

# Lidia's Italy at Home

## Celebrating at the Table

Christmas dinner ideas  
and holiday party traditions

## Keeping It Light

How to stay healthy  
after the holidays

## Valentine's Day

Cook a perfect dinner  
for you and your partner

## Discovering Istria

Recipes and memories  
from my native land

## It's Wine O'Clock

Sommelier Jeff Porter  
shares his precious tips

## Tie One On!

How to make  
your cocktail at home



Chef Lidia Bastianich brings us into her home to share her favorite family recipes:

Smothered Escarole • Butternut Squash Gnocchi in Sage Butter Sauce • Lemon-Vanilla Fried Ribbon Cookies  
Scaloppine in Lemon-Caper Sauce with Spinach • Baked Stuffed Shells • Ricotta Dumplings in Jam Sauce  
Eggplant Rollatini with Spinach-Ricotta Filling • Quick Hazelnut Loacker Wafer "Tiramisù"



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# Tutti a tavola!



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Holidays are a perfect time to have family and friends together at a table full of delicious food. I love to cook for loved ones anytime of the year, but holidays are extra special since the guest list increases, the table is abundant, and the conversation is always fun and lively.

In this second issue of Lidia's Italy at Home, I share some of my favorite recipes and culinary ideas from the months of November through March. This is a time of year when we typically spend more time inside the kitchen and around the table. However, I keep summertime flavors alive by preparing dishes inspired by my garden.

It's also a time of year when I like to get the children and grandchildren back in the kitchen with me. I cannot say enough about how important it is to get the children involved in cooking from an early age. This way, they will understand where their food comes from, develop their palettes and have a place where they can openly communicate with their families. Many of my fondest childhood memories are from my time spent in the kitchen with my own grandmother.

Holiday menus and family gatherings do not stop in my kitchen after December. Valentine's Day is a great holiday to stay at home and prepare some intimate, flavorful dishes for the people we love. I also like to play with some lighter foods during these late winter months after the big holiday entertaining comes to an end. I believe in cooking lighter foods during this time, but will never sacrifice flavor!

For those traveling during the winter months or starting to plan their summer vacation, I share information on the region of Istria, my homeland. It's a place full of culture, culinary traditions and so much more. I visit several times a year, but summertime is my favorite; it's a perfect place to relax by the sea while being surrounded by its European charm and traditions.

Lastly, holidays are about celebrating life, and we should extend those celebrations even beyond the holidays. Cocktail recipes, quick pasta recipes and must-have pantry items for the easiest of meals are also part of this issue. For me, the table is a place for celebrating life anytime of the year.

Tutti a tavola a mangiare!

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# IN MY GARDEN: GIARDINIERA

This time of year, I still think about my abundant summer garden. I often pop open a jar of vegetable giardiniera that I prepared during the end of the summer when everything was growing and in full bloom. Canning and preserving is a wonderful way to incorporate summertime freshness during the winter months, and it allows you to use any produce that wasn't consumed during the growing season. Giardiniera, which translates to "the gardener's style", is an assortment of freshly picked vegetables that can include carrots, onions, celery, cauliflower, string beans and much more. The crunchy vegetable mix is served as an antipasto or with an assortment of Italian salumi and cured meats; it is also delicious in sandwiches as a way to give crunch and flavor.

During the growing season, giardiniera can be prepared, sealed, and kept in the refrigerator for at least 24 hours before serving, though it will stay fresh for several weeks. You can also harvest the vegetables in the summer and place your giardiniera in full jars. Then, you can put the jars in a canner, the jars completely covered with water, boiled for ten minutes, and allowed to cool. This way, those jars can be used during the colder winter months.



## From earth to table

My garden gives me great joy, and when I plan ahead, I get to enjoy the vegetables I cultivate all year round by drying and canning.

Growing produce that can be left to dry out over the winter is another Italian tradition that I learned as a little girl on my grandmother Rosa's small family farm. I still carry on this tradition today at home. I store garlic and beans, either hanging or spread out on paper, in a cool, dry place. I gather green beans and corn, place them in small, air-tight bags, and freeze them immediately after the harvest. I place leaves of basil in ice cube trays, and once the cubes are formed, put them in small, air-tight sealed bags and return them to the freezer. I then use that basil to make pesto and bring a little summertime freshness to my kitchen.

For me, gardening is a form of relaxation. I enjoy what the earth gives us and am pleased to know that the foods I harvest from my garden will be used for many months as I cook for my family and friends. This kind of cooking is directly from my garden to my table. Although I love to cook when everything is in full bloom during the summer, my summer garden is still part of my kitchen when I cook during the cold, winter months. Whether I use canned, dried or frozen delights from the harvest, I just love it!

# Giardiniera

## GIARDINIERA

Giardiniera is a great way to brighten heavy winter dishes, and it can be used in almost endless ways. You can serve it as a part of an antipasti spread, chopped for salads or sandwiches or even as a component in a Bloody Mary. You can also use the brine for dressings or to add zing to a sauce.

### Yield

Makes about 3 quarts

### Ingredients

- 1 small cauliflower, cut into small florets
- 1 red bell pepper, cut into ½ inch squares
- 3 medium carrots, cut into 2 by ½ inch sticks
- 3 stalks celery, sliced ½ inch thick on the bias
- 1 small red onion, sliced
- 1 bulb fennel, trimmed, halved, cored and sliced
- 1 cup fennel fronds reserved
- 4 fresh bay leaves
- 4 garlic cloves, crushed and peeled
- ½ cup kosher salt
- 3 cups white wine vinegar
- 3 tablespoons sugar

- 1 tablespoon mustard seeds
- 1 teaspoon celery seeds
- 1 teaspoon fennel seeds
- ½ teaspoon peperoncino

### Recipe

Combine the cauliflower, bell pepper, carrots, celery, onion, fennel, bay leaves and garlic in a very large ceramic or glass bowl.

Sprinkle with the salt and toss well. Cover and refrigerate at least 4 hours or overnight. The next day, drain and rinse the vegetables well. Tightly pack the vegetables in quart jars, distributing some garlic and bay leaves in each.

Combine the vinegar, 3 cups water, the sugar, mustard seeds, celery seeds, fennel seeds and peperoncino in a medium saucepan. Bring to a simmer and stir to dissolve the sugar. Pour over the vegetables in the jar, distributing the spices equally among them.

Tap the jars on the counter to remove any air bubbles, screw the lids on and let cool completely. Refrigerate until ready to serve, at least 24 hours or up to 2 weeks.







# Chicken Salad with Giardiniera

INSALATA DI POLLO CON GIARDINIERA

You can make your own giardiniera, as I like to do, but this salad would also be perfectly delicious made with prepared giardiniera from an Italian deli. For an extra quick meal, you could make this with shredded meat from a good quality rotisserie chicken. If you're poaching the chicken, add the carcass back to the poaching liquid once you've removed the meat and simmer for another hour or so. Strain and you'll have yourself a great base for soup.

## Yield

Serves 4 to 6

## Ingredients for the chicken

- 1 (3 ½ to 4 pound) chicken
- 1 medium onion, chunked
- 1 large carrot, chunked
- 1 large stalk celery, chunked
- 2 tablespoons tomato paste
- 4 garlic cloves, crushed and peeled
- 3 bay leaves
- Kosher salt

## Ingredients for the salad

- 3 cups giardiniera, store-bought or homemade, drained and coarsely chopped
- 1 (6-ounce) jar marinated artichoke hearts, drained and coarsely chopped
- ½ cup pitted green olives, such as Cerignola, coarsely chopped
- ¼ cup chopped fresh Italian parsley
- 6 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
- ¼ cup giardiniera brine (half brine/half white wine vinegar if your brine is too salty)
- Kosher salt
- Peperoncino
- 8 cups mixed baby greens

## Recipe

Rinse the chicken and put in a large Dutch oven so it fits with just an inch or so of space around the sides. Add the onion, carrot, celery, tomato paste, garlic and bay leaves.

Add cold water to cover by about an inch and season with 2 teaspoons salt. Bring to a gentle simmer and cook, skimming the foam from the surface as needed, until the chicken is tender, about 45 to 50 minutes.

Remove the chicken and let cool.

Once the chicken is cooled, remove and discard the skin. Pull the meat from the bones and shred into bite-sized pieces.

Put the chicken in a large serving bowl. Add the giardiniera, artichokes, olives and parsley. Drizzle with the brine (or brine and vinegar) and olive oil.

Season with salt and peperoncino, remembering that your ingredients are already quite salty. Toss well.

Add the baby greens, toss once more and serve.





# Flavors of Childhood

Healthy eating begins at a young age. I always involved my children and grandchildren in my kitchen. It helped them appreciate the food they were eating—to better understand where it grows and eventually how to work with the various ingredients. I plucked basil and rosemary when they were infants and rubbed it under their noses so they could smell and become familiar with the kitchen flavors. As they got older, they began to help me with mixing, shaping and preparing the ingredients.

Children need special guidance and tasks in the kitchen to help them understand healthy eating. The more familiar children are with the foods that they eat, the less picky they will become as they grow older. I often shelled peas and snapped off the ends of string beans to help my grandmother; this tradition still exists in my kitchen. An all-time favorite in my kitchen for both young children and older ones is making pasta. Mixing flour and eggs and kneading dough is fun and quite natural for them. Shaping the pasta is also a wonderful way for children to play.

Spending time with children in the kitchen will result in fond memories for the whole family. Plus, it will help your children and grandchildren develop into healthy, independent adult eaters. The aromas that fill the kitchen when they are young will return later in life to fill their hearts.



# Fresh Egg Pasta

PASTA ALL'UOVO

One pound of pasta will serve about 4 to 6 people. This easy dough is tender, yet resilient enough to cut into most shapes or to use for filled pastas. Make this your go-to fresh pasta recipe and you'll never turn back. If you have a pasta machine, you can use it but if you're just making a simple shape such as pappardelle, you can easily roll and cut this dough by hand.

## Yield

Makes 1 pound

## Ingredients

2 cups all-purpose flour, plus more for working the dough

2 large whole eggs

¼ cup extra-virgin olive oil

## Recipe

Pulse the flour in the work bowl of a food processor to aerate it. Beat the eggs, olive oil and 3 tablespoons cold water in a spouted measuring cup.

With the machine running, pour the wet ingredients into the dry and process until the dough clumps around the blade, adding a bit more water if it is crumbly or a bit more flour if it is too sticky. Once the dough begins to form a ball, process until the dough forms a smooth ball on the blade, 20 to 30 seconds. Dump the dough onto a floured countertop to form a smooth dough ball. Wrap in plastic and let rest 30 minutes at room temperature.

To roll the dough by hand, divide into 4 equal pieces, keeping the other pieces covered as you work. Roll a piece of dough into a roughly 16-by-12-inch rectangle. You'll know the dough is thin enough when you can see the outline of your hand when you put it underneath the dough.

Use a pizza wheel to cut into your desired shape. (For pappardelle, cut the dough in half to make two 8-by-12-inch rectangles, then cut shortways into ¾-inch strips, for fettuccine cut slightly thinner strips).

Dust the pasta with flour and curl into nests on baking sheets lined with floured kitchen towels.



# Spaghetti with Quick Garlic–Tomato Sauce

SPAGHETTI ALLA SALSA D'AGLIO

A generous amount of garlic and parsley lend a bright and summery flavor to this dish, but since it's made with pantry ingredients, we can enjoy it year-round. In summer, substitute fresh basil for the parsley.

## Yield

Serves 6

## Ingredients

- 1/3 cup extra-virgin olive oil, plus more for drizzling
- 1/3 cup thinly sliced garlic
- 1 (28-ounce) can Italian plum tomatoes, preferably San Marzano, crushed by hand
- Kosher salt
- Peperoncino
- 1 pound spaghetti
- 1/3 cup chopped fresh Italian parsley
- 1/2 cup grated Grana Padano, plus more for serving

## Recipe

Bring a large pot of salted water to boil for pasta. Heat the olive oil in a large skillet over medium heat.

When the oil is hot, add the garlic. Cook and stir the garlic just until it begins to color, about 1 minute.

Add the crushed tomatoes and rinse the can with 1 cup pasta water and add that as well. Season with salt and a healthy pinch of peperoncino.

Bring to a simmer and cook until slightly thickened and flavorful, about 15 minutes.

When the sauce is almost ready, add the spaghetti to the boiling water and cook until al dente. Remove the spaghetti with tongs and add to the sauce.

Sprinkle with the parsley and drizzle with olive oil. Toss well, adding a little pasta water if it seems dry.

Remove the skillet from the heat, sprinkle with the grated cheese. Toss and serve immediately, passing more cheese at the table.





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# 11 INGREDIENTS YOU SHOULD ALWAYS HAVE IN YOUR KITCHEN

The first secret to a good meal is a well-stocked and organized pantry. Use very simple ingredients, whose flavors, however, are so intense that they make a difference and allow you to handle any circumstance that may arise, and at any time.

Here is my personal shopping list.

## ITALIAN PANTRY



### PEPERONCINO

Peperoncino, or hot red pepper, is the Diavolillo pepper in its dried form. It is very stimulating to the digestive process and can be a tonic and a purge for the system.

It is used to give some spiciness in many Italian dishes and a pinch goes a long way. It is typical of southern Italian cuisines, especially in Calabria.

Peperoncino as crushed flakes is the most commonly used and contains the flesh and seeds of the dried pepper, which are the main sources of spiciness.

It is also available whole, milled into a fine powder and steeped in olive oil.



### CELERY

Celery is available year-round, making it ideal for winter cooking when seasonal vegetables are scarce.

Although a generally under-used vegetable, celery appears in many dishes in Italy, where it is used in soups, sauces, braised dishes and sides such as caaponata or giardiniera.

The larger outer stalks and leaves of the whole head of celery can be used for soups and stocks. The medium-sized stalks are ideal for baking, and the celery hearts make a great appetizer or snack.

Celery goes extremely well with cheeses like Grana Padano and Gorgonzola.



## CAULIFLOWER

Cauliflower is a highly nutritious vegetable that plays an important part in Italian cuisine.

Cauliflower releases a sulfur odor that gets stronger the more it is cooked. Quickly cooking it in a skillet greatly reduces the odor, caramelizes the vegetable and minimizes nutrient loss.

This is how Italians typically prepare cauliflower, sautéed with some garlic and olive oil in the pan.

When buying, choose firm, compact heads with bright green leaves attached, which ensures it is fresh. The stem and leaves are edible and can be added to stocks.



## SQUASH

Winter squash, known as “zucca” in Italy, is nutritious, versatile and high in fiber. Varieties include butternut, acorn, kabocha, pumpkin and more.

It is a very popular vegetable in Italy, especially in the Northern regions. When in season, it is used in pasta, risotto, stuffing, and soups.

Winter squash can be fried, marinated, grilled, puréed, boiled or roasted. It can be used as a filling for pasta and as a sauce for pasta and risotto, or made into an appetizer, side dish and dessert.

The seeds are edible and make a great snack food when roasted.



## RICE

Rice is an extremely versatile staple in Italian cooking.

It makes an appearance in every course from salads and appetizers to soups, risotto and even dessert.

When buying rice for risotto, look for the Italian varieties Arborio, Carnaroli, and Vialone Nano.

They are a short-grain rice, the primary type used in Italian cooking.

While cooking, it releases its starches, becomes fluffier and makes a wonderfully creamy risotto.

Leftover risotto can be used for another meal and is traditionally made into crispy pancakes known as “riso al salto” in Italy.



## HONEY

Honey is a natural sugar that contains powerful antioxidants. The flavor and aroma of honey are determined by the type of blossom from which the bees gather the nectar, by the climate, soil composition and time of harvest. You can find honey made from acacia, thyme, sage, chestnut, and lavender.

It is used in salad dressings, as a glaze when roasting meats and vegetables, drizzled on fruit and cheese, and in many desserts.

Popular in almost every region of Italy, the production of honey is regarded with as much respect as the production of olive oil or cheese.



## RED BEET

The red beet is a root vegetable rich in antioxidants and nutrients. It is the more common variety of beets among others.

