

Recipes from Organic Tuscany

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Appetizers

Polpette di Melanzane

Eggplant Croquettes



Season: Summer; Vegetarian

One of the most delicious things invented! Best fried just before you serve them, but they are fine at room temperature too if it's a hot day.

Prep time: 20 mins | Cook time: 50 mins | Servings: 12-15

Ingredients

- ❖ 4 eggplants
- ❖ 200g (7oz) breadcrumbs
- ❖ 2 eggs
- ❖ 1 bunch parsley
- ❖ 2 cloves garlic, minced
- ❖ salt
- ❖ pepper
- ❖ Additional breadcrumbs for rolling
- ❖ oil for frying

Directions

- ❖ Preheat your oven to 450 deg F.
- ❖ Make lengthwise slits in the eggplant and bake for 45 minutes to an hour, until they feel soft inside. Leave to cool.
- ❖ Peel the eggplant and squeeze the water out of them well using a dish-towel. Cut into chunks.
- ❖ Put all ingredients in a food processor and blend until smooth. Add more breadcrumbs if the mixture is too wet and sticky.
- ❖ Form croquettes (either spherical or cylindrical) and roll in more breadcrumbs.
- ❖ Fry in hot oil until golden brown.

Fiori Fritti

Fried Zucchini Blossoms



Season: Summer; Vegetarian

This is a dish to be made and savoured immediately. You can even make it as a pre-dinner nibble while you finish cooking something time-consuming with friends.

Prep time: 10 mins | Cook time: 5 mins | Servings: 6

Ingredients

- ❖ 10 large zucchini blossoms
- ❖ 1 cow's milk mozzarella (125g/4 oz)
- ❖ A few basil leaves
- ❖ For the batter
- ❖ 3 tablespoons all-purpose flour
- ❖ 1 egg
- ❖ 100 ml/3 oz beer
- ❖ Pinch of salt

Directions

- ❖ In a large bowl, beat the egg with the flour. Add the salt.
- ❖ Add the beer gradually and beat well to obtain a homogeneous, quite liquid batter.
- ❖ Take out the stamen from the flowers. Fill with pieces of mozzarella and basil.
- ❖ Put plenty of oil (to deep fry) in a frying pan to heat.
- ❖ When the oil is hot, take 1 flower at a time, dip in the batter and fry until golden.
- ❖ Serve immediately!

Pomodori Secchi Sott'Olio

Sundried Tomatoes



Sundried tomatoes prepared like this tend to be much tastier than the ones you find already prepared in oil. The dried tomatoes are also an easy item to bring back home from a trip to Italy (customs permitting!)

Prep time: 15 mins | Cook time: 2 mins | Servings: 6

Ingredients

- ❖ A handful of sundried tomatoes
- ❖ 2 tsp capers
- ❖ 1 clove garlic, chopped
- ❖ Oregano
- ❖ Olive oil

Directions

- ❖ Boil the sundried tomatoes for a minute or two, until they are soft and have lost some of their saltiness. Dry them with paper towels.
- ❖ Rinse the capers thoroughly of their salt or vinegar.
- ❖ Place the tomatoes in a dish. Sprinkle with the capers, garlic and oregano, and cover with olive oil.

Cipolline in Agrodolce

Small Onions in a Balsamic Vinegar Reduction



Vegetarian

Your guests will be fighting over these tangy onions! Remember to provide plenty of bread to mop up the delicious caramelized sauce coating them.

Prep time: 15 mins | Cook time: 1 hour | Servings: 6

Ingredients

- ❖ 700 g (1.5 lb) small white pickling onions, peeled
- ❖ 3 tablespoons sugar
- ❖ Half cup balsamic vinegar
- ❖ 4 cups vegetable stock

Directions

- ❖ Trim the onions of any remaining peel and hairy bits.
- ❖ In a heavy pan, brown the onions in a little olive oil, turning them over, until they are golden.
- ❖ Add the vinegar and allow to evaporate off.
- ❖ Add the sugar and cook for 5 minutes, stirring continuously.
- ❖ Cover (no more) with vegetable stock, cover the pan and cook on a slow heat for 45 minutes, adding a little more stock gradually as needed. You should aim for a thick syrupy coating on the onions.

Crostini Toscani

Tuscan Chicken Liver Pâté



This is the most classic of all Tuscan crostini. Even those who say they don't like pâté love this one!

Ingredients

- ❖ 200 g (7 oz) chicken livers and hearts (the hearts are optional)
- ❖ 2 small onions
- ❖ 30 g/1 oz. butter
- ❖ 2 tsp capers, soaked, drained and chopped
- ❖ 1 medium pork sausage (optional)
- ❖ 1 bay leaf
- ❖ 5 or 6 sage leaves
- ❖ 1 glass dry vin santo (or sherry)
- ❖ 1 anchovy or a little anchovy paste (optional)
- ❖ Vegetable stock

Directions

- ❖ Chop the onion finely and sauté in the butter with the bay leaf and sage until soft.
- ❖ Clean the chicken livers and hearts of fat and gristle. Add to the pan, along with the sausage meat, if you are using it, broken up into small pieces. Add pepper (careful to salt only at the end – the capers/anchovies are salty!)
- ❖ Cook for a further 5 minutes, until browned. Add the vin santo and evaporate off.
- ❖ Cook for a further 3-4 minutes, gradually adding a little vegetable stock to keep it moist.
- ❖ Put on a board and chop finely with the capers (with a mezzaluna if possible)
- ❖ Return to the pan, adding anchovy paste if using.
- ❖ Cut thin slices of firm bread (Tuscan-style bread is best but baguette will do) and top with the pâté.
- ❖ This pâté improves if you make it in advance (say, 24 hours) and reheat it using a little butter or stock.

Crostini di Peperoni

Roast Peppers & Goat's Cheese Canapés



Season: Summer; Vegetarian

Crostini are little appetizers that you can invent yourself depending on what's in season and what ingredients you happen to have around.

Ingredients

- ❖ A couple of small peppers, preferably one red, one yellow
- ❖ Garlic
- ❖ Parsley or Basil
- ❖ Goat's cheese

Directions

- ❖ Roast or grill a pepper or two. Put them in a plastic bag or a closed container to cool. They will "sweat" and be much easier to peel.
- ❖ Peel and deseed the peppers. Cut into fine strips.
- ❖ Dress the pepper strips with salt, pepper, and a little raw finely chopped garlic (optional) good olive oil and fresh basil and/or parsley. Leave a little while to marinate.
- ❖ Top the bread with a little slice of goat's cheese and some pepper strips.

