIENTS:

For the filling :

900 gr ricotta cheese
450 gr sugar
milk
vanilla
cinnamon
100 gr mixed candied fruit diced
100 gr dark chocolate chopped

For the wafers:

200 gr flour
30 gr cocoa powder
30 gr sugar
2 eggs
20 gr butter
salt to taste
1 tablespoon Rhum
frying oil
Icing sugar

PREPARATION:

For the wafers: mix together the flour, cocoa powder, melted butter and eggs in a bowl.

Add the rhum and keep mixing until the dough is smooth.

Wrap it in plastic wrap and let it rest for half an hour.

Roll out the cannoli dough and cut it into squares. Wrap the squares around metal tubes to shape the cannoli.

Fry the dough, still wrapped around the tubes in boiling oil.

Let the cannoli cool on paper towels. Once cool, slide out the metal tubes.

For the filling:

Mix with the ricotta and sugar, adding a bit of milk, vanilla and cinnamon.

Pass the mixture through a sieve and blend in diced candied fruit and bits of dark chocolate.

Fill the Cannoli with the ricotta filling. Sprinkle the outside with powdered sugar.

Serve immediately after filling or they will get soggy and break.



SWISS WALNUT CAKE

A classic Swiss Cake, a caloric bomb and one of the best desserts you will ever eat

INGREDIENTS:

450 g sugar
250g walnuts in small pieces
2 dl cream
350 g white flour
200 g butter or margarine
1 egg
1 pinch of salt

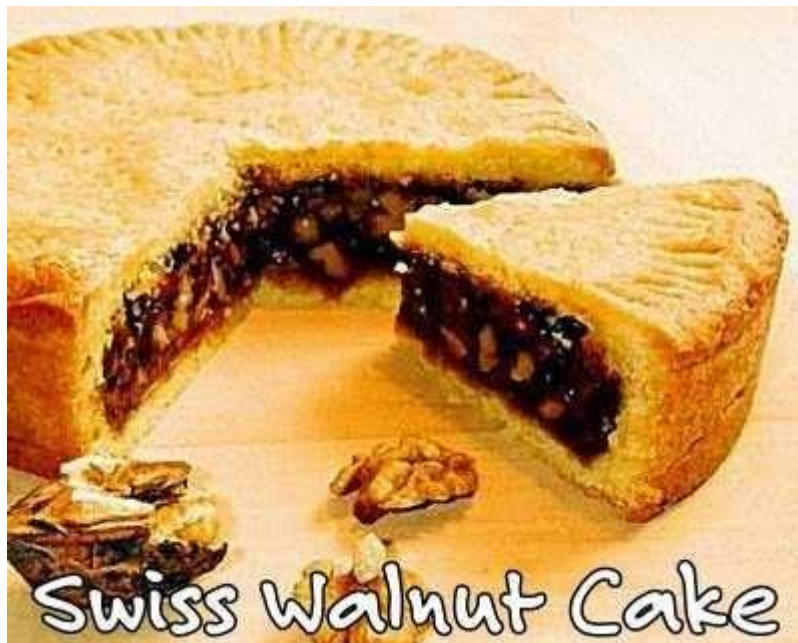
PREPARATION:

Filling:

Heat gently 300 g sugar in a pan until the sugar foams. Do not stir.
Add walnuts, mix, remove from heat or sugar will get too brown.
Add the cream immediately and mix.
Let the filling cool down.

Dough:

Mix all remaining ingredients to make a dough
Cut the dough into three pieces, two the same size, one smaller.
Flatten the large pieces to make bottom and a top of the cake
Roll up the third piece and place it on the bottom along the form
Pour the filling on the bottom.
Cover the cake with the top.
Bake in the oven at about 200°C for 40 minutes.
Remove from the form immediately or it will stick.



TIRAMISU”

Tiramisu’ was invented,somewhere in Northeastern Italy around 1967.

There is no mention of it before this date. Similar desserts like Bavarese, Zuppa Inglese, Zuccotto and Charlotte have been made for hundreds of years but Tiramisu’ is a recent addiction (Believe me. I was already there).

There are literally hundreds of versions of this dessert. This one is easy,very fast to prepare and always gives a great result.

If you are uncomfortable using raw eggs whisk the raw yolks in a double boiler over hot water and substitute the egg whites with whipped cream.

INGREDIENTS:

6 eggs
500g mascarpone
150g sugar
300g Savoiardi biscuits
4 cups of coffee
1 cup of liqueur to taste (rum, cognac ...)
Cocoa or grated dark chocolate

PREPARATION:

In a bowl whisk the egg yolks with the sugar until creamy and frothy .

Add mascarpone cheese, half a cup of liquor and mix well.

Beat the egg whites until stiff and mix with the cheese and egg cream.

In a bowl mix the slightly sweetened coffee and the remaining liquor.

Dip briefly the ladyfingers in the coffee

In a small baking tray forma layer of Savoiardi dipped in coffee.

Cover with a layer of cream then continue with a layer of Savoiardi and one of cream.

Refrigerate for at least two hours.

Just before serving, sprinkle the surface of the tiramisu with cocoa powder or grated chocolate.