Beets can be enjoyed in many ways. They can be grated raw and tossed in a salad, pickled, boiled or roasted. When cooked, beets become tender and buttery. Roasting intensifies the sweet flavor of beets; a classic way to enjoy roasted beets is in a salad with goat cheese.

When cooking with beets, boil or bake them first and then peel them.

People often discard the beet greens, yet they are nutritious and delicious when cooked.



## BAY LEAVES

Growing fresh herbs is an important part of the Italian culture, and a bay laurel plant will give you wonderful fresh bay leaves. Use them fresh to add a pungent and aromatic flavor to dishes, or dry them for a milder, more herbal and floral flavor.

The oils and flavors of bay leaves are slowly extracted from their leaves, making them ideal for dishes with a long cooking time, such as soups, stews and braises.

They should be removed once the dish has finished cooking.

Store fresh bay leaves in the refrigerator. If dried, store in a cool, dry place.



## LENTILS

Lentils are a nutritional powerhouse and they are readily available and economical.

Lentils are typically sold in the shell, although some types are shelled. Shelled lentils take much less time to cook and usually dissolve in the cooking liquid.

They originated in central Asia in ancient times and are a big part of the culinary tradition in Italy, where they are traditionally served with pork such as cotechino or with pasta.

Lentils continue drying while stored, causing old lentils to take longer to cook. Using newly bought lentils is best when cooking.



## CINNAMON

Cinnamon is a spice made from the inner bark of the *Cinnamomum* tree.

It is used in sweet and savory cooking in Italy, especially in Friuli-Venezia Giulia and Venice, which was a considered the center of the spice trade.

Cinnamon is available milled into fine powder or as sticks.

The sticks are typically used when braising or making teas.

Powdered cinnamon has a stronger flavor and is best for baking, such as making pies and strudels.

Fresh cinnamon has a sweet smell. The absence of a sweet smell indicates that it is not fresh and should be thrown away.



## CHOCOLATE

Chocolate is made from roasted cacao beans. It is available as bars, blocks, wafers, chips, and cocoa powder.

Chocolate with a high cocoa content such as dark chocolate contains less sugar, has a stronger chocolate flavor and a bitter taste.

Dark chocolate is nutritious, high in antioxidants and is said to have various health benefits.

Italy has a long tradition of chocolate-making originating in Turin. Among its most famous chocolate creations is gianduja, a blend of chocolate and hazelnuts, which led to gianduiotto and Nutella, both sold worldwide.





# It's Wine O'Clock

The end of the year and the beginning of the year are always interesting times; there is personal reflection and looking to the future. The same could be said about Italian wine today. Italy is the “oldest-newest” wine-producing country in the world. For centuries, wine has been central to daily life. Wine is always present, from birth to death. Yet, today Italy is in the midst of a qualitative renaissance up and down the peninsula. Everywhere families are rediscovering the native grapes, their “roots” (pun intended) and making wine that is across the board delicious. As we wind down the year and look to 2019 and all its promises, the wines we have selected represent a historic family in the Veneto and young gun winemaker from the heart of one of Italy’s most classic regions: Chianti Classico.

Just 40 minutes northwest of Venice is the heart of Soave Classico. It is a wine region dedicated to making beautiful age-worthy whites from the native grape: garganaga. Since the 1600’s, the Gini family has grown vineyards in the heart of Soave. Today the family is continuing their tradition and producing some of the most captivating wines in Italy. They are committed to their vines and the people that work them by farming organically and ensuring that they maintain their land, as did their ancestors. The estate’s most important wine is “Salverenza”, a sub-

plot of their prestigious vineyard called La Frosca, with some of the vines being over 100 years old. The wine is rich, full in body, yet balanced by a vibrant acidity. This is a perfect wine for seafood, especially lobster or crab.

You may ask yourself...Chianti Classico? That’s just wine for the red-checked-tablecloth restaurants. While a bottle of Chianti Classico is great at those restaurants, the region is home to many young growers and winemakers trying to reintroduce Chianti Classico. Angela Fronti is the owner and winemaker of Istine. She is one of the most energetic, vibrant and brilliant winemakers in Italy today (having won Gambero Rosso’s Best Young Winemaker Award). Her focus on her vineyards (which are organically grown) and her attention to detail in her winemaking create wines that are pure, elegant, beautiful and most importantly, transport you to Chianti Classico itself. The 2015 Chianti Classico is 100% Sangiovese and grown in the communes of Radda and Castellina. This wine exemplifies the beauty of the grape and the region with notes of cherry, rosemary and flowers. Medium in body – it will surprise you with fish stews (such as Cacciucco) or a Tuscan classic, Bistecca Fiorentina.

Have a happy holiday season and enjoy the future of Italian wine.



Jeffrey Porter has just reached his 20th anniversary in the wine trade. He has spent the last 10 years focused on the grapes and wines of Italy as the wine director for the likes of Osteria Mozza in Los Angeles, California & Del Posto in New York City.

Today he is the corporate beverage director of the Bastianich Group and is continuing his journey throughout the Italian food and wine world.



## Andrea Felici Verdicchio Castelli di Jesi Classico Superiore 2016

REGION: MARCHE  
GRAPE: VERDICCHIO

Fresh, vibrant and pure. This is one of the top wines from the Marche and shows off the greatness of Verdicchio. Grown organically at high altitudes overlooking the sea, this wine leaps out of the glass with immediate gratification but will also reward those who give it time.

## Ciro Biondi “Outis” Etna Rosso 2014

REGION: SICILIA  
GRAPES: NERELLO MASCALESE & NERELLO CAPPUCCIO

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\*IRI market data, prosciutti cotti segment, YTD March 2018

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# Celebrating at the Table

There are few things that please me more than having my kitchen table full of family and friends celebrating a holiday or special occasion. It makes me feel so fulfilled to nourish people and watch those special moments that happen when a meal is shared around a table.

I enjoy cooking for everyone and having my family help with the preparation. They set the table, prep the beverages, and help add those final touches to many of my dishes. Once at the table, platters are passed, bread baskets are moved around, drinks are poured, and all of it is topped off with chatter and laughter. Of course, when the family is at the table, I want to be there too. Therefore, I usually choose a menu that includes dishes that I can either cook in the oven or prepare beforehand and finish easily at the last minute. This affords me more time with my guests so that I get to sit, eat and laugh as well!

A typical holiday meal at my house includes baked clams, gnocchi, an oven baked main course and more.



## Together

Holidays offer special moments for spending time with family and friends. I use my oven to do a lot of the cooking, allowing me to spend more time with my guests.

I can clean and stuff the clams for a baked clams oreganata ahead of time and pop them in the oven as guests arrive. As family and friends are toasting with Prosecco or sparkling wine from Franciacorta, guests can pick up their finished dish with their hands, slurp down the succulent juices from the baked clams, and enjoy a casual, friendly environment at the table. Butternut squash gnocchi boil quickly so that, in just a few minutes, I can be back at the table with my guests. Throughout the meal, the main course is cooking away in the oven.

I always watch the cooking time so that the main course comes out shortly after the pasta course. While one of my guests slices and plates the meat, I can do a quick sauté of vegetables so that the feast continues. I always prepare a ready-to-go dessert like baked fruit, cookies, or fresh fruit. I can also fill the table with a choice of chocolates, dried fruit, and nuts. It gives everyone a chance to pick on something without having to eat a super filling dessert. This way the conversation continues for hours over some espresso and grappa.



## Smothered Escarole

SCAROLA AFFOGATA

Escarole is one of my favorite vegetables for its versatility. Braising the escarole softens its slight bitterness and makes it a perfect accompaniment to roasted pork or poultry. This recipe is easily doubled for a crowd; just make sure to use a large pot so it doesn't get watery.

### Yield

Serves 4 to 6

### Ingredients

2 medium heads escarole (about 1 pound)  
3 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil  
6 cloves garlic, crushed and peeled  
Kosher salt  
¼ teaspoon peperoncino

### Recipe

Remove the outer leaves of escarole if damaged or discolored. Cut off the bases, wash the leaves and drain, leaving a bit of water clinging to the leaves. Coarsely chop to make about 12 cups.

Heat the olive oil in a medium Dutch oven over medium high heat. When the olive oil is hot, add the garlic and cook until it sizzles and begins to turn golden, 1 to 2 minutes.

Add the escarole and season with salt and the peperoncino. Cook and stir until the escarole begins to wilt, 3 to 4 minutes, adding a little water if the leaves begin to scorch. Cover and cook until the escarole is tender, 6 to 7 minutes more.

Remove and discard the garlic; serve immediately.

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# Baked Clams Oreganata

VONGOLE GRATINATE

Try to find the Sicilian oregano, dried right on the branch, for this recipe; it makes a difference. Try to get clams on the larger side, and you'll have plenty of space in the shell for the crispy crumbs.

## Yield

Serves 4 to 6

## Ingredients

½ cup extra-virgin olive oil  
3 cloves garlic, sliced  
2 dozen littleneck clams, shucked on the half shell, juices reserved  
½ cup dry white wine  
Juice of 1 lemon  
¼ cup chopped fresh Italian parsley  
2 tablespoons unsalted butter, cut into small pieces  
¼ teaspoon peperoncino  
1 ½ cups panko breadcrumbs  
¼ cup grated Grana Padano  
4 scallions, finely chopped  
1 teaspoon crumbled dried oregano, preferably the Sicilian on the branch, crumbled  
Kosher salt

## Recipe

Let the oil and garlic steep in a small bowl for 30 minutes. Preheat the oven to 450 degrees F. Strain the clam juice through cheesecloth or a very fine sieve into a large rimmed baking sheet (like a half sheet pan).

Add the white wine, lemon juice, 2 tablespoons of the parsley, the butter and half of the peperoncino.

In a large bowl, toss the breadcrumbs, grated cheese, scallions, 3 tablespoons of the garlic-infused oil, the remaining 2 tablespoons chopped parsley, the oregano and the remaining peperoncino. Season lightly with salt. Toss until thoroughly blended.

Top each clam with some of the breadcrumb topping packing it down tight. Set the clams in the prepared baking pan and drizzle the remaining infused oil over them, leaving the garlic behind.

Bake until the pan juices are bubbling and the breadcrumbs are golden brown, 12 to 15 minutes. Transfer the clams to a warm platter or divide among serving plates. Spoon the sauce from the baking dish onto the plates, not over the clams, to keep the breadcrumbs crispy. Serve immediately.





# Butternut Squash Gnocchi in Sage Butter Sauce

GNOCCHI DI ZUCCA CON SALVIA E BURRO

These pale orange gnocchi make a perfect first course to a holiday meal. The gnocchi can be formed ahead of time. Dust them with flour and freeze them, in one layer, on a well-floured baking sheet. Once they're frozen solid, they can be frozen in a plastic freezer bag until ready to use. When boiling frozen gnocchi, make sure you use lots of water so it will come back to boil quickly; otherwise the gnocchi may clump together.

## Yield

Serves 6 to 8 as a first course, 4 to 6 as a main course

## Ingredients for gnocchi

1 pound chunk butternut squash  
(about half a medium squash)  
1 tablespoon extra-virgin olive oil  
2 medium russet potatoes (about 12 ounces)  
¼ cup freshly grated Grana Padano  
1 large egg  
1 teaspoon kosher salt  
¼ teaspoon freshly grated nutmeg  
1½ cups all-purpose flour, plus more as needed

## Ingredients for Sage Butter Sauce

1 stick unsalted butter  
12 fresh sage leaves  
Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper  
½ cup grated Grana Padano, plus more for serving

## Recipe

For the gnocchi, preheat the oven to 400 degrees F. Scoop seeds from the squash, and place in a baking pan, cut side up. Drizzle with the olive oil. Bake until tender throughout, about 45 minutes to 1 hour. Let cool.

When it is cool, scrape the flesh from the squash, set in cheesecloth, and let hang or set in a strainer in the refrigerator to drain, about 2 hours. You should have about ¾ to 1 cup squash.

Cook the potatoes in a medium saucepan with water to cover until tender, about 20 to 25 minutes. Drain, let cool until you can peel them, then peel and press through a ricer into an even layer on your work surface.

Let cool completely. You should have about 2 cups potatoes. Pass the drained squash through the ricer as well.

In a large bowl, combine the squash, potatoes, grated cheese, egg, salt, and nutmeg, and mix until smooth. Sprinkle in 1¼ cups of the flour, and mix to combine. Dump the dough onto your work surface, and knead until it comes together. If the dough is still sticky, add the remaining ¼ cup flour (or more, if your squash was very wet), and knead just until smooth.

Bring a large pot of salted water to a boil. Divide dough into eight equal pieces. Line two large rimmed baking sheets with parchment. Sprinkle parchment lightly with flour. Working with one dough piece at a time, roll dough out on a floured surface to about a ½-inch-thick rope. Cut rope crosswise into ¾-inch pieces.

Working with one piece at a time, roll gnocchi along the back of fork tines dipped in flour, making ridges on 1 side and a dimple on the other. Transfer the gnocchi to the floured baking sheets. Repeat with the remaining dough.

When you're ready to cook the gnocchi, make the sage butter sauce. Melt the butter in a large skillet over medium heat. Add the sage leaves and cook until they begin to crisp and the butter is just beginning to brown, about 1 minute. Add 1 cup of the pasta water and bring to a boil. Cook until reduced by half, 3 or 4 minutes.

Meanwhile, cook the gnocchi in two batches in the boiling water, giving them just a couple minutes more after they all float to the surface. Remove with a spider and transfer to the sauce. Season with salt and pepper, remembering that the pasta water was salted.

Sprinkle with the grated cheese, toss and serve, passing more cheese at the table.

# Pot-Roasted Herb-Scented Pork Loin

## PORCHETTA

To make ground fennel for this recipe, pulse dried fennel seeds in a spice grinder until coarsely ground. Ground fennel will keep sealed in the refrigerator or freezer for months and is a wonderful seasoning for pork, chicken and fish. Sliced leftover porchetta makes delicious sandwiches. If the porchetta has been refrigerated, be sure to dress the sandwiches well with vinaigrette; chilling has a way of drying out the meat.



### Yield

Serves 6



### Ingredients

1/3 cup fresh rosemary leaves,  
plus two fresh rosemary sprigs  
6 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil  
10 garlic cloves, crushed and peeled  
16 fresh sage leaves  
Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper  
3 1/2 pounds boneless pork loin roast,  
with 1/2 inch fat cap  
2 teaspoons ground fennel  
Zest and juice of 1 orange  
1 bay leaf  
Freshly ground black pepper



### Recipe

Put 1/3 cup rosemary leaves, 3 tablespoons of the oil, 5 of the garlic cloves, 8 of the sage leaves and 1 teaspoon of salt in the work bowl of a mini food processor. Process until you have a smooth paste.

Lay the loin on your work surface fat-side down. Cut along the top side of the “tail” and into the eye of the roast, ‘unrolling’ the loin into a rectangle of more or less even thickness, pounding with a mallet to flatten and even it out.

Spread the herb paste evenly over the entire cut surface of the pork. Roll the roast into a compact

roll with a spiral of the herb filling running through it. Tie the roast securely at 1-inch intervals with kitchen twine.

Combine the ground fennel, orange zest, 1 teaspoon salt and a generous grinding of black pepper in a small bowl and rub all over the surface of the roast.

Set the loin in a heavy flameproof casserole into which it fits snugly. Add the rosemary sprigs, remaining 8 sage leaves and the remaining 5 garlic cloves. Pour in just enough water to come halfway up the sides of the meat and add the orange juice.

Season the water lightly with salt and pepper. Bring to a boil over high heat, lower the heat so the pork is simmering and cook, partially covered and occasionally turning the pork in the liquid, until almost all of the water has evaporated and the meat begins to stick to the casserole, about 1 to 1 1/2 hours.

Skim the foam that rises to the surface regularly as the pork simmers.

Pour or spoon off the fat remaining in the braising pan and pour in the remaining 3 tablespoons of olive oil. Adjust the heat to very low.

Cook, turning often, until the pork has a caramelized, golden brown crust, about 15 minutes.