Crostini di Funghi

Mushroom Crostini



Season: Fall; Vegetarian

Best served warm, these crostini will have your guests demanding more. You'll see that the vin santo gives the mushrooms a very special flavour, and the butter gives them a melt in the mouth texture.

Ingredients

- ❖ 150g (5 oz) white mushrooms
- ❖ A handful of dried porcini mushrooms
- ❖ Parsley (or nipitella/mentuccia/wild mint if you can get it)
- ❖ 2 cloves garlic, chopped finely
- ❖ Bread and butter (farmhouse bread is best, but baguette is fine too)

Directions

- ❖ Put the porcini to soak in a cupful of hot water for at least half an hour. Check for any sand and dirt. Chop finely.
- ❖ Clean the white mushrooms and chop them finely.
- ❖ Stir-fry in hot olive oil with the garlic and herbs. Add the chopped porcini mushrooms towards the end.
- ❖ Serve warm on buttered crostini (or top the buttered crostini and warm in the oven for a few minutes).

Crostini con Salsa Verde

Salsa Verde Canapés



Crostini are little appetizers that you can invent yourself depending on what's in season and what you have in the house. Salsa Verde is a tangy herby sauce often served to accompany boiled meats, but delicious in its own right. Cut thin slices of firm bread (Tuscan-style bread is best but baguette will do), toast it if you like, and top with the sauce:

Ingredients

- ❖ 2 boiled eggs
- ❖ Parsley, small bunch, leaves only
- ❖ Capers, 10 to 15
- ❖ Garlic, 1 clove
- ❖ Olive oil
- ❖ Vinegar (apple or wine), a splash
- ❖ A little anchovy paste or 1 anchovy fillet (optional)

Directions

- ❖ Combine the above ingredients (except the oil and vinegar) into a smooth (but not completely uniform) paste using a food processor. Add the olive oil and vinegar. Salt to taste.
- ❖ Use to top crostini or to accompany other dishes.

Zuppa di Fagioli e Scarola

Bean and Escarole Soup on Crostini



Vegetarian

You can serve small quantities of this Tuscan bean dish on crostini, as an appetizer, or larger quantities as a hearty soup.

Prep time: 20 mins | Cook time: 30 mins | Servings: 6

Ingredients

- ❖ 300g (10 oz) cooked cannellini or borlotti beans and the water they were cooked in
- ❖ 1 head escarole (or another curly bitter lettuce)
- ❖ 2 cloves garlic
- ❖ 2 small chili peppers
- ❖ Olive oil

Directions

- ❖ Boil the lettuce in plenty of boiling, salted water. Squeeze the water out, and chop it finely.
- ❖ Stir fry the garlic (whole) and the chili peppers in a good swoosh of olive oil.
- ❖ Add the cooked lettuce and cook for a little while, so that the lettuce takes on the flavours of the oil.
- ❖ Add the cooked beans and 2 cups of the water they were cooked in. Cook on a low flame for 10-15 minutes.
- ❖ Serve with warm bread or toast, rubbed with raw garlic.

Notes

- ❖ To cook the beans, soak overnight in plenty of cold water. Discard this water and cook on a low heat for approximately an hour and a half, until tender.
- ❖ Cooking with pieces of kombu seaweed improves the digestibility of legumes/pulses.

Focaccia al Rosmarino

Rustic Focaccia



An easy but unusual focaccia recipe which makes a rustic-textured, half whole wheat bread. Ideal to eat with cheeses and salad.

Ingredients

- ❖ Makes 2 medium oven trays of focaccia
- ❖ 500 g (1 lb) all purpose (plain) flour
- ❖ 500 g (1 lb) whole wheat flour
- ❖ 20 g (2/3 oz) fresh yeast
- ❖ 1 cup olive oil
- ❖ salt
- ❖ rosemary – 3 large sprigs worth, removed from stalks

Directions

- ❖ Crumble the yeast into a large mixing bowl with the flour.
- ❖ Add a good pinch of salt and drizzle in half the olive oil. Mix well.
- ❖ Add warm water until you achieve a soft but not sticky mixture which you can work with your hands.
- ❖ Knead well for 10-15 minutes.
- ❖ Leave to rise in a warm place, covered, for an hour or two.
- ❖ Brush olive oil onto your oven sheets, roll out the dough to about a 1 cm (half-inch) thickness and leave to rise again for an hour.
- ❖ Make dimples in the dough with your fingertips.
- ❖ Brush with the remaining oil and sprinkle with salt and the rosemary.
- ❖ Bake in a preheated oven at 220°C/425°F for around 10-15 minutes until crusty outside, cooked through but still soft inside.

Cecina

Baked Chickpea Pancake

There are versions of this all the way up to the French Riviera. In Livorno (Leghorn) it is served as an energy-packed sandwich.

Ingredients

- ❖ 400 g (14 oz) gram (chick pea) flour
- ❖ 800 g (27 fl oz) water
- ❖ 1 tsp salt
- ❖ 3-4 tbsp olive oil.

Directions

- ❖ Pre-heat the oven to a high temperature (250° C/480°F).
- ❖ Sift the gram flour.
- ❖ Mix the water, flour, salt and oil well, taking care to avoid any lumps. Be sure to add enough oil and salt, or it will end up dry and bland.
- ❖ Filter the mixture and pour into a oiled pan (e.g., two 30 x 30 cm oven trays). Or use greaseproof paper. Works best if poured thin, like thick crepes, or thin pancakes.
- ❖ Cook in the oven, turning on the grill, and placing the cecina close to the grill. Burst with a knife any bubble that may form.
- ❖ Remove from the oven when golden brown (almost burnt in spots) ~6-10 min.
- ❖ Slice into pieces and serve immediately. Add lots of olive oil and pepper.

First Course Soups and Salads

Brodo di Verdura

Simple Vegetable Stock

Vegetarian

A decent stock is essential for many dishes, such as risotti and slow-cooked dishes. Vegetarians will be pleased that most stock used in Tuscany is vegetable stock.