TORTA DI MELE – APPLE PIE

When you think of Italian ingredients probably Parmigiano, Mozzarella, Balsamic vinegar, Prosciutto, olives or lemons and oranges come to mind but Italy is the largest producer of apples in Europe and 5th in the world. Apple pie is made, more or less the same way, all over Italy, what changes and makes the difference is the apple variety used to prepare it. This very simple pie should be soft and moist and keeps well for several days.

INGREDIENTS:

- 1 cup Butter
- 4 Apples
- 2 $\frac{1}{4}$ cups Flour
- 1 tablespoon Baking Powder
- $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon Cinnamon
- $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon Salt
- 4 Eggs
- 1 teaspoon Vanilla Extract
- 1 cup Sugar
- $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon Lemon Zest
- 4 tablespoons butter, melted
- 3 tablespoons sugar

PREPARATION:

Heat oven to 180 C degrees.
Butter a springform and dust with flour .Remove excess flour.
Mix flour, baking powder, salt, and cinnamon.
In a large bowl, make a soft cream of butter and sugar.
Add eggs beating well after adding each egg.
Beat until pale lemon yellow in color, creamy, and thick.
Add slowly the flour mixture. Keep beating gently and add lemon zest, vanilla.
Beat 2 more minutes. Peel, quarter, clean and slice the apples.
Cut half of the apple slices into smaller pieces and fold into the batter.
Pour the batter into prepared springform. Smoothen the surface of the batter.
Arrange the remaining apples slices on the top of the cake with edges slightly overlapping.
Brush the apples with melted butter. Sprinkle apples and batter with sugar.
Bake in preheated oven until the cake pulls away from the sides and the top is golden brown.
The cake is done when apples are lightly browned.
Remove from oven and allow to cool on a wire rack.
Dust powdered sugar with cinnamon all over the cake.
It can be served as it is or with whipped cream.



8. DRINKS



GRANITA AL CAFFE'

When weather is hot I find there is no better way to start a day than with a classic Sicilian Granita al Caffè'. Served with the "brioche" (a sort of croissant) or a tender sweet bun, the coffee Granita is the classic Sicilian summer breakfast. To make it even richer, it is necessary to have a nice curl of whipped cream and, why not, a garnish of chocolate shavings.

INGREDIENTS:

2.5 deciliters of water
1.5 deciles of espresso coffee
100 grams of sugar
Whipped Cream
Dark grated chocolates

PREPARATION:

Put in a saucepan 100 g of sugar and 2.5 dl of water. On low heat, dissolve the sugar and cook the syrup until it thickens and sticks to the spoon. Let it cool, and then add 1.5 dl of espresso. Mix well the coffee with syrup to obtain a homogeneously coloured liquid, then pour it into metal or plastic containers (also freezer trays are good) . Fill in no more than 2 thirds so that it can be easily mixed during the freezing phase. Put the containers in the freezer for at least half an hour and as soon as the mixture begins to freeze scrape the hardening parts from the sides of the containers and mix everything. Put in the freezer and mix from time to time to obtain a homogeneous granita. Garnish with whipped cream and dark chocolate shavings and serve with a sweet bun or a croissant



HOT CHOCOLATE ITALIAN STYLE

Hot chocolate cures everything. Hot chocolate makes this miserable weather vanish. Hot chocolate lifts your mood when you feel down. Hot chocolate is happiness in a cup. We are not talking of something that comes from a powder and is watery and with no personality. Hot chocolate comes from real chocolate and is a total, life-changing experience. There is no way back. Hot chocolate is thick, nearly pudding-like and part of the pleasure is to scrape the last bits from the cup. Hot chocolate starts with a spoon and finishes with a spoon. Hot chocolate does not need marshmallows or candy canes, star anise or cardamom or any other fancy addition. Hot chocolate needs just a big swirl of whipped cream on top and it is perfect. Hot chocolate does not need added sugar or milk; it is perfect as it is. Try it and it will reward you with the taste of perfection that only simple things have.

INGREDIENTS

125 gr of 70% dark chocolate broken in to pieces (the smaller the better)
250 ml milk (almond milk if you prefer)
25 gr of sugar
5 gr corn starch
1 pinch of salt
Whipped cream

PREPARATION

Heath on low flame the milk. When it is hot but not boiling add chocolate and sugar then stir until everything is melted. Add the cornstarch and a pinch of salt and pour into your favourite cup. Top with a swirl of whipped cream. Be happy.



SANGRIA

The perfect fruity summer beverage that's adaptable and delicious ! The Spanish fruit punch one must have at every party. There are dozens of variations but this is a very simple version .

INGREDIENTS:

3 Liters of Red wine	2 oranges sliced
1 Liter of Orange Juice	2 lemons sliced
1 Liter of Sprite	1 apple sliced
2 cups of Brandy	Sugar, to taste
1 Bottle of white Sparkling Wine	

PREPARATION:

Wash and slice fruit. Dissolve sugar in Brandy. Add sugar, brandy and fruit in a punch bowl. Pour in wine. Stir to mix in fruit. Chill before serving. When ready to serve add in Sprite and sparkling wine to give the sangria some fizz. Serve with ice cubes if desired.