To serve hot, as a main course, let the porchetta rest 20 minutes, remove the strings, then slice 1/4-inch thick. Porchetta can also be served warm or at room temperature.





# Lemon–Vanilla Fried Ribbon Cookies

## CROSTOLI

I have flavored these crispy cookies in many ways over the years, but this combination of lemon and vanilla keeps them light tasting, even though they are fried. You can fry the cookies ahead of time, but dust with the confectioners' sugar just before serving. Once you've scraped the vanilla bean, store it in your sugar canister to make vanilla sugar or freeze it to flavor a custard based dessert another day.

### Yield

Makes about 5 dozen

### Ingredients

6 tablespoons unsalted butter, at room temperature  
⅓ cup granulated sugar  
½ teaspoon kosher salt  
¼ cup milk  
1 large egg, plus 1 large egg yolk  
2 tablespoons brandy  
Zest and juice of 1 lemon  
1 vanilla bean, split lengthwise  
2 ¼ cups all-purpose flour, plus more for working the dough  
Vegetable oil, for frying  
Confectioners' sugar, for dusting

### Recipe

Combine the butter, granulated sugar and salt in the work bowl of a food processor and pulse until smooth. Add the milk, egg and yolk, brandy, lemon zest and juice. Scrape in the seeds from the vanilla bean with a paring knife. Process until smooth. Scrape down the sides of the bowl, add the flour and process in pulses until the dough comes together. Scrape the sides of the bowl again and pulse a few more times to mix thoroughly.

Scrape the dough out onto a lightly floured work surface and knead briefly into a soft smooth ball. If it is sticky, knead in more flour in small amounts. Wrap the dough tightly in plastic and chill for 30 minutes to an hour. (You can keep it refrigerated up to a day, but let it return to room temperature before rolling).



Cut the chilled dough in half and work with one piece at a time. Flatten the dough on a lightly floured work surface and roll it out to a rough square shape, approximately 16 inches square. Trim the edges of the square and with the fluted cutter, divide it into 16 strips, about 1 inch wide. Cut across all the strips in the middle to form 32 ribbons, each about 7-inches long (though they shrink after you cut them).

One at a time, tie each ribbon into a simple overhand knot. If necessary, stretch the ends gently so they're long enough to knot. Place the knotted crostoli on a sheet pan lined with parchment as you work, leaving room between them so they don't stick to each other. Roll out the second piece of dough; cut and tie ribbons the same way.

Meanwhile, pour vegetable oil in a large pot to a depth of about 3 inches and heat to 350 degrees F. Fry the crostoli in batches until cooked through and golden brown, about 4 minutes per batch, letting the oil return to temperature before frying the next batch. Drain on a paper-towel-lined baking sheet. Let the crostoli cool completely. Dust with confectioners' sugar in a fine strainer just before serving.

# Keeping It Light

When the holidays are over, New Year's resolutions of dieting and weight loss become the norm. Instead of negating or dieting, I prefer to switch to lighter foods during this time of year to shed extra holiday pounds. Preparing winter salads, soups, vegetable dishes, and fruit-based desserts are a great way to help accomplish this.

Winter salads are healthy and satisfying. I like to use fennel, cauliflower, broccoli, escarole and baked squash in my winter salads. The vegetables can be baked, steamed, or sliced and lightly dressed with extra-virgin olive oil, salt, and sometimes vinegar. Hearty vegetable soups are another healthy and flavorful choice during the winter months. I love the aromas that waft throughout my house and the warmth in the air when a soup or minestra is bubbling away on the stove. To keep the soups light, I don't add any starch to them.

Braised meats dominate my kitchen over the holidays, but fish or beans are my main protein in January. Braised beans with a drizzle of extra-



## Light and tasty

Everyone needs a break from all the eating and celebrating.

However, it is important to not feel deprived.

Eat lighter meals instead; soups are a great option.

virgin olive oil or seared fish with salt and a drizzle of olive oil are so sincere in their flavors. Of course, good primary ingredients are necessary for any delicious dish, especially when using simpler techniques.

For dessert, I suggest leaving behind the cake and cookies and thinking about fresh or oven-baked fruit. Italians often serve an assortment of seasonal fruit after a meal as dessert. Oven-baked apples or pears are a delicious way to eat lighter but feel satisfied.

I love food, and that should come as no surprise. However, there are times to splurge and times to keep it light and simple. During the winter months, focus on the best of ingredients, keep the preparation simple, and make sure the portions are in check. Sticking to one course also limits food intake and helps those extra holiday pounds come off. Choose a complete salad, a hearty soup, or a plate of fish and vegetables. One course can be enough and, if enjoyed slowly with friends, will taste even better!



# Orange, Escarole and Red Onion Salad

INSALATA DI SCAROLA, ARANCE E CIPOLLA

This salad is great as an appetizer, a refreshing end-of-the-meal salad, or as an accompaniment to boiled or grilled meats. Use the inner hearts of escarole here and save the tougher outer leaves for braising or soups. This salad is especially beautiful when made with blood oranges in season, but any large, juicy orange will do.

## Yield

Serves 4 to 6

## Ingredients

4 large navel oranges

3 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil

Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper

2 tablespoons chopped fresh Italian parsley

½ small red onion, thinly sliced

2 inner hearts of escarole, chopped  
(about 8 loosely packed cups)

## Recipe

With a sharp, thin-bladed knife, shave off the peel and pith of each orange completely, exposing the flesh of the fruit.

Cut out the segments, leaving the membrane behind. Squeeze the juices from the peels and membrane into a large bowl, you should have about ⅓ cup juice. Whisk the olive oil into the juice and season with salt and pepper. Whisk in the parsley.

Add the orange segments, red onion and escarole to the bowl. Toss well and serve immediately.



# Vegetable Soup with Fennel

MINISTRA DI VERDURE MISTE CON FINOCCHIO

When you finish a chunk of grating cheese, such as Grana Padano, always save the rind. It will keep for quite a few weeks if you wrap it in parchment, then plastic wrap and keep in the refrigerator. It can be added to just about any water or broth based soup as a flavor enhancer, especially when you're looking to keep a soup vegetarian. Just lightly scrape, then rinse the rind before adding to the soup.

## Yield

Makes about 3 ½ quarts

## Ingredients

8 ounces dried Great Northern or cannellini beans  
3 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil,  
plus more for drizzling, if desired  
3 medium leeks, halved lengthwise and sliced,  
white and light green parts only (about 2 cups)  
2 large carrots, cut into ½-inch chunks  
(about 2 cups)  
2 celery stalks, cut into ½-inch chunks  
(about 1 ½ cups)  
4 cloves garlic, finely chopped  
¼ cup tomato paste  
3 fresh bay leaves  
1 rind from a piece of Grana Padano,  
about 3 inches square  
¼ teaspoon peperoncino, or to taste  
1 medium bulb fennel, trimmed and chopped  
(about 2 cups)  
2 large Idaho potatoes, peeled and cut into  
½-inch chunks (about 1 ¼ pounds)  
1 medium bunch kale, trimmed and coarsely  
chopped (about 4 loosely packed cups)  
1 medium bunch spinach, trimmed and coarsely  
chopped (about 4 loosely packed cups)  
Kosher salt  
Freshly grated Grana Padano, for serving

## Recipe

Put the beans in a large bowl with cold water to cover by about 2 inches. Let soak in the refrigerator overnight, then drain.

Heat the olive oil in a large Dutch oven over medium heat. When the oil is hot, add the leeks, carrots and celery. Cook, stirring occasionally, until the leeks are wilted, 5 to 6 minutes. Add the garlic and stir until sizzling and fragrant, about 1 minute. Make an empty space in the middle of the pot and add the tomato paste. Let the tomato paste toast in the hot spot for a minute, then stir into the vegetables. Add 5 quarts of cold water, the bay leaves, cheese rind and peperoncino. Bring to a rapid simmer and cook until the beans are beginning to become tender, about 30 minutes.

Add the fennel and potatoes and cook until the beans are just tender, about 20 to 30 minutes more. Add the kale and spinach and season with salt, using up to 1 tablespoon.

Simmer until the greens and beans are very tender, about 20 minutes more.

Remove and discard the cheese rind and bay leaves. Serve the soup with a sprinkling of grated cheese and a drizzle of olive oil, if desired.



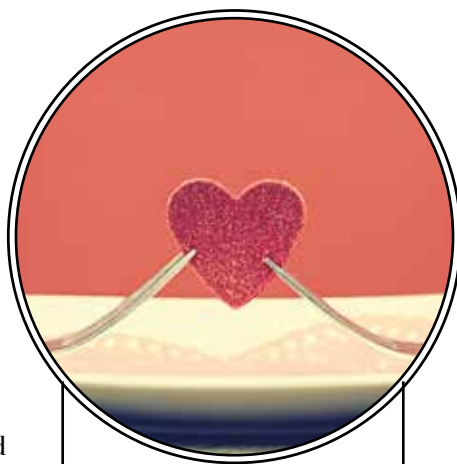




# Valentine's Day

One of the most common sayings that you hear over and over again is that the way to your lover's heart is through their stomach. Valentine's Day is the perfect day to spend time cooking for your loved one. Often, restaurants are very crowded, so staying home and cooking is a great way to eat a delicious meal, share some intimacy, and show that you care.

Creating a meal that is romantic and flavorful, while allowing you to spend time together in the kitchen and at the table, is the goal on this special occasion. My ideal Valentine's menu includes a fun drink, a quick appetizer, and a simple, flavorful main course before sharing an easy dessert. I like to start with a fruit cocktail that is light on alcohol and not too sweet. I really like Prosecco and fresh fruit juices or purées like my tangerine bellini. Sharing is also part of the fun—making



## Love is all you need

Time spent with the one you love is important, so cook for them or cook together, the important thing is to share time together at the table.

an appetizer that can be placed in the middle of the table is satisfying and intimate. Montasio cheese crisps are just right for the romantic celebration; it is a bit of a splurge and so tasty when served with a salad.

The main course should be light and flavorful—a lemony caper sauce with chicken fits the bill. The meal should not be too heavy or filling so that you can still enjoy a night of dancing ahead or a good movie on the sofa. Finish the meal with fine chocolates, small cookies, and something light like my refreshing pomegranate sorbet, which is an easy dessert that can be made ahead of time. Many believe that the pomegranate was actually the “apple” that Eve ate in the Garden of Eden—the first original sin. After such a fabulous meal, who knows what romance will ensue.



## Tangerine Bellini

BELLINI AL MANDARINO

The classic Venetian bellini is often made with white peach purée. Since white peaches have such a fleeting summer season, try it in the winter with tangerine juice for an interesting twist.

### Yield

Makes 2 cocktails

### Ingredients

4 ounces freshly squeezed tangerine juice, chilled  
8 ounces Prosecco, chilled  
Tangerine wedges, for garnish

### Recipe

Chill 2 champagne flutes until ready to serve. Divide the tangerine juice between the flutes. Add the Prosecco. Stir gently, garnish with a tangerine wedge and serve immediately.

# Montasio Cheese Crisp

FRICO CROCCANTE DI MONTASIO

These fricos are perfect small bites for a romantic dinner for two and pair well with Prosecco or a cocktail and a handful of lightly dressed greens. For a first course for a dinner party, you can also make just 4 larger fricos, drape over a rolling pin to make a “taco” shape and fill with the greens once they’ve cooled. (Larger fricos will require a slightly longer cooking time.)

## Yield

Makes 8 crisps

## Ingredients

6 ounces Montasio cheese, rind removed  
(or about 4 ounces trimmed), coarsely shredded  
(about 1 ½ cups)

## Recipe

Line a baking sheet with paper towels. Place a large non-stick skillet over medium low heat until a shred of the cheese begins to sizzle 2 to 3 seconds after it hits the pan.

Scatter about 3 tablespoons of the cheese in an even layer over the bottom of the skillet in a 2- to 3- inch circle (you want a thin layer, sprinkled in an even thickness). Make several more circles, leaving enough space in between to flip them later.

Let the cheese cook without disturbing it or moving the pan until the fat, which separates from the cheese, begins to bubble around the edges, 1 to 2 minutes. Shake the skillet gently to free the cheese crisp from the bottom of the pan. If it sticks, let it cook a minute or two more, then try again. Flip the crisps with a spatula when they are golden brown. Cook the second side in the same manner, 1 to 2 minutes more.

Transfer to the paper-towel-lined baking sheet and repeat with the remaining cheese.



# Veal Scaloppine in Lemon-Caper Sauce with Spinach

SCALOPPINE IN SALSA DI LIMONE E CAPPERI CON SPINACI

All of the chopping and prep for this dish can be done ahead. Once that's out of the way, it's just a few minutes in the pan for a flavorful, elegant meal for two. Make sure your veal is sliced thin enough to cook quickly here so it doesn't toughen – it should be sliced and pounded to less than ¼ inch thick. You may also use thinly sliced and pounded boneless skinless chicken breast or pork loin.

## Yield

Serves 2

## Ingredients for the scaloppine

2 small lemons  
12 ounces veal scaloppine (6 pieces)  
Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper  
All-purpose flour, for dredging  
4 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil  
3 tablespoons unsalted butter  
2 garlic cloves, crushed and peeled  
10 large green olives (preferably Cerignola),  
cut away from the pit in wide strips (about ½ cup)  
¼ cup capers in brine, drained  
½ cup dry white wine  
1 cup reduced-sodium chicken broth  
2 tablespoons chopped fresh Italian parsley

## Ingredients for the spinach

1 tablespoon extra-virgin olive oil  
1 tablespoon unsalted butter  
2 garlic cloves, crushed and peeled  
1 small bunch spinach, stemmed  
(about 8 packed cups)  
Kosher salt  
Peperoncino

## Recipe

Squeeze the juice from 1 ½ of the lemons and reserve. Lay the remaining lemon half flat side down and cut into very thin slices with a paring knife. Remove the pits and set the lemon slices aside.

Season the scaloppine with salt and pepper.

Spread the flour on a plate. Dredge the scaloppine in flour to coat both sides lightly and tap off the excess flour. Heat 2 tablespoons of the olive oil and 2 tablespoons of the butter in a large skillet over medium heat until the butter is foaming.

Add as many of the scaloppine as will fit without touching and cook until golden brown on the underside, about 3 minutes. Flip and cook until the second side is lightly browned, about 2 minutes. Remove and drain on paper towels. Repeat with the remaining scaloppine, adding a little more olive oil and butter if the pan is dry.

Remove all scaloppine from the pan. Pour off the fat and carefully wipe out the skillet with paper of towels. Pour in the remaining 2 tablespoons of olive oil and add the remaining 1 tablespoon butter, the garlic and lemon slices. Cook, scraping the bottom of the skillet, until the garlic is golden brown, about 3 minutes. Scoop out the lemon slices and set aside. Scatter the olives and capers into the skillet and cook, stirring gently, until they begin to sizzle, about 2 minutes. Pour in the wine and lemon juice, bring to a vigorous boil and cook until the wine is reduced by half. Pour in the chicken stock, bring to a boil and cook until slightly syrupy, about 2 minutes.

Return the scaloppine to the skillet, turning the cutlets in the sauce until they are warmed through and coated with sauce. Let sit, off the heat, for a moment while you prepare the spinach.

Heat a second large skillet over medium heat. Add the butter and olive oil and cook until the butter is foaming. Add the garlic cloves and cook until they begin to sizzle, about 1 minute. Add the spinach, season with salt and peperoncino and toss to coat the spinach in the oil. Cover and cook until the spinach is wilted, 2 to 3 minutes. Uncover the spinach, increase the heat to high and cook until the liquid from the pan is gone and the spinach is tender, 2 to 3 minutes more. Discard the garlic.

Return the scaloppine to a brief simmer, swirl in the parsley and divide the scaloppine among warm plates. Spoon the sauce over them, discarding the garlic and including some of the capers and olives in each spoonful. Decorate the tops of the scaloppine with the reserved lemon slices. Plate the spinach alongside the scaloppine.