Ingredients

- ❖ 2 litres (2 quarts) water
- ❖ 2 onions
- ❖ 2 carrots
- ❖ 2 sticks celery
- ❖ 2 organic vegetable stock (bouillon) cubes
- ❖ 6 cloves
- ❖ Other vegetables (tomatoes, zucchini)

Directions

- ❖ Wash and peel the vegetables. Stud the onions with the cloves.
- ❖ Add everything to a large pot, bring to the boil, and then simmer for at least an hour (but the longer the better).
- ❖ Notes
- ❖ Some Italians use tomatoes and zucchini in their vegetable stock in the summer months..

Pappa al Pomodoro

Tuscan Tomato, Bread and Herb Soup



Season: Summer

This classic summer dish is very versatile: it can be eaten hot, at room temperature or chilled. It relies on the very best ripe, tasty tomatoes. If you find your tomatoes a little lacking in taste, add a cup or two of good organic crushed tomatoes to enrich the flavour.

Prep time: 20 mins | Cook time: 30 mins | Servings: 6 people as a filling soup, or for 12 as part of a picnic-style meal with cheeses, pulses etc:

Ingredients

- ❖ 2 medium onions, chopped very finely
- ❖ 3 sticks celery, chopped very finely
- ❖ 2 large clove of garlic, one whole, one finely chopped or crushed
- ❖ 1.5 kg (just over 3 lb) tasty, ripe tomatoes
- ❖ Good extra-virgin olive oil
- ❖ Black pepper
- ❖ Small bunch basil, leaves only (at least 25 leaves)
- ❖ 750 ml (1.5 pint) vegetable stock, prepared by boiling water with a stock cube, onion, celery and carrot
- ❖ 6-10 slices firm (stale, 3 days old is perfect!) Tuscan bread (or firm farmhouse loaf), cut into small pieces

Directions

- ❖ Bring a large pot of water to the boil and turn off the heat. Put the tomatoes into the water and leave for a couple of minutes. Test with a knife tip to see if the skin peels away easily. Discard the water and skin the tomatoes. Chop quite finely.
- ❖ Heat a good swirl of olive oil in a large pot. Add the whole clove of garlic, the onions and celery and sauté for a few minutes, until the onion is translucent but not browning.
- ❖ Add the chopped tomatoes, a pinch of salt and some black pepper, and cook gently for a couple of minutes.
- ❖ Add the stock and the pieces of bread and cook, covered, for a further 20 minutes on a low flame. Make sure there are no large pieces of bread that have not been turned into mush! Add more stock or hot water if necessary (the consistency should be mushy but not too liquid – just about possible to eat with a fork).
- ❖ Locate the cooked garlic and squeeze it back into the dish with a garlic press. Add the raw chopped or crushed garlic and the finely chopped basil. Taste for seasoning.

- ❖ You can serve this hot, at room temperature or chilled. Serve with plenty of freshly ground black pepper and raw extra virgin olive oil to swirl on top at the table.

Minestrone di Primavera

Springtime Minestrone



Season: Spring; Vegetarian

A slow-cooked minestrone made with fresh seasonal ingredients and served with good bread is a healthy and delicious dinner or lunch. The winter version has more potatoes in it, and denser, richer vegetables such as cavolo nero. Its springtime cousin is altogether lighter and fresher.

Prep time: 30 mins | Cook time: 2 hours | Servings: 6

Ingredients

- ❖ 250g/8 oz dried cannellini beans
- ❖ 2 cloves garlic
- ❖ 3 small tomatoes
- ❖ Extra virgin olive oil
- ❖ 1 onions
- ❖ 2 leeks
- ❖ 2 carrots
- ❖ 2 sticks celery
- ❖ 1/2 savoy cabbage
- ❖ 1 or 2 potatoes
- ❖ 3 skinned tomatoes (can be canned)
- ❖ Other seasonal vegetables (chard, spinach, peas...) a handful of each
- ❖ Several sprigs of thyme
- ❖ 1 litre/2 pints vegetable stock
- ❖ Salt, pepper

Directions

- ❖ The previous evening, soak the beans in plenty of cold water.
- ❖ Change the water and bring slowly to the boil, with the garlic, sage and small tomatoes. Cook slowly for approximately 2 hours, until the beans are tender.
- ❖ Discard the garlic and sage, and purée half the beans.

- ❖ While the beans are cooking, wash the vegetables well. Cut the carrots into discs or cubes, the tomatoes into large chunks, and the rest into fine cubes or slices.
- ❖ Put all the vegetables into a large pot to fry for 5 minutes in a good swirl of olive oil.
- ❖ Add the herbs, salt, pepper, the whole and puréed beans and the stock. The quantities should be such as to end up with a thick soup, but remember that the cabbage will release a lot of water.
- ❖ Check the seasoning and cook with the lid on for about an hour and a half on a low flame.
- ❖ Add the thyme towards the end of the cooking process.
- ❖ Dress with plenty of olive oil and black pepper. Soup is often served in Tuscany in a bowl which has toasted farmhouse bread placed in it, rubbed lightly with raw garlic and drizzled with olive oil.

Notes

- ❖ Minestrone is often served in Tuscany in a bowl which has toasted farmhouse bread placed in it, rubbed lightly with raw garlic and drizzled with olive oil.

Sugo di Pomodoro

Vegetable-Based Tomato Sauce



Season: Summer; Vegetarian

This is a good alternative to a classic tomato and basil sauce. It has more texture and a more subtle, less tart flavour. Great with potato gnocchi, pasta, or any recipe that calls for a tomato-based sauce.

Prep time: 15 mins | Cook time: 30 mins | Servings: 8

Ingredients

- ❖ 2 medium onions
- ❖ 3 sticks of celery
- ❖ 2-3 carrots
- ❖ 4-6 large cloves of garlic (depending on taste)
- ❖ 1.5 kg (3 lbs) ripe tomatoes, or equivalent in bottled or canned crushed tomatoes.
- ❖ Extra virgin olive oil, salt, pepper
- ❖ 25 basil leaves

Directions

- ❖ If using fresh tomatoes, roughly chop them. Keep aside.
- ❖ Coarsely chop the onions, carrot and celery (1-inch pieces). Put in a large pot with a good swirl of olive oil.
- ❖ Add the tomatoes and cook on a medium flame for 30 minutes (when the carrots are cooked, switch off).
- ❖ Pass through a food mill (not too fine). If you do not use a food mill, you'll have to skin the tomatoes before you cook them.
- ❖ Add salt and pepper to taste, and the torn basil leaves. Add a swirl of raw oil when serving.