## Pomegranate Sorbet

SORBETTO DI MELOGRANO

This vibrant sorbet is the perfect light ending to your romantic meal, and the best part is that it can be made ahead. Add a few crisp cookies on the side and Cupid will certainly hit his mark. (This makes more sorbet than you'll need for two, but it will keep in the freezer for several days.)

### Yield

Serves 4 to 6

### Ingredients

$\frac{3}{4}$  cup sugar  
2 cups pure pomegranate juice  
2 tablespoons brandy  
Pomegranate seeds, for garnish  
Chocolate biscotti or other crisp cookies, for serving

### Recipe

In a small saucepan, bring 1 cup water and the sugar to a simmer, stirring just until the sugar is dissolved. Stir in the pomegranate juice and brandy. Let it cool to room temperature, then transfer it to a covered container and refrigerate until chilled, at least 4 hours.

Process the sorbet in an ice-cream maker according to the manufacturer's instructions until it is soft-set. Transfer it to a covered container, and freeze until it is scoopable, at least 2 hours.

To serve, scoop it into chilled serving glasses, and garnish with pomegranate seeds. Serve the cookies alongside the sorbet.



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# Lidia Entertains

I love holidays and having family and friends around the table. Entertaining is about good food and wine, a fun ambiance and great company. The right table setting helps create a warm, inviting atmosphere and guarantees a great party. I decorate the table with centerpieces of flowers from my garden or with branches from the bushes in wintertime. I don't overdo the decorating and keep it simple. Once the crowd gets down to serious eating, the centerpieces are removed to make room for the platters of food. For a casual and rustic feel, I set the table with big ceramic dishes. For a more formal affair, fancy plates with an elegant tablecloth and matching cloth napkins are called for. If the seating needs to be prearranged, I make up handwritten place cards and draw a small design on each. If it's just family, everyone knows where their usual spot is at the table.

For an effortless start to a dinner party, I serve an antipasto spread. Every-



## Sharing food, sharing stories

Entertaining is about good food, wine, great company and the right table setting. An antipasto spread, Italian-style bar and family-style service are great ways to maximize delicious food and memorable conversations.

enjoying pickled vegetables, salumi, cheeses, and sipping some Prosecco. I also include some room-temperature salads like asparagus and egg salad and of course at my house octopus salad can never be missing.

I set up a bar off to the side so guests can refill drinks at their own pace.

Everyone is then asked to take a seat and either a pasta or soup is served, followed by the main course.

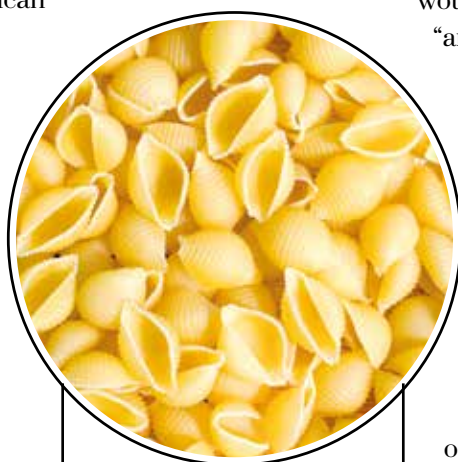
My favorite way to entertain is family-style. Guests can mingle and relax. Food served family-style allows people to easily help themselves to platters set out in the middle of the table. I love to see guests passing platters of food back and forth across the table.

There is a communion of food and sharing that takes place which makes eating together sacred. I keep dessert simple with some cookies, biscotti, chocolates, nuts, and dried fruit for a wonderful, no-fuss dessert spread. Add an espresso and a drop of grappa - now it's a party!

# Italian American Favorites

I was introduced to Italian American cuisine when I moved to the United States at the age of 12. It was very different from the traditional Italian foods that I knew from my homeland, but I have grown to love many of the classic Italian American dishes. A cuisine of adaptation, Italian American cooking tried to capture flavors from home. Italian immigrants were trying to emulate these flavors with American ingredients. Tomatoes, garlic, cheese, pastas, and meatballs each have an interesting story in Italian American cuisine.

The thin-skinned, pulpy San Marzano tomatoes from southern Italy were not available to the first immigrants in America, so Italians prepared sauce with locally grown beefsteak tomatoes. These tomatoes needed to be simmered for hours to reduce the sauce and intensify the flavors. Garlic was more heavily used in some of these early sauces, and strong but easily found herbs, such as oregano, also became regular seasonings. Cheese, especially mozzarella and ricotta, are ubiquitous in Italian American dishes. Italian American mozzarella has a stringy-ness to it; in fact, it was often called the “filo di telefono”, or telephone wire, because, when pulled, the long strings of mozzarella



## Traditions

Everyone loves the classic Italian American dishes filled with flavors, red sauce and cheese. It's real comfort food.

would extend—especially when eating “arancini”, fried rice with tomato sauce and mozzarella in the center.

Early Italian Americans often made pasta “fatta in casa”, or homemade pasta. It was easy and economical, using water, salt, flour and sometimes eggs.

Unlike in post-war Italy, meat was readily available in America, so it was often added to pasta sauces where it imparted its flavor. On the other hand, in Italy, meat cooked in tomato sauce is traditionally removed from the sauce and eaten as a main course. Most interesting is the favorite Italian American classic, spaghetti with meatballs. This is a dish that one simply does not find in Italy, though it certainly has become a hit here!

Baked pasta dishes—which are common in southern Italy—carried over to the Italian American cuisine, with lasagna, baked ziti, manicotti, cannelloni and stuffed shells becoming favorites on this side of the pond. These dishes are not only delicious, but they are great for big family gatherings, which is of course important to Italians. Much of Italian American food is based on what the immigrants could recall of the food from their hometowns but made with ingredients they could find in America. I must say that the outcome is terrific.



# Baked Stuffed Shells

CONCHIGLIONI RIPIENI AL FORNO

If you buy fresh ricotta from an Italian grocer or specialty store, you won't need to drain it. Be sure to cook the shells very "al dente" before filling them, or they will tear when you try to stuff them. This dish can be assembled ahead of time and baked just before serving, so it's a great addition to any holiday meal and will thoroughly satisfy the vegetarians (and non-vegetarians) at your table.

## Yield

Serves 6 to 8

## Ingredients for the sauce

- 1 pound jumbo pasta shells
- 3 ½ cups prepared marinara sauce
- 1 ½ pounds fresh ricotta, drained overnight if needed
- 1 pound low moisture mozzarella cheese, half grated, half cut into tiny cubes
- 1 cup freshly grated Grana Padano
- 1 bunch scallions, chopped
- ½ cup chopped fresh Italian parsley
- 1 large egg, beaten
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper
- ½ cup shredded fresh basil leaves

## Recipe

Preheat oven to 425 degrees F. Bring a large pot of salted water to a boil for the shells. Add the shells and cook until very "al dente", 3 to 4 minutes shy of the package cooking instructions. Drain and rinse under cold water until you can handle them. Dry them well. Put the marinara sauce in a small saucepan and heat to a simmer.

Combine the ricotta, cubed mozzarella, ½ cup Grana Padano, scallions and parsley in a large bowl and stir to combine. Add the beaten egg, ½ teaspoon salt and several grinds of pepper. Stir to combine.

Line the bottom of a 15- x 10-inch or other large baking dish with about 1 cup of the sauce. Spoon about 2 to 3 tablespoons of the ricotta mixture into each shell.

The shell should be filled to capacity but not overstuffed. Nestle the shells next to each other in the baking dish as you fill them. Spoon the remaining sauce over the shells, coating each one.

Combine the grated mozzarella and remaining Grana Padano in a small bowl. Sprinkle in an even layer over the shells. Bake until the mozzarella is browned and bubbling, about 25 minutes. Remove and let stand 5 minutes. Sprinkle with the basil before serving.







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# THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING ITALIAN

Italian cuisine is a culinary adventure that begins with tradition and authentic products. It continues to evolve and becomes enriched with memories that are made at the table. Grandmothers' recipes focus on simple, healthy and flavorful ingredients and techniques that continue to inspire children and adults for generations.

Tradition is important in every ethnicity. We strive to be a part of our current community, but also hold on to our roots and culture. Tradition is often found in food served at important family meals. Each family has their favorites, and each culture its highlights. One of my favorite parts of belonging to a culture are the anecdotes or slightly superstitious sayings passed down from generation to generation. Some of these are common to many cultures, like the belief that opening an umbrella in the house brings bad luck. Italians see bad luck in having 13 people at the dinner table. It is unlucky in Italy to cheer or toast at the table with water in your glass—all toasting must be done with wine. And when you take your hat off, be sure not to put it down on a bed—that too “porta sfortuna”, or brings bad luck. While shaking hands, never do so over two other people shaking hands, which is also considered bad luck. Do not let anyone sweep under your feet with a broom or you will never marry, and do not sit in a cross-ventilated area, which is sure to bring sickness, the ever so well known “corrente d’aria”. In Italy, you do not knock on wood for good luck, but rather you have to “toccare ferro” or touch iron. Never sit on the corner of a table while eating—also a sure sign you will not marry. There are so many seemingly innocuous ways to run into bad luck in Italian culture, but good luck can also come from seemingly bad situations. One sure sign of good luck is rain on one’s wedding day—“sposa bagnata, sposa fortunata” means a wet bride is a lucky bride. Seeing a spider at night is good financial luck. But not all Italian good luck is meant to make us feel better about wet weddings and



## Memories

Your culture and family history is an important part of who you are and anecdotes and superstitions fit into that story, just like grandma’s secret recipe does.

spider sightings. Eating lentils immediately after New Year’s Eve brings good luck and money. Finding a button on the ground is the sign of a new friendship coming soon. Sprinkling salt in a new home clears it of all ill and evil, which is always a good thing. And if you think someone has wished you unwell or has given you the “malocchio”—literally translated as the evil eye—be sure to wear a “corno”, or horn on a chain, to keep evil away. Alternatively, stick out your index finger and pinky together, like cattle horns, to ward off all evil.

Some traditions are not as superstitious, but rather are far more meaningful. The big Sunday family meal is a tradition I strive to keep up, despite it being more difficult to do every Sunday as kids grow up and start their own families. Growing our own garden is a big part of being Italian and a tradition I love. When gardening, I am relaxed and happy to know I will be able to reap the benefits of my planting, use them in my kitchen, and feed my friends and family with them.

Many of the dishes I cook at home are redolent with memories of cooking and tending the farm with my grandma Rosa—the flavors of my childhood are all part of our family tradition. The chickens on the family farm were great eaters of all leftovers, and they produced fabulous farm-fresh eggs. For special meals, we would use a chicken to make a hearty chicken meat stew, or guazzetto, usually served with homemade pasta; I was always licking my fingers by the end. Sweets were for special occasions and were always made at home. For me, a few simple dishes add up to lots of memories and flavors that will carry on my family’s traditions.



# Chicken in Sguazet with Polenta

GUAZZETTO DI POLLO CON POLENTA

Traditionally, chicken in sguazet is made with a whole chicken, cut into parts. Chicken thighs, as we've used here, also work well, stay juicy and make this dish more accessible for a weeknight. It's delicious served over polenta, but also good over pasta or gnocchi. The chicken livers here are optional, but if you have them, they add a nice depth to the sauce.

## Yield

Serves 4

## Ingredients

- 3 fresh bay leaves
- 2 sprigs fresh rosemary
- ½ teaspoon black peppercorns
- 4 cloves
- 8 bone-in, skin-on chicken thighs  
(about 2 ½ to 3 pounds)
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper
- 3 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
- 2 thick slices bacon, coarsely chopped
- 2 carrots, cut into 1-inch chunks
- 1 large onion, cut into 1-inch chunks
- ½ cup chicken livers, cleaned and finely chopped  
(optional)
- 2 tablespoons tomato paste
- 1 cup dry white wine
- 2 cups low-sodium chicken broth
- 2 tablespoons chopped fresh Italian parsley
- Make basic polenta, for serving (page 106)

## Recipe

Lay out a piece of cheesecloth and bundle the bay leaves, rosemary, peppercorns and cloves in the center and tie to enclose them.

Season the chicken all over with salt and pepper. Heat 2 tablespoons of the olive oil in a large Dutch oven over medium high heat. When the oil is hot, add the chicken, in batches, skin side down. Brown the chicken well on both sides, about 2 minutes per side, moving the pieces to a plate as they are browned.

Once all of the chicken is out of the pot, carefully pour out the oil to a bowl to discard when it cools. Wipe the pot clean with a paper towel and add the remaining tablespoon of olive oil over medium heat. Add the bacon and cook until it is just crisp, 2 to 3 minutes.

Add the carrots and onion, season lightly with salt and pepper, and cook until the onion just begins to wilt, 2 to 3 minutes. Add the chicken livers if using, stir and cook until lightly browned, about 2 minutes.

Clear a space in the middle of the pot and add the tomato paste. Let it toast in that spot for a minute, then stir into the vegetables. Increase the heat to high, add the white wine and cook until reduced by half, about 1 minute. Add the chicken broth and adjust the heat so the sauce is simmering. Add the chicken pieces skin side up. The sauce should almost but not completely cover the chicken. If not, add a little water.

Set the lid ajar and simmer until the chicken is very tender, 40 to 45 minutes. To serve, plate the chicken pieces on top of polenta. Stir the parsley into the sauce and spoon over the chicken and polenta.



# Ricotta Dumplings in Jam Sauce

CANEDERLI DI RICOTTA CON MARMELLATA

I love this sauce made with chunky plum preserves, but you could use any chunky jam you have in your pantry. Cherry, mixed berry or apricot would all be delicious.

## Yield

Serves 4

## Ingredients for the jam sauce

2 tablespoons unsalted butter

1 cup chunky plum jam



## Ingredients for the ricotta dumplings

1 pound fresh ricotta, drained if necessary

2 large eggs

¼ teaspoon kosher salt

1 cup all purpose flour, plus more as needed

## Recipe

Bring a large wide pot of salted water to a boil for the dumplings. For the sauce, heat a large skillet over medium heat. Add the butter. When the butter is melted, add the jam and ¼ cup water.

Cook, stirring, until the jam melts and is bubbling.

Simmer to make a syrupy sauce, about 2 minutes. Set aside, off heat, while you make the dumplings.

For the dumplings, put the ricotta in a large bowl and break up any clumps with a fork to loosen it. Beat the eggs in a small bowl with the salt and pour over the ricotta. Stir well to combine.

Add the flour and stir just to make a smooth dough. The dough should be stiff and hold its shape, but still sticky. If not, add a little more flour.

Fill a drinking glass with cold water. Dip two soup spoons in the water and scoop up some dough with one. Use the other spoon to pack into a dumpling shape and slip the dumpling into the simmering water. Continue to wet the spoons and slide the dumplings into the water until you've used all of the dough. (You can also make the dumplings with a small ice cream scoop).

Once the dumplings have floated to the surface of the water, cook 5 minutes and remove one with a slotted spoon. It should feel firm to the touch and spring back when pressed. If it is soft at all, return the water and cook another minute or two. Once the dumplings are cooked, bring the sauce to a simmer and transfer the dumplings with a slotted spoon to the sauce.

Simmer and gently turn the dumplings in the sauce to coat them, adding a little more water to the sauce if it's too thick. Serve immediately.





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*Rovinj old town at night on the Adriatic coast of Croatia*



# Discovering Istria

My lifelong love of food began as a small child in Istria at the side of my grandmother, Nonna Rosa. Some of my earliest memories are of helping her in the garden. My grandparents were self-sufficient, growing most of what they needed. In the season of plenty, food was bottled, dried, or smoked, and put away for leaner times. What they had in abundance was bartered or offered for sale by my grandmother at the market. I would follow Nonna Rosa and Aunt Ivana to the market in Pula and help them sell our vegetables. Those trips to the market have been a lifelong culinary inspiration to me. My recollections of the flavors, aromas, sights, and sounds live on in the recipes that I make today. I learned to bring out the fullest potential of a basic ingredient from my grandmother and my mother.

In my kitchen and in my life, I sometimes still hear the pearls of wisdom Nonna Rosa would extol daily. When I would be given the task of cleaning the wooden kneading board for bread and pastas, Nonna Rosa would say “grata la tavola ben, se no non ti trovará un bon mari” meaning, “scrape the board well, otherwise you will never find a good husband.” Or if I would complain about something, she’d say “o mangia questa minestra o salta fuori di questa finestra,” meaning, “either eat this soup or jump out this window.” In other words, take it or leave it! Remembering her lessons on life always brings a smile to my face, especially when I hear myself saying the same exact words to my own children and grandchildren.

That was my small world, but Istria has so much to offer the visitor today. I go back as often as I can. A small, triangular peninsula that juts out into the Adriatic Sea, Istria lies about an hour away from the Italian border near Trieste. Istria is very diverse in topography, with an elevated inland which slopes gently down to the seashore. Inland, people raise goats, sheep, and cattle and farm the land growing corn, wheat and vegetables. They also produce some excellent cheeses and local prosciutto. On the coast, locally caught seafood abounds, as bluefish, sardines, mussels, calamari, and shrimp fill the surrounding waters. The whole of Istria is filled with vineyards and olive trees producing award-winning products. The prized white truffle abounds in the fall around the town of Buzet, which is not far from Motovun.



## History in the stones

The old white stone towns are rich with culture, and it would be wonderful if their walls could talk about the things they have seen.

### Novigrad



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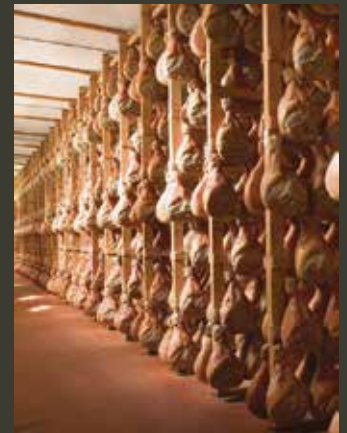
## The sweetest prosciutto

Only sea salt used as preservative, as little as possible. Only selected meat from heavy, mature pigs raised in a restricted area and fed with a specially formulated feed that includes whey from Parmesan cheese production. That's how Galloni becomes the sweetest prosciutto, the difference that you can taste at the first bite.



## Hand salted

At Galloni salting is still carried out by hand. A highly trained "maestro salatore" uses as less salt as possible considering individual characteristics of every single thigh. No machine can do that! The result is a product of absolute mildness, firmness and consistency.



## Long time and naturally aged

All aging of Galloni Prosciutto is much longer than usually required – minimally 16/17 months. We can reach 24, 30 months and even more. They are mainly cured by natural air which allows a long seasoning and a full maturation of taste, aroma and flavor.



Buzet is in the center of the Mirna river valley, where truffles abundantly grow. Nearby Motovun is well-known for its yearly film festival and medieval twin entry gate. The main square is charming, and the views from up high are magnificent.

Local food in Istria is fresh and simple. Winter months have menus filled with polenta and homemade pasta with braised meat sauces. Antipasti are always the local sheep's milk cheese and prosciutto. Surrounded by the sea, fish is never missing in Istria, and you can always find a whole grilled branzino or mussels in a white wine sauce. My favorite is scampi alla buzara, shrimp served in a light wine and tomato sauce. The fun is eating it with your hands and mopping up the remaining sauce with soft Istrian bread. The flavors are genuine and satisfying.

Istria has been occupied by many different people and ruling powers over the centuries. Perhaps the most influential occupiers of Istria were the ancient Romans and the Venetian Empire. In modern times, Istria has been part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, Italy, and Yugoslavia. Today, it is part of Croatia. As a result of the many times Istria has changed hands, it is very diverse in its culture and art.

The largest city in Istria is Pula (Pola) at the very southern tip of Istria. It is filled with ancient Roman antiquities such as the Roman Arena (80 A.D.), which is right next to the sea, and what eventually became the only major port of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. During summer months, there are concerts or theater every evening in the Arena. Julius Caesar established Pula; the Triumphal Arch of the Sergii (c. 29 B.C.) and the Temple of Augustus (c. 14 A.D.) still stand in memory of the bustling Roman colony. The town hall, located in the square that was once the Roman forum, is a Venetian building, whose medieval and Renaissance elements are a reminder of "La Serenissima". A walk through the city gardens and down the main pedestrian street is highlighted by the Austro-Hungarian palaces on either side. The lively activity on the main streets during the evening can be found during the day on the many beautiful beaches around Pula (Pola), such as Stoja, Verudela, or those in the nature preserve of Premantura, which consists of 124 acres of pristine land that is surrounded by beaches. The crystal-clear water will beckon you for a dip, and the nearby pine trees will provide the shade for a post-swim nap. Some beaches have small cafes that grill up local fare like "cevapcici" (small meat patties) and calamari. The nature and glistening sea are all you will need for a splendid day.



Motovun





Nearby towns of Fazana (Fasana) or Vodnjan (Dignano) are perfect for an evening stroll or dinner within their picturesque ancient centers. Fazana is an old fishing village, with old town squares and stone houses. The Cathedral Church of St. Cosmas and Damian is right on the water and was built in the 15th century in a Gothic style. The tiny Church of St. Mary of Mount Carmel is a jewel in the center of town with its delightful portico and medieval frescoes. Not to be missed, the more inland city of Dignano is a typical medieval town with small winding streets and stone facade buildings in the Gothic, Renaissance, and Baroque styles. The main square in town, Piazza del Popolo, is where the town castle stood; it contains some important buildings like the city hall, Benussi house, Bembo house, Bettina Palace, and Bradamente Palace (which has a gorgeous decorated facade). The largest church in Istria, St. Blaise, is in Dignano, built on the site of a Romanesque church. Inside are many important artistic works from the 14th to the 18th century, including a work by Paolo Veneziano. There are also quite a few pieces of religious reliquary, sacred art, and mummified bodies of saints. The town of Dignano has always been known for excellent wine, so enjoy a glass in the main piazza.



## Adriatic Splendor

The glistening, pristine sea beckons and refreshes every time with a saline content that creates a buoyancy so familiar and appreciated.

A short distance off the coast of Istria are the islands of Brijuni (Brioni). These islands became the summer residence for President Tito, the leader of Yugoslavia after the Second World War. Similar to the rest of Istria, these islands contained a Roman settlement, and some ruins remain. They were also part of the Venetian Empire and, in the 19th century, the Austro-Hungarian Empire. During this time, they became a vacation spot for the wealthy, with restaurants, a hotel, casino, and beach resort. Tito, the Yugoslavian leader, vacationed on Brioni and invited many dignitaries such as President Gamal Abdel Nasser of Egypt and movie stars including Elizabeth Taylor, Richard Burton, and Sophia Loren. Today the islands have hotels for vacationing and a nature reserve to view local and exotic flora and fauna. Several sites worth visiting are the remains of a Byzantine palace, the remains of two ancient Roman villas, and the 13th-century church of St. Mary built by the Knights Templar. There are several hotels, restaurants, and homes to rent as well.

The pearl of Istria is Rovinj (Rovigno) on the western coast. The Baroque Church of St. Euphemia dominates the town, resting at the top of the town. Filled with ancient buildings, the white stone center and its small, meandering streets are fun to explore. The city really comes alive in the evening during



## Local ingredients

Sincere familiar flavors that are authentic come from the sea and the land, unadulterated they arrive at simple tables rich with family and friends to share.

summer months, with performers playing music in the streets. Bar patrons perch on small cushions placed on stone seats carved out of the seashore for an aperitivo, giving them some of the best views anywhere. Originally a fishing town, the small port still has some local fisherman and is a great place to have a coffee and people-watch.

Part of the Venetian Empire for several hundred years, the towns of Istria have Romanesque and medieval churches filled with frescoes, none more famous than the frescoes in the Church of St. Martin and Church of St. Mary of the Slate Floor. These frescoes depict a lively macabre dance of death, painted shortly after the Black Plague which decimated Europe's population. These frescoes are simply amazing. Early Christian mosaics created by Venetian mosaic masters are the highlight of Porec (Parenzo) in the Basilica of Euphrasius. Additionally, much of the architecture in Porec, such as biforium windows and sculptural details, recalls Venice. Stroll through the elegant city streets to take it all in and pass by the Zuccato Palace, today a gallery, with its original Gothic face preserved. The tradition of the *passeggiata*, or leisurely stroll, is alive and well, not only in Porec, but most Istrian towns. One of the most pleasant towns to stroll through is Novigrad (Cittanova), a small fortified town that sticks out into the Gulf of Venice. Containing two beautiful Renaissance towers and a town hall that overlooks the water, this charming sea town has a lovely port and some great restaurants to enjoy the local food. Don't miss the small but great example of Baroque residential architecture in the Palace of the Counts of Rigo, which has a well-preserved interior layout.

Of course, these are just the major highlights. If time were of no matter, then I would also suggest seeing the Morosini-Grimani Castle in Svetvincenat, and while you are there, do not miss the town square that has a public well and parish church. I would tell you to stop by the most perfect Classical architecture in all of Istria—the Castle of the Polesini family—that local lore says was built from a design by Andrea Palladio himself. The classic facade with columns and two-story staircase was part of a larger estate in the town of St. John of Sterna, not far from St. Lovrec. Or I would tell you that you should visit Labin to see the Baroque Battiala-Lazzarini Palace and the Church of the Birth of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Despite going back several times a year, I still have not seen everything there is to see in Istria. I love its coastline and sea, enjoy its genuine and tasty cuisine, and admire its natural beauty.

### Brioni Islands





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Pecorino Sardo P.D.O. Pecorino Romano P.D.O. Fiore Sardo P.D.O.

# Jumbo Shrimp Buzara Style

SCAMPI ALLA BUZARA

Shrimp alla buzara is common all around the northern Adriatic coast. Shrimp of this size make an impressive presentation, but you can cook inexpensive smaller shrimp (shelled and cleaned) in the same method to make a terrific dressing for spaghetti or linguine. And leftovers make a great addition to a risotto.

## Yield

Serves 6

## Ingredients

24 extra large raw shrimp, about 1 ounce each,  
peeled and deveined  
6 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil,  
plus more for drizzling  
Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper  
3 garlic cloves, chopped  
½ cup finely chopped shallots  
2 tablespoons tomato paste  
1 cup dry white wine  
1 tablespoon fine dry breadcrumbs, plus more as needed  
2 tablespoons chopped fresh Italian parsley  
Crusty bread, for serving

## Recipe

Slice open the back of the shrimp almost all the way through to butterfly them open, but keep them intact. Rinse the shrimp and pat dry. Heat a large skillet over medium high heat. Add 2 tablespoons of the olive oil. Add the shrimp and season with salt and pepper.

Cook and toss until the shrimp turn white and curl, 3 to 4 minutes. Remove to a plate. Add the remaining ¼ cup olive oil. Scatter in the garlic, cook until sizzling, then stir in the shallots.

When they're sizzling, season with salt and pepper and stir in ¼ cup of the wine. Cook, stirring frequently, until the wine is nearly completely evaporated and the shallots have softened.

Drop in the tomato paste and stir it around the pan for a minute, coating the shallots and caramelizing them. Add the remaining wine, bring to a boil and add 1 cup water. Simmer and reduce until thickened, about 4 minutes.

Transfer the shrimp to the sauce and sprinkle with the breadcrumbs. Toss and bring to a simmer to thicken. If the sauce is still too thin, sprinkle in a little more breadcrumbs. Simmer until the shrimp are just cooked through, about 2 minutes. Sprinkle with the parsley, toss and serve immediately with the bread.







## Sauerkraut with Pork

CAPPUCCI GUARNITI

This dish is a holiday staple for my family. It's easy, filled with flavor and can be made ahead. Good quality sauerkraut is important here. Try to buy it in an Eastern European market if you can. At the very least, buy the bagged (not canned) variety in the grocery store.

### Yield

Serves 6 to 8

### Ingredients

- 3 pounds sauerkraut
- ¼ cup extra-virgin olive oil
- 1 ½ pound piece boneless pork butt,  
cut into 2 to 3 inch chunks
- 1 pound thinly sliced bone-in smoked pork chops
- 8 ounces slab bacon, cut into 4 pieces
- 4 fresh bay leaves
- 3 sprigs fresh thyme
- 3 garlic cloves, thinly sliced
- 1 ½ pound smoked pork sausages, such as kielbasa,  
cut into 2 to 3 inch chunks
- Freshly ground black pepper

### Recipe

Put the sauerkraut in a colander.

Rinse and toss under cold running water for a minute to remove excess saltiness.

Put the sauerkraut in a large Dutch oven and add 4 cups cold water. Nestle the pork butt, smoked chops and slab bacon in the sauerkraut.

Add the bay leaves, thyme and garlic.

Bring to a simmer, cover and cook, stirring occasionally, until the pork is tender, about 1 ½ hours.

Uncover and add the smoked pork sausages and simmer 30 minutes. Increase the heat to boil away any excess liquid, about 5 minutes, you want it to be slightly saucy but not dry.

Season well with black pepper before serving.

# Pljukanci with Chanterelle Mushrooms

PLJUKANCI CON GALLINACCI

Pljukanci are traditional in Istria, a kind of pasta made when there was no time to roll, cut and shape pasta dough. Rolling little pieces of dough between the palms of one's hands was quick and effective, especially if the children got involved to expedite things. My grandmother and other women of her generation were truly expert pljukanci makers. In no time, they would take a big batch of pasta dough and turn it into slim little noodles. Instead of rolling the little bits of dough back and forth for a second or two, my grandmother could compress and stretch a bit of dough into a perfect pljukanci with one swipe of her hands—and flick it right onto her floured tray in the same movement. This delicious sauce is traditionally made with gallinacci or chanterelles, though other mushrooms can be used. Pljukanci are also wonderful with a simple tomato sauce.

## Yield

Serves 4 to 6

## Ingredients for Pljukanci

2 cups all-purpose flour, plus more for working the dough  
½ teaspoon kosher salt  
½ cup warm water  
1 tablespoon white vinegar

## Ingredients for sauce

2 cups low-sodium chicken broth  
¼ cup extra-virgin olive oil, plus more for drizzling  
1 small onion, thinly sliced  
2 garlic cloves, crushed and peeled  
1 pound fresh chanterelles or other mushrooms (a mix is nice), cleaned and sliced  
Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper  
8 fresh sage leaves, chopped  
¼ cup tomato paste  
2 tablespoons chopped fresh Italian parsley  
½ cup grated Grana Padano, plus more for serving

## Recipe

For the pljukanci, combine the flour and salt in the work bowl of a food processor and pulse to aerate. Combine the water and vinegar in a spouted measuring cup. With the machine running, pour the liquid through

the feed tube. Process for 30 to 40 seconds until a soft dough forms and gathers on the blade. If the dough does not gather and is wet and sticky, add a little more flour. If it is dry and stiff, add a little more water. Turn out the dough and knead it briefly until smooth, soft and stretchy. Form into a round, cover it in plastic wrap and let it rest at room temperature for 30 minutes.

To make pljukanci, cut off a lemon-size piece of dough and keep the rest wrapped in plastic. Lightly flour the work surface and have a floured tray or baking sheet close at hand. Pinch off 6 or so marble-sized bits of dough. Roll each one between your palms, back and forth, into a strand about 2-inches long and drop it on the floured baking sheet as you go. The pljukanci won't be uniform so don't worry if some are fatter and shorter or skinnier and longer. Continue to roll with the remaining dough, tossing the strands in flour and keeping them separate on the baking sheet.

Bring a large pot of salted water to a boil for the pasta. For the sauce, heat the chicken broth in a small saucepan over low heat. Heat a large skillet over medium high heat and add the olive oil. When the oil is hot, add the onions and garlic. Cook until the onions are softened, about 6 minutes. Stir in the sage. Add the mushrooms and season with salt. Toss the mushrooms to coat in the oil. Cover and cook until the mushrooms are wilted and have given up their liquid, 8 to 10 minutes. Uncover and increase the heat to evaporate and concentrate the liquid in the pan.