Crema di Peperoni

Bell Pepper Soup



Seasons: Summer, Fall; Vegetarian

Manuela adapted a green pepper soup that she tasted in the famous Cibrè in Florence, and came up with this smooth, full-flavoured delight.

Prep time: 25 mins | Cook time: 20 mins | Servings: 6

Ingredients

- ❖ 6 large red and/or yellow peppers
- ❖ 2 medium potatoes
- ❖ 1 litre (2 pints) vegetable stock
- ❖ 1 cup milk
- ❖ Half cup yogurt
- ❖ 2 cloves garlic
- ❖ Herbs to garnish (e.g. fresh oregano, parsley)

Directions

- ❖ Grill or roast the peppers until the skin is blackened. Place in an airtight container to “sweat” for half an hour, so that the skins slip off easily.
- ❖ Cut the peeled, deseeded pepper into strips and place in a pot with a generous swirl of olive oil and a clove of garlic, cut in half. Fry for 5 minutes.
- ❖ Add the potatoes, peeled and cut into 1 inch cubes, and the vegetable stock, to cover (no more).
- ❖ Cook on a medium heat until the potato is tender.
- ❖ Blend the soup, adding the milk.
- ❖ Add a finely minced clove of garlic to the cup of yogurt.
- ❖ Serve bowls of soup with a little swirl of extra virgin olive oil and a swirl of the yogurt on top, and a tiny sprinkle of fresh oregano (or parsley) for colour.

Pasta e Fagioli

Pasta and Bean Soup

Seasons: Fall, Winter; Vegetarian

Since Italian cuisine is so regional, there are dozens of versions of this delicious, hearty soup. In Tuscany, white cannellini beans are used (the darker borlotti beans tend to be used further north).

Ingredients

- ❖ 150g (8 oz) cannellini beans
- ❖ a small strip of kombu seaweed (optional)
- ❖ 2 cloves garlic
- ❖ 6 leaves sage
- ❖ 2 sticks celery
- ❖ 3 carrots
- ❖ 1 small dried chili pepper
- ❖ Olive oil
- ❖ 4 tomatoes, skinned and chopped
- ❖ 150g (5 oz) small pasta, e.g. ditalini

Directions

- ❖ Soak the beans overnight in plenty of water.
- ❖ Change the water and add the garlic, sage and seaweed (Tuscan grandmothers would use a pinch of bicarbonate of soda).
- ❖ Cook the beans (preferably in a terracotta pot) on a low heat for approximately 2 hours, until the beans are tender. Add salt when they are almost done. Any earlier and they'll break up.
- ❖ Chop the celery and carrots very finely.
- ❖ Fry in a large pot on a low flame in olive oil with the chili pepper until tender.
- ❖ Purée three-quarters of the beans. Add this purée, along with the remaining whole beans and the tomatoes, to the pot.
- ❖ Cook for 30 minutes, then add the pasta.
- ❖ When the pasta is cooked, serve dressed with excellent olive oil.

Notes

- ❖ Cooking with pieces of kombu seaweed improves the digestibility of legumes/pulses.

Minestra di Pane

Tuscan Vegetable and Bread Soup

Seasons: Fall, Winter; Vegetarian

This soup, like many others, actually improves if left for a day or so. We make a large batch and have it in varied ways – without the bread soaked into it but served on top of hot toast rubbed with raw garlic; puréed and cooked with short pasta such as ditalini; or this traditional way, with bread soaked into it, creating a thick, comforting texture for cold nights.

Ingredients

- ❖ 250g/8 oz dried cannellini beans
- ❖ 2 cloves garlic
- ❖ Sprig of sage
- ❖ 3 small tomatoes
- ❖ Extra virgin olive oil
- ❖ 1 onion
- ❖ 1 leek
- ❖ 2 carrots
- ❖ 1 stick celery
- ❖ 1/2 cavolo nero (or kale)
- ❖ 1/2 curly white cabbage
- ❖ 3 skinned tomatoes (can be canned)
- ❖ Optional: other seasonal vegetables (potatoes, zucchini, green beans, peas...)
- ❖ 1 teaspoon chopped parsley
- ❖ Sprig of thyme
- ❖ 1 litre/2 pints [vegetable stock](#)
- ❖ Salt, pepper
- ❖ 300g Tuscan-style bread in 1 cm slices

Directions

- ❖ The previous evening, soak the beans in plenty of cold water.
- ❖ Change the water and bring slowly to the boil, with the garlic, sage and small tomatoes. Cook slowly for approximately 2 hours, until the beans are tender.
- ❖ Discard the garlic and sage, and purée half the beans. u While the beans are cooking, wash the vegetables well. Cut the carrots into discs or cubes, the tomatoes into large chunks, and the rest into fine slices.
- ❖ Put all the vegetables into a large pot to fry for 5 minutes in a good swirl of olive oil. Add the herbs, salt, pepper, the whole and puréed beans and the stock. The quantities should be such as to end up with a thick soup, but remember that the cabbage and cavolo nero will release a lot of water.
- ❖ Check the seasoning and cook with the lid on for about an hour and a half on a low flame.
- ❖ Take a terracotta bowl and line it with slices of bread. Add some soup. Alternate layers of bread and soup.
- ❖ Dress with plenty of olive oil and black pepper.
- ❖ Allow to rest for at least 2 hours so that the bread absorbs the liquid well.
- ❖ This can be served hot (boil again for 20 minutes, being careful not to burn the bread, or bake at 210°C for 10 minutes), at room temperature, or chilled, dressed with more olive oil.

Pasta e Ceci

Pasta and Chickpea Soup

Seasons: Fall, Winter; Vegetarian

This dish is lighter than it sounds, but is satisfying enough to have as a one-course meal with bread to dip into the bowl.