When the skillet is dry, clear a space in the bottom and add the tomato paste. Let it toast in that spot for a minute, then stir into the mushrooms. Add 1 cup of the broth and adjust the heat so the sauce is simmering nicely. Continue to simmer, adding the remaining stock in 2 more additions, until the mushrooms are tender and the sauce is thick and flavorful, 15 to 17 minutes. Season with salt and pepper and stir in the parsley.

When ready to serve, shake the pljukanci in a colander to remove excess flour and drop them all at once into the pot. Stir well and return the water to a boil. Cook the pljukanci until al dente, 3 to 4 minutes after they rise to the surface. Transfer to the simmering sauce with a spider, drizzle with olive oil and toss to coat the pasta in the sauce, adding a little pasta water if it seems dry. Remove the skillet from the heat, sprinkle with the grated cheese, toss and serve, passing more cheese at the table.





# It's Wintertime

Food that feeds not only the stomach but also the soul is the kind of food I like to eat in the wintertime. I love the smell of soup percolating away on the stove. I enjoy the way the aroma of meat braising can beckon everyone to the kitchen, asking what's for dinner. A big pot of polenta served with cheese or a ragù is typical for the colder months in my house. Any leftover polenta is also great the next morning for breakfast with some sugar and warmed milk.

I even like to turn on the oven for dessert, my favorite dolce being pears roasted with grapes and quince apples that I core, sprinkle sugar into, and bake. It's not only home-cooked hearty food that I like in the winter—I also enjoy warm drinks. One of my favorite things to drink after a meal is a “canarino”, literally translated as canary, hot water and lemon. It is very helpful in digesting a meal.



## Baby, it's cold outside

When the cool air begins,  
I like to relax by a warm  
fire with something hot  
to drink. I love it  
when the aroma of what  
I am stewing fills  
the air of my home.

When at home, I often make compote, or a mixture of stewed fruits. Compote particularly pleases me because not only is it delicious, natural, and healthy, but it also gives me an opportunity to use any fruits that might be overripe. The fruity liquid is great served with some honey and a squeeze of lemon.

Oftentimes, in the winter months, my mother and I have compote and a few biscuits for dinner, chatting happily away in front of the fire and feeling warm inside and out. This is exactly what my grandmother and the generation before her used to do. I do not discard the cooked fruit either, and instead serve it as a dessert with some vanilla ice cream. If not that, I eat it the following morning mixed into a dollop of yogurt or my oatmeal. It is so important to not waste food and use every possible part of a fruit, vegetable or animal. This is especially easy during the wintertime when longer cooking techniques allow for it.

# Spiced Fruit Compote

COMPOTE DI FRUTTA

Don't throw away the fruit used in the compote. It makes a wonderful breakfast with oatmeal or plain yogurt.

## Yield

Serves 8 to 10

## Ingredients

- 3 whole cloves
- 3 pounds apples, cored and cut into wedges
- 1 cinnamon stick
- 1 medium orange
- 1 medium lemon
- 4 ounces dried apricots
- 4 ounces dried pears
- 4 ounces dried apples
- ½ cup sugar, plus more as needed

## Recipe

Stick the cloves into three of the apple wedges. In a medium Dutch oven, combine all of the apples and 2 quarts cold water.

Add the cinnamon stick. With a vegetable peeler, remove the peel from the orange and the lemon, and add to the pot. Squeeze juice from the lemon and orange into the pot, and add the dried fruit and sugar.

Bring to a simmer, cover, and gently simmer the compote until reduced by about a third, about 30 minutes.

Strain through a sieve, pressing on the cooked fruit to extract any remaining juices.

Taste, and add more sugar if desired. Serve hot as a tea on a cold day, or chilled on warmer days.



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A vertical photograph of a wooden surface with a glass vial of yellow oil and a tomato.

# Time to Eat

Although I love sitting down at the table for a celebration or a regular family meal, picking and grazing is another great way to entertain and eat. When I have guests coming to my home, I like to often set up a big antipasto bar where everyone gets a plate and circles around it like busy bees.

It is actually quite easy to create a whole meal out of antipasti, and the variety is endless. I usually include mozzarella and tomato, a vegetable frittata, some roasted peppers, sliced cured meats, an array of braised green vegetables, and poached shrimp served with a salad of beans. It is important to keep an even balance of dairy, vegetables, fish, and meat, so there is something for everyone. When served all together, it is more than enough to call it a meal, and I find that people get to talk and mingle more than if they were seated at a long table.

# Ricotta and Pepper Frittata

FRITTATA DI RICOTTA E PEPERONI

What makes this frittata different is the bread. It soaks up the egg, and cream gives the frittata a firm but still tender texture. It makes it easy to cut into bite-sized squares for an easy, room temperature appetizer and best of all, it can be made several hours ahead.

## Yield

Serves 6 or more

## Ingredients

- 10 large eggs
- ¼ cup heavy cream
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper
- 1½ cups cubed (½ inch) day-old bread, crusts removed
- 3 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
- 1 medium onion, chopped
- 1 large red bell pepper, chopped
- 1 tablespoon unsalted butter
- 2 tablespoons chopped fresh Italian parsley
- ¾ cup fresh ricotta
- ¼ cup grated Grana Padano

## Recipe

Preheat the oven to 400 degrees F. Beat the eggs, heavy cream, and salt and pepper to taste in a large bowl. Add the bread cubes and let soak until softened, about 15 minutes.

Meanwhile, heat 2 tablespoons of the olive oil in a 10-inch non-stick skillet with a heatproof handle over medium heat. Add the onion and cook until wilted, about 4 minutes. Add the peppers and cook, stirring until crisp-tender, about 5 minutes. Season with salt and pepper. Add the butter and the remaining 1 tablespoon oil to the skillet and heat until the butter is foaming. Stir the parsley into the egg mixture and add the egg mixture to the pan. Let the egg mixture set just a minute or two, then drop the ricotta mixture by tablespoonfuls all over the surface of the frittata. Sprinkle with the grated cheese. Cook, still over medium heat, without stirring, just until the bottom is lightly browned, 3 to 4 minutes (check by lifting an edge with a spatula). There should be a few bubbles at a time around the edges; any more than that means the frittata is cooking too quickly, so adjust the heat accordingly.

Transfer the skillet to the oven and cook just until the center is set and firm to the touch and the top of the frittata is browned, about 15 minutes.

To unmold, run a rubber spatula around the edges of the frittata and shake the pan gently to free the bottom of the frittata. Let cool on a cutting board for 10 minutes if you'd like to serve it warm, in wedges. To serve at room temperature as completely small squares, and cut into





# Cherry Peppers Stuffed with Prosciutto and Provolone

PEPERONI RIPIENI DI PROSCIUTTO E PROVOLONE

Cherry peppers are plump, round peppers that are usually sold pickled and range in color from bright red to dull green, and in spiciness from mild to hot. Good in salads and as part of an antipasto tray, they also add a kick to cooked dishes, too, like chicken scarpariello.

## Yield

Serves 4

## Ingredients

16 hot pickled cherry peppers, plus brine from the jar  
1 (3 ounce piece) provolone, cut into 16 cubes  
3 thin slices prosciutto, cut into 16 squares  
1 tablespoon chopped fresh Italian parsley  
½ teaspoon dried oregano,  
preferably Sicilian oregano dried right on the branch  
Extra-virgin olive oil, as needed

## Recipe

Carefully remove the stems and seeds from the peppers, taking care not to split the peppers open.

Wrap each piece of provolone in a square of prosciutto, trimming to fit.

Press the prosciutto-wrapped provolone into the cavity of the pepper

Pack the peppers in a wide mouthed, squat jar or other container that will fit them snugly.

Add enough pepper brine to come within an inch of the top of the peppers.

Add the parsley and oregano and fill the jar with enough olive oil to just cover the peppers.

Screw the lid on tightly and shake to combine. Marinate overnight (or up to 3 days) in the refrigerator. Let come to room temperature before serving. To serve, remove from the brine and serve with toothpicks.



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Balsamic Vinegar of Modena is a precious condiment obtained by the blending of grape must, that is cooked or concentrated, with the addition of wine vinegar. Grape must can originate exclusively from 7 varieties of grapes, all typical of the Emilia Romagna region. The minimum maturation period is 60-day, in wooden barrels or vats, then Balsamic Vinegar of Modena (Aceto Balsamico di Modena) can be further aged. If this phase lasts over three years, the finished product can boast the “aged” classification.



## PROTECTION AND PROMOTION

The Consorzio Tutela Aceto Balsamico di Modena, born in 1993 on an initiative of producers, carries out the public functions of promotion, defence and protection of the product. Actually the Consortium groups together 50 producers, ancient and new families that have adopted the secrets and values of tradition. In 2009 the European Union granted the Protected Geographical Indication, or PGI, certification to Balsamic Vinegar of Modena (Aceto Balsamico di Modena), as a guarantee of the authenticity of the product and of security for consumers. It is the PGI logo that guarantees that the production was in compliance with the product specification and, at the time of purchase, permits to distinguish the real product from the several counterfeits that still exists.





# Tuna–Stuffed Zucchini

ZUCCHINE RIPIENE CON TONNO

These savory stuffed zucchini can be served whole, with one piece per guest, or you can let them cool and cut crosswise into appetizer-sized portions. They are equally delicious warm or at room temperature. Make sure you select zucchini that are all about the same size so they bake evenly. If you choose a good quality Italian tuna packed in olive oil, reserve the oil from draining to use in the stuffing.

## Yield

Serves 8 or more

## Ingredients

3 medium zucchini (about 1 ½ pounds)  
6 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil,  
plus more for drizzling  
Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper  
1 (5-ounce) can Italian tuna in oil, drained  
¾ cup panko breadcrumbs  
4 scallions, finely chopped  
2 hard-boiled eggs, finely chopped  
2 tablespoons drained capers in brine, chopped  
2 tablespoons chopped fresh Italian parsley  
Zest and juice of 1 lemon

## Recipe

Preheat oven to 425 degrees F. Trim just the ends from both sides of the zucchini, then split the zucchini lengthwise. Use a measuring spoon or melon baller to scoop the flesh from the zucchini to make 6 boats.

Chop enough of the insides of the zucchini to get ½ cup and add to a large bowl. Put the zucchini boats in a 9-by-13 inch baking dish and brush with 2 tablespoons of the olive oil. Season with salt and pepper.

Add the drained tuna, panko, scallions, eggs, capers, parsley and lemon zest to the bowl with the chopped zucchini.

Drizzle with 2 tablespoons of the olive oil, season with salt and pepper, and toss well to form a cohesive filling. Stuff the filling into the zucchini boats without packing too tightly.

Drizzle lightly with olive oil.

Combine the remaining 2 tablespoons olive oil, the lemon juice, ½ cup water and ¼ teaspoon salt in a spouted measuring cup. Pour in the bottom of the baking dish.

Cover the dish tightly with foil, tenting it so it doesn't touch the stuffing. Bake until the pan juices are bubbling and the zucchini is almost tender, about 35 minutes. Uncover and bake until the filling is brown and crisped, about 20 to 25 minutes more. Serve warm, drizzled with the pan juices or at room temperature.









# Tie One On!

Sometimes a classic is just that, classic. However, sometimes you can be creative with your cocktails and change things up a bit. Everyone loves a good negroni, for example, but a small change of Campari to Averna creates a darker and richer Negroni, just for a change of pace. Garnish is very important. It is essential to use fresh citrus, or plump olives. I like to make a small garnish “spiedino” or kabob for guests to munch on while enjoying their cocktails. I really enjoy refreshing sparkling cocktails and have found that one of my favorite non-alcoholic drinks, a grapefruit, fennel spritzer is really kicked up a notch with some gin. The gin compliments the grapefruit and fennel creating a truly delicious cocktail. I like the bubblyness the seltzer adds to the drink. I also enjoy the bubbles in cocktails made with Prosecco, such as the classic bellini or the same drink made with purée of fruit that is seasonal, also tasty and refreshing.



# Vin Brûlé

VIN BRULÈ

Vin brûlé is a version of mulled wine enjoyed in Piedmont, in northwestern Italy. It's a perfect choice for holiday entertaining, because you can double or even triple the recipe. You can keep it warm over very low heat on the stove (below a simmer) or even in a Crock-Pot. You can add a splash of brandy or dark rum to the mugs as well. You don't need to spring for an expensive wine here, since the other ingredients will be adding so much flavor.

## Yield

Serves 6 or more

## Ingredients

2 oranges, whole, plus 1 sliced  
1 cinnamon stick  
1 teaspoon allspice berries  
1 star anise  
6 whole cloves  
2 (750ml) bottles dry but fruity red wine  
¾ cup sugar, plus more if needed

## Recipe

Remove the peel from the whole oranges with a vegetable peeler. Set the peel in a square of cheesecloth with the cinnamon, allspice, star anise and cloves, and tie to enclose. Put the sachet in a large Dutch oven, and add the wine and sugar. Halve and squeeze in the juice of the 2 whole oranges. Bring to a bare simmer over low heat. Taste, and add additional sugar, to your taste. Simmer 5 minutes, then reduce heat to the lowest setting and simmer until the spices permeate the wine, about 10 minutes more. To serve, ladle the wine into mugs, garnish with orange slices and serve hot.

# Grapefruit–Fennel Gin Spritzer

SPRITZ DI POMPELMO, FINOCCHIO E GIN

I originally conceived of this recipe as a non-alcoholic refresher, but love the flavor gin adds when I'm looking for a light, easy winter cocktail. You can double or triple the syrup recipe if you're throwing a larger holiday gathering

## Yield

Serves 4

## Ingredients

4 to 5 large red grapefruits  
¾ cup sugar  
2 tablespoons fennel seeds  
8 ounces gin  
Seltzer, chilled  
Ice cubes

## Recipe

With a vegetable peeler, remove the peel from one grapefruit. Squeeze enough juice from the grapefruits to yield 2 cups.

In a small saucepan, combine the peel, juice, sugar and fennel seeds and simmer until lightly syrupy, 15 to 18 minutes. Strain and cool. (You should have ½ to ¾ cup syrup.) To serve, divide the syrup among 4 highball glasses and add the gin. Fill with seltzer. Stir and fill the glasses with ice. Serve.





# Dark Negroni

NEGRONI SCURO

The classic Negroni, born in Florence, is a cocktail to be enjoyed year-round. The classic is simply equal parts gin, Campari and sweet vermouth. Here, the Campari is swapped out for another favorite and somewhat more complex Amaro called Averna. It's the perfect winter twist on a Negroni.

## Yield

Makes 1 cocktail

## Ingredients

- 1 ounce gin
- 1 ounce sweet vermouth
- 1 ounce Averna
- 2 dashes orange bitters
- Ice cubes
- 1 orange slice

## Recipe

Combine the gin, vermouth, Averna and bitters in a mixing glass and stir to combine. Add ice to a rocks glass. Pour the cocktail over, garnish with an orange slice and serve.



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# What a Wonderful Pasta

The versatility of pasta is endless. It can be prepared with a simple butter and sage sauce, a garlic and oil sauce, an array of vegetables, a seafood sauce, a plain tomato sauce, a hearty, meat ragù, and more. I am often asked what I would eat for my last meal, and of course my answer is pasta! However, the way it's dressed might change, depending on the season and the pasta shapes that I might have available.

My favorite combination any time of year is Spaghetti with White Clam Sauce. During the colder months, I like a pasta with winter vegetables like cauliflower or broccoli, flavored with a little pancetta and, for a spicy kick, peperoncino. I also enjoy braised meat sauces during the winter, paired with a pasta that has a hole in the middle like rigatoni or penne. This way, the pieces of meat in the sauce get stuck and pop in my mouth like a delicious surprise when I bite into the pasta. Long pasta shapes, like spaghetti or fettuccine, pair well with smooth sauces. Have fun with your pasta, experiment with different shapes and sauces, and don't be afraid to mix it up.





# Orecchiette with Breadcrumbs, Pancetta and Cauliflower

ORECCHIETTE CON PANCETTA E CAVOLFIORRE

Orecchiette is a great choice for the pasta shape here – it will catch the little nuggets of pancetta and cauliflower so you'll have a bit of all of the flavors of this dish in every bite – but any other shell or corkscrew shape would work well. If you skip the pasta altogether, this is also a great vegetable side.



## Yield

Serves 6



## Ingredients

- 1 ½ cups low-sodium chicken broth (or homemade)
- 2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil,  
plus more for drizzling
- 4 ounces pancetta, cut into small cubes
- 3 medium leeks, halved lengthwise  
and sliced, white and light green parts  
only (about 2 cups)
- ½ medium head cauliflower,  
stalks removed, florets and  
tender leaves cut into ½ inch  
pieces (about 3 cups)
- Kosher salt
- Peperoncino
- 1 pound orecchiette
- ¼ cup chopped fresh Italian  
parsley
- ¼ cup fine dry breadcrumbs,  
or as needed



## Recipe

Bring a large pot of salted water to a boil for the pasta. Heat the chicken broth in a small saucepan just to simmer and keep warm.

Heat the olive oil in a large skillet over medium heat. When the oil is hot, add the pancetta and cook, stirring occasionally, until the pancetta has rendered some of its fat and is lightly browned but still soft in the center, about 4 minutes. Add the leeks and cook until just wilted, about 3 minutes. Stir in the cauliflower and cook, stirring occasionally, until the cauliflower is wilted and begins to brown, about 4 minutes. Season lightly with salt and a generous pinch of peperoncino.

Pour the chicken stock into the skillet, bring to a boil and lower the heat so the sauce is at a lively simmer.

Cook until the vegetables are tender and the liquid is reduced by half, about 5 minutes.

Meanwhile, add the orecchiette to the boiling water and cook until al dente. When the pasta is done, remove with a spider directly to the sauce. Add the parsley and breadcrumbs, and toss to coat the pasta with the sauce. Let simmer a minute, until the breadcrumbs thicken the sauce. Adjust the consistency of the sauce by adding more breadcrumbs if it is still too soupy, or a little pasta water if it is too tight. Remove the skillet from the heat, drizzle with a little more olive oil, toss and serve.



# Rigatoni with Turkey Sausage, Onions and Fennel

RIGATONI CON SALSICCIA DI TACCHINO, CIPOLLE E FINOCCHIO

I've lightened up an old family favorite here by using turkey sausage, but feel free to use sweet (or hot) Italian pork sausage if you prefer, just decrease the olive oil by a tablespoon or two. The fennel adds freshness any time of year.

## Yield

Serves 6

## Ingredients

¼ cup extra-virgin olive oil, plus more for drizzling  
1 pound sweet turkey Italian sausage  
(without fennel seeds), removed from casings  
1 large fennel bulb, cored and sliced ¼ inch thick,  
½ cup fronds chopped  
1 large onion, sliced  
Kosher salt  
Peperoncino  
½ cup tomato paste  
½ cup dry white wine  
1 pound rigatoni  
1 cup grated Grana Padano, plus more for serving

## Recipe

Bring a large pot of salted water to a boil for the pasta. Heat the oil in a large skillet over medium heat. Crumble in the turkey sausage. Cook, breaking up the sausage with a wooden spoon, until no longer pink, about 5 minutes.

Add the sliced fennel and onion. Cook, stirring occasionally, until the vegetables are just tender, about 6 minutes. Season with salt and a large pinch of peperoncino.

Make a space in the center of the skillet and add the tomato paste. Cook and stir the tomato paste in that spot until it is toasted and darkened a shade or two, 1 to 2 minutes.

Add the wine, bring to a simmer and stir to make a smooth thick sauce. Add 3 cups of the pasta cooking water and bring to a simmer to reduce.

Add the rigatoni to the boiling water and stir. Simmer the sauce until reduced by about half, about 10 minutes. When the pasta is al dente, remove with a spider to the sauce. Sprinkle with the chopped fennel fronds and drizzle with olive oil.

Toss to coat the pasta with the sauce, adding a little pasta water if it seems dry. Remove the skillet from the heat. Sprinkle with the grated cheese, toss and serve, passing more cheese at the table.



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# Spaghetti with Spinach- Walnut Pesto and Ricotta

SPAGHETTI AL PESTO DI NOCI E RICOTTA

## Yield

Serves 6

## Ingredients

6 cups packed fresh spinach leaves  
1 cup packed fresh basil leaves  
1 cup packed fresh Italian parsley leaves  
½ cup walnut halves, toasted  
2 garlic cloves, crushed and peeled  
Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper  
½ cup extra-virgin olive oil, plus more for drizzling  
1 pound spaghetti  
1 cup fresh ricotta  
½ cup freshly grated Grana Padano

## Recipe

Bring a large pot of salted water to a boil for the pasta. Pulse the spinach, basil, parsley, walnuts, garlic, and salt in a food processor to a coarse paste. Pour in the olive oil in a slow, steady stream.

Process to make a smooth paste, stopping occasionally to scrape down the sides of the bowl.

Add the spaghetti to the boiling water, and cook until al dente. Scrape the pesto into a serving bowl and stir in the ricotta.

Season with salt and pepper. Stir in ½ cup of the pasta cooking water to loosen the sauce.

Remove the spaghetti with tongs directly to the sauce, add the grated cheese and a drizzle of olive oil. Toss to coat the pasta with the sauce, adding more pasta water if it seems dry.







# My Grocery List

My kitchen staples are essential and are often used with whatever I buy fresh at the market. I prefer to shop for a small amount of groceries on any given trip so I can use seasonal ingredients in my dishes. In order to accomplish this, I have staples that are always in my pantry. This way, I can prepare simple pantry-based dishes or more complex and seasonal dishes using the fresh ingredients I have.

My pantry items are grains, rice, pasta, polenta, beans, spices, and canned tomatoes. As for fresh ingredients, I am never without carrots, onions, celery, and herbs. I also keep a chunk of grating cheese in the refrigerator. Having these items on hand allows me to frequently make soup, one of my favorite dishes. Although simple vegetable soup is a favorite, I also like to add pasta, rice, beans, barley, and other grains. Polenta is another favorite dish that I ate as a child and like to make today. I had it with sugar in warm milk for breakfast, with cheese for lunch, and with a chicken guazzetto sauce for dinner.

Some of my favorite dishes are made with simple ingredients I can find every day in my kitchen, like spaghetti with garlic and oil. It is incredibly satisfying in its simplest form. But if I have a fresh ingredient I just picked up at the market like zucchini, I could add that as well and have some extra flavor. I like keeping it simple with fresh local ingredients.

# Wedding Soup

MINISTRA MARITATA

Legend has it that this recipe was created and served at weddings in Italy to serve to newlyweds to fortify them for the night ahead, but I've also read that this soup is actually named this way because it "marries" vegetables and meat so well in one dish. Whatever explanation you believe (the first is a bit more fun!), this soup belongs on your holiday table.

## Yield

Serves 8 to 10

## Ingredients for the soup

1 medium onion, cut into chunks  
2 stalks celery cut into chunks  
1 medium carrot, cut into chunks  
4 garlic cloves, cut into chunks  
1 cup loosely packed fresh parsley leaves  
½ cup extra-virgin olive oil, plus more for serving  
2 heads escarole (about 2 pounds), coarsely chopped  
1 large fennel bulb, quartered, cored and finely chopped  
2 medium zucchini (about 1 pound), chopped  
3 fresh bay leaves  
Kosher salt  
Peperoncino

## Ingredients for the meatballs

4 cups day old crustless country bread cubes (about 4 ounces)  
½ cup milk  
12 ounces ground beef  
12 ounces ground pork  
½ cup grated Grana Padano, plus more for serving  
¼ cup chopped fresh Italian parsley  
1 large egg, beaten  
2 garlic cloves, finely chopped  
Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper

## Recipe

For the soup; in a food processor, combine the onion, celery, carrot, garlic and parsley. Process to make an almost smooth paste or pestata. Heat the olive oil in a large Dutch oven over medium high heat. Scrape in the pestata and cook, stirring occasionally, until it dries out and begins to stick to the bottom of the pan, about 8 minutes. Add 6 quarts water and bring to a simmer. Simmer 15 minutes.

Add the escarole, fennel, zucchini and bay leaves. Season with about a tablespoon of salt and a healthy pinch of peperoncino. Cover and simmer until the vegetables are tender, about 30 minutes. Uncover and simmer to reduce the soup in volume by about a quarter, about 45 minutes. Season with salt.

Meanwhile, make the meatballs. Bring a large pot of salted water to a boil. Put the bread cubes in a medium bowl and pour over the milk. (If your bread is very dry, add a little water too, you want them to be soaked through). Let sit 10 minutes, then squeeze out the excess liquid and crumble up the soaked bread into a large bowl. Add the beef, pork, Grana Padano, parsley, egg and garlic. Season with 1 teaspoon salt and several grinds of black pepper. Mix with your hands until combined.

Roll the meat mixture into 1-inch balls (about the size of a large grape). Gently drop them into the boiling water. Simmer the meatballs until just cooked through, 10 to 15 minutes, then remove with a spider to the simmering soup. (If you'll be serving the soup later, remove the meatballs to a bowl. Reheat them in the soup and simmer 5 minutes before serving).

Remove and discard the bay leaves. Serve the soup in bowls with a drizzle of olive oil and a sprinkle of Grana Padano.









# Eggplant Rollatini with Spinach–Ricotta Filling

INVOLTINI DI MELANZANE RIPIENI CON RICOTTA E SPINACI

You can use a good quality prepared tomato sauce here, or whip up a batch of the Quick Garlic-Tomato Sauce on page 16, reducing the garlic a bit. If your prepared sauce is quite thick, warm it with a half cup of water or so first to loosen it. I prefer fresh ricotta from an Italian grocery store or market with a good cheese selection. If you're using grocery store ricotta, start with about 2 ¼ cups and drain overnight in a cheesecloth-lined strainer in the fridge to remove the excess liquid.

## Yield

Serves 6

## Ingredients

2 medium eggplants (about 2 pounds total)  
Kosher salt  
½ of a (10-ounce) box frozen chopped spinach, thawed  
1 ½ cups fresh ricotta  
¾ cup freshly grated Grana Padano  
1 ½ cups low-moisture mozzarella, grated  
2 tablespoons chopped fresh Italian parsley  
3 large eggs  
3 cups prepared tomato sauce  
Vegetable oil, for frying  
All-purpose flour  
Extra-virgin olive oil, for drizzling

## Recipe

Trim the stems and ends from the eggplants. Remove strips of peel with a vegetable peeler about 1-inch wide from the eggplants, leaving about half the peel intact. Cut the eggplant lengthwise into ¼-inch thick slices and place them in a colander.

Sprinkle generously with the coarse salt, tossing to expose all slices, and let drain for 1 hour. Rinse the eggplant under cool running water, drain thoroughly and pat dry.

Preheat oven to 400 degrees F. Put the chopped spinach in a kitchen towel (or squeeze in a potato ricer) and wring out as much liquid as possible. Break the clumps apart and put in a large bowl. Add the ricotta, ¼ cup of the grated Grana Padano, the grated mozzarella and

parsley and stir to combine. Beat 1 of the eggs in a small bowl and stir into the filling to combine. Season with salt.

Put the tomato sauce in a small saucepan and warm over low heat.

Whisk the remaining 2 eggs and 1 teaspoon salt together in a wide, shallow bowl. Spread the flour in an even layer in a separate wide, shallow bowl. Heat about ½ inch vegetable oil in a large skillet over medium high heat. Dredge the eggplant slices in flour, shaking the excess off. Dip the floured eggplant into the egg mixture, turning well to coat both sides evenly. Let excess egg drip back into the pan.

When a corner of a coated eggplant slice gives off a lively sizzle when dipped into the oil, it is ready for frying. Add as many of the coated eggplant slices as will fit touching and cook, turning once, until golden on both sides, about 4 minutes. Remove the eggplant to a sheet pan with paper towel and repeat with the remaining eggplant slices. Adjust the heat as the eggplant cooks to prevent the egg coating from cooking too fast or overbrowning. Add oil to the pan as necessary during cooking to keep the level more or less the same. Allow the oil to heat before adding more eggplant slices.

Pour 1 cup of the tomato sauce over the bottom of a 19-by-13-inch baking dish.

Lay one of the fried eggplant slices in front of you with the short ends towards you. Spoon on about 3 tablespoons of the ricotta filling. Roll into a compact roll and place, seam side down, in the prepared baking dish. Repeat with the remaining eggplant slices and filling, placing the rolls side by side.

Ladle the remaining 2 cups of tomato sauce over the eggplant rolls to coat them evenly. Drizzle with olive oil. Sprinkle with the remaining ½ cup grated Grana Padano. Cover the dish with foil, tenting it so it doesn't touch the tops of the rolls, and bake until the edges of the casserole are bubbling and the filling is heated through, about 25 minutes. Uncover and bake until the cheese is browned and crusty, 20 to 25 minutes more. Let rest 10 minutes before serving.

# Basic Polenta

## POLENTA

Polenta is similar to grits. In northern Italy, where it is most common, it can be prepared and served in many different ways. In its most basic preparation, polenta is a smooth and dense porridge. It can be served beneath or alongside many different foods, such as vegetables, fish, meat, and game, the proteins most often in a sauce or guazzetto. When chilled, polenta can be fried, grilled, or baked. For a richer polenta, swap a cup or two of the water for milk.

### Yield

Serves 6

### Ingredients

- 1 tablespoon extra-virgin olive oil
- 1 fresh bay leaf
- 1 tablespoon kosher salt
- 1 ½ cups coarse polenta
- 4 tablespoons unsalted butter, at room temperature, cut into pieces
- 1 cup grated Grana Padano

### Recipe

In a large saucepan, combine 5 cups water, the olive oil, bay leaf, and salt, and begin to bring to a simmer over medium heat. As the water heats, sift the cornmeal by handfuls into the pot, through the fingers of one hand, stirring constantly with a wooden spoon or whisking to remove any lumps.

Once all of the cornmeal is added, adjust the heat so just a few lazy bubbles pop to the surface. Continue to cook and stir until the polenta is smooth and thick and pulls away from the sides of the pan as it is stirred, about 30 to 35 minutes.

Discard the bay leaf. Beat in the butter, a few pieces at a time, until incorporated. Remove the polenta from the heat and stir in the cheese. Pour the polenta into a serving bowl or onto a wooden board, and allow it to rest a few minutes before serving.



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# Eat Different

Ingredients change form, texture, and flavor when you change the cooking technique used. For me, understanding this phenomenon is part of the beauty of cooking.

Potatoes are a favorite ingredient of mine that exemplify this phenomenon. A baked potato is different from a roasted potato cut into wedges, which is different from mashed potatoes or home fries. Learning the techniques behind preparing a simple ingredient like a potato will result in varied menus and happily fed families.

Chicken breast, too, can vary greatly in look, taste, and texture based on what cooking technique is used. It can be roasted in the oven with potatoes, onions and cherry tomatoes for a quick meal. However, you can also leave chicken on the bone in the oven at a lower temperature but for a longer cooking time and have an equally tasty but different result, like roasted chicken brushed with a balsamic glaze.

Certain foods are better suited for specific cooking techniques. Short ribs become tender and full of flavor when slowly braised for a long time. Roasting a chicken just right seals in all of the juices and flavor while cooking it to a golden crisp on the outside. Grilling steak at high temperatures provides the ability to cook and sear the outside while keeping the inside tender and juicy. Poaching shrimp brings out their delicate flavor, while searing them on a hot pan gives them a crispy crunch. How you cook an ingredient is just as important as the amount of time you cook it for.



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# Spicy Pickled Mushrooms

FUNGI SOTTACETO PICCANTI

Pickling can seem intimidating, but a quick refrigerator pickle like this is a good starting point. These mushrooms keep for a few days in the refrigerator. If you want to keep them longer, make sure to top them off with enough oil and vinegar to cover them completely. The oil will float to the top and seal out air. They'll keep a couple of weeks like this. The mushrooms are delicious on their own, or tossed in a salad or on a sandwich. They're also a delicious addition to an antipasti spread or salumi platter.