Ingredients

- ❖ 500g/ 1lb dried chickpeas a little flour
- ❖ A few small pieces of kombu seaweed (optional)
- ❖ 2 large sprigs of rosemary
- ❖ 3 cloves garlic

Directions

- ❖ Soak the chickpeas overnight in plenty of cold water and a tablespoon of flour (to help make the chickpeas more digestible).
- ❖ Rinse well and cook until tender (2 hours approx) in twice their volume of cold water, adding the seaweed (also to improve digestibility) and whole garlic cloves to the pot.
- ❖ Put aside 2 ladlefuls of whole chickpeas, remove the garlic and seaweed and puree the rest of the chickpeas and water.
- ❖ In a large pot, gently fry a sprig of rosemary in a good swirl (2-3 table- spoons) of olive oil, until the rosemary has softened and released its aroma.
- ❖ Add the chickpea puree and the whole chickpeas to the pot. Bring to the boil.
- ❖ Add a little pasta (50g /1.5 oz) per person is sufficient). Ditalini is the shape most used in Italy for soups like this.
- ❖ Strip the leaves off the other sprig of rosemary. Mince finely.
- ❖ When the pasta is cooked, stir in the fresh minced rosemary.
- ❖ Serve dressed with raw extra virgin olive oil and black pepper.

Insalata Siciliana

Sicilian Orange and Fennel Salad

Season: Winter; Vegetarian

The most refreshing of winter salads, this sounds a little odd, but is wonderful!

For 4 people as an accompaniment

Ingredients

- ❖ 3 oranges
- ❖ 1 large (or 2 small) fennel bulbs
- ❖ 15 black olives (kalamata or similar)

Directions

- ❖ Peel the oranges, making sure that no pith (white part) is left. Cut into thin slices and place on a serving dish.
- ❖ With a mandolin, slice the fennel bulb very finely on top of the orange slices.
- ❖ Decorate with the olives. u Dress with salt and olive oil.

Notes

- ❖ Best made just before serving (the fennel tends to go dry).

Panzanella

Tuscan Bread and Tomato Salad

Season: Summer; Vegetarian

This is a great dish to make a couple of hours in advance in the summer, to have ready waiting for you in the fridge when you get back home. It is light yet satisfying.

For 6 people as a starter

Ingredients

- ❖ 6 large slices (around 400g, just under 1lb) firm (stale, 2 to 3 days old is perfect!) Tuscan-style bread (or firm farmhouse loaf)
- ❖ 3 tablespoons wine or apple vinegar
- ❖ Half a cup good extra virgin olive oil
- ❖ 1 cucumber, peeled, de-seeded and chopped medium
- ❖ 500 g (around 1lb) tasty, firm tomatoes, skinned and chopped medium
- ❖ Half a small, sweet onion, very finely sliced
- ❖ Cherry tomatoes to decorate, halved (optional)
- ❖ 1 clove garlic, chopped finely or crushed (optional)
- ❖ 1 stick celery, very finely sliced (optional)

Directions

- ❖ EITHER: Soak the bread in water and 2 tablespoons of vinegar for 10-15 minutes. Squeeze out the water very, very well and crumble. Place in a large serving dish (traditional Tuscan method, giving an almost tabbouleh-like texture)
- ❖ OR: Cut the bread into small (1 cm, 1/2 inch) cubes. Place in a large serving dish (modern method that works well with all kinds of bread and gives more bite to the texture).
- ❖ Add a pinch of salt, some pepper, another splash of vinegar, the garlic (if using) and half the oil. Mix well.
- ❖ Now add the tomatoes, cucumber, onion, the chopped basil, the garlic and celery (if using) and the rest of the oil.
- ❖ Cover well and chill for at least an hour before serving for the flavours to infuse well.
- ❖ Decorate with cherry tomatoes if you like

First Course Dishes

Risotto di Carciofi

Risotto with Artichokes



Seasons: Spring, Fall; Vegetarian

The best types of rice for making risotto are: Arborio, [Carnaroli](#) and Vialone nano. These have round grains and are starchy, becoming creamy when cooked, unlike varieties such as basmati or long-grained rice whose grains remain separate.

For 4 people as a starter or 2 people as a main meal

Ingredients

- ❖ 5 or 6 medium artichokes
- ❖ 300 g (10 oz) risotto rice (see below)
- ❖ 1 large onion, finely chopped
- ❖ 2 bay leaves
- ❖ Vegetable stock (onion, carrot, celery, stock cube)
- ❖ 2 whole cloves of garlic, squashed to release their flavour
- ❖ A splash of white wine
- ❖ Olive oil
- ❖ A knob of butter
- ❖ Parmesan cheese – around half a cup

Directions

- ❖ Prepare around 2 pints of vegetable stock by boiling water with a stock cube, a peeled onion, a couple of sticks of celery and a couple of peeled carrots, cut into large pieces. Keep this always hot, and boil extra water just in case you need more liquid.
- ❖ Prepare the artichokes by removing the tough outer leaves, paring the stalks and cutting so that you have a cone shape at the tip of the artichoke. Cut in half, remove the hairy choke if there is one and reserve the artichoke halves in a bowl of water with lemon juice squeezed into it to prevent blackening. When the artichokes are all trimmed, cut them into small (half cm/quarter inch) pieces.
- ❖ Heat a swish of olive oil in a large heavy bottomed high-sided frying pan (skillet).

- ❖ Add the onion and sauté until this is translucent. Then add the artichoke pieces, the bay leaves and the garlic. Sauté for a couple of minutes, until the artichoke is tender.
- ❖ Add the rice and sauté for several minutes, until it becomes translucent.
- ❖ Add the white wine and stir in, letting it evaporate.
- ❖ Begin adding the hot stock, a ladle at a time, stirring well and letting the liquid evaporate before you add another ladleful of it. Add salt and pepper.
- ❖ Begin tasting the rice when it has been cooking for around 15 minutes. When it seems cooked but still firm to the bite (“al dente”), switch off the heat. Add the butter and cheese, stir well and cover.
- ❖ Let the risotto sit for a couple of minutes before you serve it.

Notes

- ❖ You can substitute the artichokes with practically any vegetable that will stand cooking for 20 minutes or more and not get mushy and overcooked – NOT broccoli etc. Asparagus, wild mushrooms, squash, peas and radicchio all work well. If using asparagus, cut off the tips and reserve. Add these tips a minute before you finish cooking the risotto to keep them crunchy.
- ❖ Make sure you don’t drink too special a wine when you eat artichokes – they will ruin any complex flavours.
- ❖ Wear gloves to prevent your hands becoming blackened when you prepare the artichokes.

Gnocchi Verdi e di Patate

Potato Gnocchi and Potato and Spinach Gnocchi



Vegetarian

The less flour you use, the lighter the gnocchi will be, but the more likely it will be to go mushy while you wait to cook it, handle it and when it is cooking in the water. For a kilo of potatoes, you can use anything from 200g to 300g of flour.