## Yield

Serves 4 to 6

## Ingredients

1 pound firm white button mushrooms  
¾ cup white wine vinegar  
4 cloves garlic, crushed and peeled  
2 fresh bay leaves  
1 tablespoon kosher salt  
1 tablespoon sugar  
2 teaspoons black peppercorns  
2 teaspoons fennel seeds  
2 teaspoons mustard seeds  
¼ to ½ teaspoon peperoncino  
(depending on how spicy you want the mushrooms to be)  
¼ cup extra-virgin olive oil, plus more for drizzling  
2 tablespoons chopped fresh Italian parsley

## Recipe

Clean any dirt from the mushrooms with a damp paper towel. Quarter or halve any mushrooms larger than button size.

Combine the vinegar, 1 cup water, the garlic, bay leaves, salt, sugar, peppercorns, fennel seeds, mustard seeds and peperoncino in a medium saucepan. Bring to a simmer to dissolve the sugar and salt. Add the mushrooms and simmer 1 minute. Remove from the heat and let cool completely.

When cool, transfer the mushrooms to a clean glass jar or ceramic crock. Ladle off any excess liquid (leaving the spices), so the mushrooms are covered by about ½ inch. Add the olive oil. Cover the jar and shake to combine. Marinate in the refrigerator overnight.

To serve, drain the mushrooms from the pickling liquid. Toss in a serving bowl with the parsley and a drizzle of olive oil.



# Fried Squid

## CALAMARI FRITTI

The secret of frying calamari (or anything, really) to appetizing crispiness is to have it as dry as possible before it gets floured, then shake the excess flour off before it goes into the pan. Also, give it enough space in the pot so that the oil can circulate freely around it. Always let the oil come back to temperature between batches. Drain your fried foods well, on paper towels or a rack.

### Yield

Serves 4 to 6

### Ingredients for the dough

Vegetable oil, for frying

1 pound medium squid, tubes and tentacles, cleaned

2 cups all-purpose flour

Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper

Lemon wedges, for serving

### Recipe

Pour 2 inches of vegetable oil in a medium Dutch oven and heat to 360 degrees F.

Cut the bodies of the calamari into ½ inch rings. If the tentacles are larger than bite-size, cut them in half lengthwise. Rinse the calamari and drain well in a colander. Pat them as dry as possible in a kitchen towel and divide into two batches. Season with salt and pepper.

Put the flour in a large shallow bowl and season with 2 teaspoons salt. Toss half of the calamari in the flour, then toss the calamari in a sieve over the bowl to remove excess flour.

When the oil reaches temperature or when one coated calamari ring gives off a lively sizzle when lowered into the oil, add the coated calamari a few pieces at a time. Fry, until golden brown, turning with a spider once or twice, about 4 minutes.

Remove the calamari to a paper-towel-lined baking sheet and let the oil return to temperature.

Repeat with the remaining calamari. Season all with salt and pepper, and serve immediately with lemon wedges.



# Red Cabbage Braised with Vinegar

INSALATA TIEPIDA DI CAVOLO ROSSO CON ACETO

Braising is a simple method of cooking that combines low heat, liquid and a relatively long cooking time. It's perfect for tougher cuts of meat or sturdy vegetables, making them tender and sweet. You can make this simple braise with any type of cabbage (green, savoy or even halved Brussels sprouts). You can also treat tough greens and root vegetables the same way. Vary the vinegar, or use a good quality flavored vinegar, for another slight flavor variation. Serve this with any simple roasted meat or poultry.

## Yield

Serves 6

## Ingredients

¼ cup extra-virgin olive oil, plus more for drizzling  
1 medium red onion, sliced  
1 small red cabbage, quartered, cored and cut into ½ inch strips  
Kosher salt  
Peperoncino  
½ cup red wine vinegar  
1 tablespoon honey

## Recipe

Heat the olive oil in a medium Dutch oven over medium heat. When the oil is hot, add the onion and cook until it just begins to wilt, 3 to 4 minutes. Add the cabbage and stir to coat in the oil. Season with salt and a generous pinch of peperoncino. Cook, stirring occasionally, until the cabbage begins to wilt, 3 to 4 minutes.

Add 1 cup water, the vinegar and honey. Adjust the heat and bring to a simmer. Cook, covered, until the cabbage is just tender, about 20 minutes. Uncover, increase the heat so the liquid is simmering rapidly, and cook until the cabbage is very tender and the liquid is reduced almost all the way, about 5 minutes. Season with additional salt, if necessary.

Spoon the cabbage into a serving bowl, drizzle a little olive oil over and serve.





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# It's Always Dessert Time

Everyone likes a little something sweet, but rich, sugar-laden desserts are not a part of the Italian dessert repertoire. Still, there is such an array of delicious options to finish a meal Italian style. My favorites are tarts, spoon desserts, and oven-baked fruit desserts.

Popular Italian desserts include crostate, or seasonal fruit-based tarts. “Dolci al cucchiaio”, or spoon desserts like “tiramisù” or “zuppa inglese”, are also very popular. Fruit roasted in the oven with sugar and maybe a bit of liqueur always makes for a lovely warm dessert, like my baked pears served over ice cream. It’s a great choice for when you have guests, since the dessert can be put in the oven and timed to be ready just after the main course. One of the simplest of Italian desserts, which is also a favorite of mine, is gelato affogato. It’s ice cream, usually vanilla, drowned in homemade espresso coffee. That’s “delizioso”!

# Quick Hazelnut Loacker Wafer “Tiramisù”

TIRAMISÙ VELOCE CON WAFER LOACKER ALLA NOCCIOLA

I love Italian spoon desserts or dolci al cucchiaio. This easy take on tiramisù fits in that category, along with so many other of my favorite desserts. They are custardy, creamy, homey and meant to be eaten with a spoon. They're incredibly versatile, as is this recipe here – you can swap out the nuts or the cookies or flavor the cream in a different manner to create endless variations.

## Yield

Serves 4 to 6 (depending on the serving glasses you choose)

## Ingredients

6 ounces bittersweet chocolate, chopped  
1 cup heavy cream  
1 cup mascarpone (8 ounces), at room temperature  
½ cup confectioners' sugar  
¾ cup freshly brewed espresso  
¼ cup granulated sugar  
¼ cup hazelnut liqueur  
16 hazelnut Loacker wafer cookies, coarsely crumbled  
½ cup chopped toasted hazelnuts

## Recipe

Melt the chocolate in a double boiler over simmering water, and keep it warm. Meanwhile, whisk the cream in an electric mixer fitted with the whisk attachment until it just holds soft peaks. (Don't overwhip—you will be whisking it again with the mascarpone, and you don't want to make butter).

Whisk the mascarpone in a separate bowl with the mixer at medium speed until smooth. Sift in the confectioners' sugar, and whisk until smooth.

Whisk the whipped cream into the mascarpone until they are just combined. Refrigerate if not using it right away.

Combine the espresso and granulated sugar in a medium saucepan set over low heat. Cook until the sugar has dissolved, then stir in the hazelnut liqueur. Remove it from the heat, and stir in the melted chocolate.

In 4 (or 6) serving glasses, sprinkle a third of the crumbled cookies and chopped nuts. Drizzle with about a third of the chocolate espresso mixture.

Top with a third of the mascarpone mixture.

Continue layering in this manner, ending with a full layer of the mascarpone mixture and a final sprinkle of cookies and nuts.

Refrigerate until well chilled, about 2 hours. Serve at room temperature.









# Chocolate Cherry Bread Pudding

BUDINO DI PANE E CILIEGIE

Chocolate and cherry is a classic combination. For a real treat, if you can find Italian amarena cherries in syrup, use them here. Substitute one cup, drained, for the dried cherries. Reduce the sugar by  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup since they are already quite sweet. If you're making this when cherries are in season, pitted Bing cherries can also be used.

## Yield

Serves 8

## Ingredients

1 tablespoon unsalted butter, at room temperature  
1 cup plus 2 tablespoons sugar  
8 ounces bittersweet chocolate, finely chopped  
2 cups heavy cream  
1 cup milk  
5 large eggs  
 $\frac{1}{4}$  teaspoon kosher salt  
1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract  
8 cups brioche or other rich egg bread, day-old,  
cut into  $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch cubes  
1 cup dried cherries  
6 tablespoons chunky cherry preserves  
 $\frac{1}{2}$  cup sliced almonds

## Recipe

Preheat oven to 350 degrees F. Bring a kettle of water to a boil and keep it hot. Coat the bottom and sides of a 2-quart oval or rectangular baking dish with the butter. Sprinkle 2 tablespoons of the sugar on the buttered surfaces; tilt and shake the pan so it's sugared. Put the chocolate in a large bowl. Combine the cream and milk in a small saucepan and heat to just simmering. Pour over the chocolate and let sit 5 minutes. Stir until melted and smooth.

Whisk the eggs in a large bowl until thoroughly blended. Gradually whisk in the chocolate mixture, then  $\frac{3}{4}$  cup sugar, the salt, and vanilla. Whisk until smooth. Stir the bread cubes into the custard, pushing them down so they're all submerged, and stir in the cherries. Let the bread soak for 15 minutes.

Spoon the pudding into the baking dish, and drop teaspoonfuls of the preserves on top, distributing evenly. Finally, sprinkle with the remaining  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup sugar. Put the dish inside a roasting pan, and set the pan in the oven. Pour the boiling water to come halfway up the sides of the baking dish. Bake 30 minutes, then sprinkle with the almonds. Continue to bake the pudding until the top is crusty and the custard is set, about 25 to 35 minutes more. (A knife blade inserted into the custard should come out clean). Remove from the oven, and let the pudding cool in the water bath until you can safely remove it. Serve warm.



# Roasted Pears and Grapes

PERE E UVA AL FORNO

These pears can be served warm, as is, but are also delightful with a scoop of vanilla ice cream or a dollop of unsweetened whipped cream on top.

## Yield

Serves 6

## Ingredients

- 2 lemons
- 2 cups seedless green grapes
- ½ cup mixed dried fruit (apricots, figs, prunes, cherries, whatever you like)
- 1 cup sugar
- ¾ cup dry white wine
- ½ vanilla bean, split lengthwise
- 2 tablespoons mixed berry jam
- 3 firm but ripe Bosc pears, quartered lengthwise, cored

## Recipe

Preheat oven to 375 degrees F. Remove the peel from 1 lemon with a vegetable peeler. Juice both lemons.

Place the grapes and dried fruit in an 11 x 13 inch baking dish. Combine the sugar, lemon juice, wine, vanilla bean and jam in a bowl and stir until blended. Pour over the grapes. Nestle the pears, cut side up, into the grapes.

Bake until the pears are tender and the liquid around the grapes is thick and syrupy, about 50 minutes. Remove the pears and let stand for about 10 minutes. Remove and discard the lemon peel. Serve them with some of the grapes and dried fruit and their liquid spooned around them.





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# Ingredient of the Month

Canned tuna is a staple in the Italian pantry and in my kitchen. It is a versatile and inexpensive ingredient, yet often underrated. American brands of canned tuna often contain albacore, a white tuna. Italians use Mediterranean tuna packed in olive oil, also called bluefin tuna. It is dark, rich, and flavorful. In many regions of Italy, canned tuna is used in salads and with tomatoes as a pasta dressing. Canned tuna in olive oil, known as “tonno sott’olio” in Italy, is wonderful as an antipasto, on bruschetta, or in a tuna salad. You can add it to a simple salad with tomatoes and red onions or cannellini beans. And when you are looking for a healthy snack, or when you want to make a simple plate of pasta, it is always good to have it on hand.

Nowadays, imported Italian tuna packed in olive oil is found in every American supermarket right next to American brands of tuna, and I encourage you to stock your shelves with both and use it in your cooking. Just remember to drain and discard the packing oil or water before using.

When shopping for canned tuna, you will find it sold as solid, chunk or flakes. Canned tuna from Italy is typically solid, in big and firm pieces. Chunk tuna, in small pieces, is more commonly found with American canned tuna varieties and is a more economical alternative. Depending on your personal preference, you can get canned tuna packed in oil, water or brine. Americans tend to prefer tuna packed in water because it contains less fat and calories. But oil-packing seals in flavor and tuna packed in olive oil is the only kind I use.

If you want the highest quality (and more expensive) canned tuna, look for the variety with “ventresca”, which is the prized belly part of the tuna. “Ventresca” is fattier, rich in taste, and has a velvety texture. Because of its premium quality, you can enjoy it on its own with just a drizzle of extra-virgin olive oil. However, for everyday tuna, can packed is fine too.





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I enjoy peppering in some Italian words in my recipes. I think it adds to the flavor of the recipes, and some words are truly difficult to translate. Using Italian words helps convey the culture's charm and warmth.

The language is a perfect mirror of the complex identity of Italy and its different regions, each with its own special recipes and ingredients, but all of them united in thousands of years of tradition.

Here are some examples of words that are often used and have great depth to them.

## Giardiniera

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In Italy, there is a long history of preserving garden vegetables for the winter by pickling them, and giardiniera is typically served as part of an antipasto. Giardiniera came to America with the wave of Italian immigrants in the late 19th century, and became Chicago's quintessential condiment, usually found in their famous Italian Beef Sandwich.

## Minestra

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Every region of Italy has its own version of "minestra", a soup with seasonal vegetables, legumes, fish or meat to which pasta or rice is added. "Brodo" is a clear stock or broth that is the base of many recipes. In Italy, although brodo can be served plain, pasta, rice or vegetables are often added to flavor a simple "brodo", especially for a festive meal.

## Montasio

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A cow's milk cheese from Friuli-Venezia Giulia, traditionally used for making Frico. Originally a monastery cheese in the 13th century, it was awarded protected designation of origin (PDO). A wheel of Montasio weighs about twelve pounds. After four months of aging, Montasio is soft and milky. When aged for six to twelve months, it is drier and sharper.



## Prosecco

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A sparkling white wine with designation of controlled origin (DOC) status that is produced in Veneto and Friuli-Venezia Giulia. Prosecco is made from the Glera grape (formally named Prosecco), which is believed to have originated in the town of Prosecco, near Trieste. Italians typically drink Prosecco as an aperitivo before dinner or during celebrations.

## Franciacorta

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A sparkling white wine from the Franciacorta region in Lombardia. It is made using the same method as French Champagne, as well as the same grape varieties, Chardonnay, Pinot Noir and Pinot Blanc. The best Franciacorta wines have yeasty, nutty aromas, fine bubbles, and complex flavors. It is drier, less fruity and pricier than Prosecco.

## Guazzetto

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Guazzetto is the slow simmering of meat, game, or poultry in stock, tomato, wine, herbs and spices. The result is tender, flavorful meat in a velvety sauce that dresses pasta, gnocchi, or polenta. Also called “Sguazet” in Istria. It is a traditional technique of preparing tougher, cheaper cuts of meat and gets its rich flavor from bones with little flesh.

## Polenta

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Polenta is made from cornmeal, introduced to Italy after the discovery of the Americas. It is the main starch in the Northern regions. Made with coarse, stone-ground cornmeal, polenta is dense and served with hearty sauces. Polenta made with fine cornmeal has a looser consistency and is common around Italy’s coast.

## Corrente d’aria

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Refers to cross ventilation, such as having open windows on both sides of a moving train or having open windows on the opposite side of a room or house. Italians believe that cross-breezes and drafts are the root of various sicknesses and should be avoided. They also avoid blasts of air, “colpi d’aria”, by not having air conditioning blow directly on them, for example.

## Fili di telefono

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Literally translates to “telephone wires” and references mozzarella, which stretches and becomes stringy when melted. Suppli al telefono, rice balls typical of Roman cuisine, are eaten hot, and as you pull them apart with your hands, strands of mozzarella stretch between the halves. This resembles old-school telephones and is what gave them their name.



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what you are cooking!

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Share your own recipe or make your own rendition of one of mine and then post an image on Instagram using the hashtag #lidiasitalyathome. I look forward to including some of your photos in the next issue of this magazine. Sharing food is so important, and I would love to read about what you are doing in the kitchen and see some photos of your techniques and final dishes.

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