Prep time: 20 mins | Cook time: 40 mins | Servings: 6

Ingredients

- ❖ Potato gnocchi:
- ❖ 1kg (2 lb) potatoes
- ❖ 220g (7 oz) plain (all purpose) flour
- ❖ 1 tsp salt
- ❖ Potato and spinach gnocchi:
- ❖ 1kg (2 lb) potatoes
- ❖ 300 g (10 oz) spinach
- ❖ 250g (9 oz) plain (all purpose) flour
- ❖ 1 tsp salt

Directions

- ❖ If you are making the spinach version, boil the spinach and leave to cool, squeezing all the water out very, very well. Mince very finely.
- ❖ Boil, steam or bake the potatoes in their skins, until tender. Leave to cool just a little, then peel.
- ❖ Use a potato ricer to finely mash the potatoes. Add the salt and the spinach (if using). Mix well.
- ❖ Using your hands (you can use rubber gloves – the potatoes are hot!), work in the flour into the potato mixture, thoroughly but with a light touch.
- ❖ When the flour has been worked in well, roll pieces of the dough into little “eel-like” cylinders, around one inch (1.5 cm) in diameter.
- ❖ Cut the cylinders into gnocchi, around 1.5 inches (2 cm) in length. Touch each of these lightly with a fork to make grooves for the sauce.
- ❖ Place on well-floured dish cloths so that you can .

- ❖ Cook in plenty of boiling, salted water. The gnocchi are ready when they float to the surface of the water. You can add more as you scoop the cooked ones out, but careful not to put too many in at once.
- ❖ Serve with a simple sauce (sage and butter or tomato) so that you can really taste the gnocchi. Parmesan cheese is a must!

Pesto alla Genovese

Fresh Basil Pesto



Season: Summer; Vegetarian

In the summer, nothing beats the pungent, aromatic flavours and satisfying texture of a home-made pesto sauce. A delicious, simple picnic dish is pasta salad dressed with fresh pesto sauce with little pieces of good mozzarella and cherry tomatoes.

For 4 people

Ingredients

- ❖ 1 cup good olive oil
- ❖ 2 big bunches of fresh basil
- ❖ A handful of pine nuts (100 g/3 oz) (or walnuts or almonds if you can't get pine nuts)
- ❖ 1 clove garlic, chopped
- ❖ Salt and pepper to taste (remember the Parmesan is salty and the pasta will be salted!)
- ❖ 1 cup Parmesan cheese, grated
- ❖ Potatoes and green beans (optional, see below)
- ❖ Pasta quantities are very subjective, but for a light sauce such as this one, calculate 80- 100 g/3-4 oz as a starter, or 160-180 g /5-6 oz as a main course.

Directions

- ❖ Either combine the ingredients with a mortar and pestle, or leave out the oil and cheese and combine by chopping (mezzaluna or food processor). Put in a small bowl and cover with oil straight away to avoid the basil oxidising and going black.
- ❖ Cook the pasta in plenty of boiling water, salted just before you add the pasta. Cook it al dente (a good minute or two less than the packet instructions, until it is cooked but still firm to the bite). When you drain the pasta, remember to reserve some of the cooking water.
- ❖ In a warmed bowl (you can warm it with the pasta water), mix the pasta and pesto sauce well, adding a little pasta water if the result is too dry. You can add cheese at the table or in the sauce, as you prefer.
- ❖ Green beans and potatoes
- ❖ Calculate 1 small potato and a handful of beans per person (adjust the pasta quantities accordingly).

- ❖ Both will need around 10-12 minutes cooking time in boiling water. Remember that if you salt the water with just the potatoes in it, they will become too salty and your pasta too bland.

Notes

- ❖ For a comforting (almost mushy) potato texture and a not overcooked bean texture, using a pasta shape which requires 10 minutes cooking, try the following:
 - Minute 0: add the potatoes (in small cubes) to the unsalted boiling water
 - Minute 2: add the beans and the pasta and salt the water
 - Minute 12: drain and dress.
- ❖ In Liguria, pesto is often served with green beans and potatoes boiled in the pasta water.

Lasagne Classiche

The Classic Lasagna



A delicious, filling dish which can satisfy lots of people and be made in advance. Please note that this recipe uses a meat sauce. See the recipe for Ragù di carne and triple the quantities (i.e. use 750g/1.5 lb ground beef etc).

This makes lasagne for 8-10 people as a filling first course/meal-in-one!

Ingredients

- ❖ Ragù di carne using 750g/1.5 lb ground beef
- ❖ 900g (2 lb) fresh pasta sheets – made with 800g (1.75 lb) flour and 8 eggs (see Pasta fresca recipe)
 - OR 500 g (1 lb) dried lasagna sheets
- ❖ 100g (4 oz) butter
- ❖ 100g (4 oz) flour
- ❖ 1 litre (2 pints) milk
- ❖ 3 cups parmesan cheese, grated

Directions

- ❖ Make a bechamel (white sauce) by browning the flour in the butter for a couple of minutes on a low heat, eliminating any lumps, and gradually adding the milk, stirring continuously until the sauce thickens. Add a little salt and set aside.
- ❖ Cut the pasta sheets into 20 cm (8 inch) rectangles.
- ❖ Cook in plenty of boiling, salted water for 5 minutes (you will do several batches depending on the size of your pot). Wash the cooked pasta immediately in cold water and set aside on dishtowels.
- ❖ In a large oven-proof dish, lay out one layer of pasta, with the sheets overlapping slightly.
- ❖ Cover with a third of the ragù, distributing it well.
- ❖ Cover with a third of the bechamel, distributing it well.
- ❖ Sprinkle with a third of the cheese.
- ❖ Repeat with two further layers of everything.
- ❖ Cook in a preheated oven on 170°C/340°F for around 20 minutes, until the cheese is brown.
- ❖ Leave to rest for a good 10-15 minutes before cutting.

Gnocchi di Zucca

Baked Pumpkin Dumplings



Season: Fall, Winter; Vegetarian

These are not like boiled gnocchi at all, but are creamy balls of pumpkin baked in a tomato sauce. Very more-ish!

Ingredients

- ❖ 1kg (2 lb) pumpkin or butternut squash
- ❖ 2 onions
- ❖ 3 cloves garlic
- ❖ 1 kg (2 lb) tomatoes, skinned
- ❖ basil, a few leaves
- ❖ olive oil
- ❖ 150g (5 oz) white flour
- ❖ 100g (3 oz) parmesan cheese

Directions

- ❖ Peel the squash, remove the seeds and cut into 2 cm (1 inch) cubes.
- ❖ In a heavy-bottomed pan, begin to stir-fry the squash in a good splash of olive oil. Add salt and pepper.
- ❖ Peel and chop the onions and garlic.
- ❖ When the squash has softened, add the onions and garlic to the pan and continue to fry for a few more minutes. Turn off the heat when the onion begins to brown.
- ❖ In a saucepan, combine a splash of olive oil, the tomatoes and the torn basil leaves.
- ❖ Cook on a low flame for 10 minutes.
- ❖ Transfer the squash mixture to an appropriate container and use a hand-blender to process. Return the mixture to the pan.
- ❖ Heat the mixture. Begin adding flour to it, little by little, stirring constantly.
- ❖ When the mixture is considerably thicker but still creamy, stop adding flour, turn off the heat and allow to cool a little.
- ❖ Pour the tomato sauce into a large shallow oven-proof dish.
- ❖ With 2 spoons, make walnut-sized balls of squash mixture and place in the sauce. Sprinkle with Parmesan.
- ❖ Cook for 15-20 minutes on 180°C/350°F, until the cheese is browned.

First Course Pasta and Sauces

Pasta Fresca

Fresh Egg Pasta



Vegetarian

People are often put off by the time-consuming aspect of making fresh pasta. Rather than thinking about it as a chore, slow down and consider that the process is really very relaxing. Put some music on in your kitchen, and take your time (or make with a friend and enjoy the conversation).

Prep time: 40 mins | Cook time: 5 mins | Servings: 6

Ingredients

- ❖ 100 g (3 oz) of flour per person. The best flour to use is durum wheat flour, but plain (all-purpose flour) works fine too.
- ❖ 1 egg per 100 g of flour. i.e. for 4 people, use 400 g (12 oz) of flour and 4 eggs.
- ❖ Directions
- ❖ Make a cone with the flour and flatten the cone at the top to make a well. Break the eggs into this well. Add a pinch of salt if you wish.
- ❖ Work the eggs and the flour together with a fork, adding the flour from just around the eggs little by little, until you have a smooth dough, adding just a drop of water if necessary, and no more.
- ❖ As soon as you can, use your hands.
- ❖ Knead the dough for ten to fifteen minutes, until it is smooth, firm, and quite elastic. Don't skimp on the kneading or the dough will tear while you're rolling it out. Leave to rest for 15-30 minutes.
- ❖ Divide the dough into two balls. With a rolling pin, roll the ball of dough out into a strip.
- ❖ Pass this dough through the rollers of the manual pasta machine until it reaches the proper thinness (usually the last but one setting). **IMPORTANT:** between using numbers on the machine, allow the dough to rest for a minute or two on dish towels.
- ❖ Once you have the desired thickness, allow the dough to rest once more (dusting with a little flour if it seems at all sticky), before you cut it using the machine cutters.
- ❖ Dust the cut pasta with flour and allow to dry on dish towels for 1-2 hours, making sure the strands are well separated and not stuck together.
- ❖ Cook for 3-5 minutes in plenty of salted boiling water. Keep tasting until you taste a texture which is a little harder than the desired one (the pasta will keep cooking while you are dressing it).
- ❖ Drain, keeping some of the cooking water aside. Dress the pasta with your sauce, mixing well and adding some cooking water little by little to help amalgamate it with the sauce. Serve immediately!

Ragù di Carne

Rich Meat and Vegetable Sauce



There are dozens of versions of ragù which are favourites in different regions of Italy. You can use this basic recipe, then experiment with quantities of wine, tomato and spices (replace the nutmeg with cinnamon for a completely different sauce!) and create your own ragù repertoire.

For 4 people

Ingredients

- ❖ 250 g (8 oz) good quality ground (minced) beef
- ❖ 1 Italian sausage (or a handful of minced pork if you can't get an Italian sausage)
- ❖ 3 medium carrots, peeled
- ❖ 3 large sticks of celery, strings removed if stringy
- ❖ 2 large onions, peeled
- ❖ Handful of parsley, stalks only
- ❖ 2 cloves of garlic
- ❖ ½ nutmeg, ground (1 to 1.5 tsp)
- ❖ Olive oil
- ❖ 650 g (1 ½ lb) good quality crushed tomatoes
- ❖ A cup or two of white OR red wine OR vin santo – for different effects!
- ❖ Vegetable stock as needed (a cup or two)
- ❖ 1 cup Parmesan cheese

Directions

- ❖ Chop the carrots, celery, parsley and onions finely, using either a mezzaluna or a food processor (careful that you don't form a mush!)
- ❖ Heat a little oil in a saucepan and fry the above on a gentle heat until the vegetables are soft.
- ❖ Add the ground beef and sausage and fry until the meat is very brown (10 minutes or so). Add salt and pepper. (If you wish, for a different, drier texture, you can fry the beef separately with a little garlic until it is well browned and then add to the vegetables).
- ❖ Add the garlic and half the grated nutmeg. Fry a little longer, being careful that the garlic does not burn.
- ❖ Add the wine, mix well and cook further, allowing it to evaporate.

- ❖ Add the crushed tomatoes, mix well and allow to cook on a low heat for at least an hour, adding wine or stock if the sauce looks as though it is drying out. The longer you cook it, the better it will be!
- ❖ Cook the pasta in plenty of boiling water, salted just before you add the pasta. Cook it al dente (a good minute or two less than the packet instructions, until it is cooked but still firm to the bite). Keep some cooking water aside.
- ❖ In a warmed bowl, combine the pasta with the pasta sauce. Add some cooking water if the result seems too dry. Either add freshly grated Parmesan cheese now or at the table.

Notes

- ❖ Pasta quantities are very subjective, but for a relatively heavy sauce such as this one, calculate 60-80 g/2-3 oz as a starter, or 140- 160 g/5-6 oz as a main course.

Sugo Finto

Meatless Ragù

Vegetarian

Until recently, people in Tuscany ate very little meat at normal meals – there simply wasn't the money and/or preserving techniques to allow it. This is a poor man's meat sauce: the vegetables are cut finely to simulate a ground beef texture and the result is very tasty indeed.

Ingredients

- ❖ 500 g (1 lb) carrots
- ❖ 500 g (1 lb) celery
- ❖ 500 g (1 lb) onions
- ❖ 750 g (1 1/2 lb) ripe tomatoes, or good canned tomatoes, drained and chopped
- ❖ 4 cloves garlic
- ❖ Large bunch of parsley
- ❖ A few leaves of basil
- ❖ A few leaves of sage
- ❖ Bottle of good red wine
- ❖ Nutmeg, salt, pepper
- ❖ Olive oil

Directions

- ❖ Skin the tomatoes and chop them. Reserve.
- ❖ Chop the other vegetables and herbs very finely, with a mezzaluna or food processor.
- ❖ Cook the vegetables slowly in a good cupful of olive oil until soft.
- ❖ Gradually add red wine, allowing each half-cupful to evaporate before you add the next.
- ❖ Add the chopped tomatoes and allow to cook on a low flame for 20-30 minutes, until you have a thick sauce.
- ❖ Add plenty of freshly grated nutmeg, salt and pepper.

Note

- ❖ Add less tomato for a different kind of sauce (more Tuscan). Use vegetable stock (or a little water) to prevent the sauce from drying out while it is cooking. This recipe will make plenty of sauce. With all the chopping involved, it is worth making more and freezing some (it freezes well).

Sugo con Funghi

Porcini Sauce for Pasta

Until recently, people in Tuscany ate very little meat at normal meals – there simply wasn't the money and/or preserving techniques to allow it. This is a poor man's meat sauce: the vegetables are cut finely to simulate a ground beef texture and the result is very tasty indeed.

Serves 4-6 as a starter

Ingredients

- ❖ 300 g (10 oz) porcini mushrooms
- ❖ 2 cloves garlic, peeled
- ❖ small bunch parsley, stalks removed
- ❖ 30g/1 oz butter
- ❖ Parmesan cheese to taste, grated
- ❖ Salt, pepper, olive oil

Directions

- ❖ Thoroughly clean the mushrooms by peeling off the very dirty part and rubbing with a damp paper towel (washing mushrooms makes them soggy).
- ❖ Chop the mushrooms into small (quarter-inch, half centimetre) cubes.
- ❖ Chop the parsley and garlic finely (preferably with a mezzaluna).
- ❖ Stir-fry the mushrooms in a good swirl (2 tablespoons) of olive oil, until they are slightly softened (2 minutes).
- ❖ Add the parsley and garlic and continue cooking for a further minute. Switch off the heat. Add salt and pepper to taste.
- ❖ When you toss with the pasta, add the butter and parmesan cheese.

Sugo con Gli Asparagi

Asparagus Sauce for Pasta



Seasons: Spring, Fall

Asparagus are available for only a very short season. We love them and try to eat them in as many ways as possible before the long wait for the next harvest. This sauce could be made with cream, but substituting with good ricotta keeps it a little lighter.

Ingredients

- ❖ 2 bunches asparagus
- ❖ 2 cloves garlic, peeled but left whole
- ❖ 0.25 litres (half pint) [vegetable stock](#)
- ❖ 120g/ 4 oz fresh good quality ricotta cheese

Directions

- ❖ Prepare the asparagus by cutting off and discarding the woody, muddy ends (where the asparagus naturally snaps – try it on one and cut all in the same way).
- ❖ Peel or thoroughly wash the next 5 cm/3 inches, rinse and cut off and set aside the spears (3 cm/2 inches approx).
- ❖ Cut into fine discs (NOT the spears – save them for later) and add to hot oil.
- ❖ Cook on a low-medium flame.
- ❖ When the asparagus has softened quite a lot (2-3 minutes) add the garlic, salt and pepper and continue cooking (1 minute) on a low flame, stirring well to prevent burning.
- ❖ Add the stock and evaporate off (3 minutes).
- ❖ Add the spears and cook for a further minute or two, to cook the spears but keep some bite (large spears may need 2-3 minutes). If you like, use a garlic press to mince the garlic and put back in the sauce. If not, discard.
- ❖ Add pepper, the ricotta cheese and a good swirl of extra virgin olive oil when tossing with the pasta.

Sugo di Burro, Panna, e Salvia

Butter, Cream & Sage Sauce



Vegetarian

This sauce is perfect to enhance the subtle flavours of homemade pasta, ravioli and gnocchi. It is far from light, so if you must(!) you can halve the quantities and use it sparingly, adding a good swirl of olive oil to help it coat the pasta/gnocchi.

To dress pasta or gnocchi for 8-10

Ingredients

- ❖ 100 g (3 oz) butter
- ❖ 20 sage leaves, whole
- ❖ 2 cups heavy cream
- ❖ salt and pepper
- ❖ 2 cups Parmesan cheese, grated

Directions

- ❖ Melt the butter on a low flame with the sage.
- ❖ Add the cream and cook on a low flame for a further 5 minutes, stirring in half the cheese.
- ❖ Leave for a at least a further 5 minutes for the sage flavour to infuse the sauce. To dress gnocchi or pasta, put half the pasta into a warmed bowl.
- ❖ Add half the sauce and half the remaining cheese.
- ❖ Mix well and repeat with the remaining pasta, sauce and cheese. Serve immediately.

Sugo con i Carciofi

Artichoke Sauce for Pasta

Seasons: Spring, Fall; Vegetarian

Artichokes can seem daunting – what to do with all those leaves??!! But once you have conquered the fear, this nutritious and delicious vegetable will become a favourite.

For 4 people as a main course

Ingredients

- ❖ 4 medium artichokes
- ❖ 1 chili pepper
- ❖ 1 large onion, finely chopped
- ❖ 2 cloves garlic, finely chopped
- ❖ 4 ripe tomatoes, skinned and chopped (or 150g/5 oz good canned/bottled crushed tomato)
- ❖ White wine – a glass
- ❖ Juice of 1 lemon

Directions

- ❖ Prepare the artichokes by removing the stalks, stripping off the outer leaves until the tender yellow flesh is exposed, cutting in half and removing the hairy choke. To avoid the artichokes blackening, leave in a bowl of cold water with the juice of a lemon added to it.
- ❖ Slice finely and add to hot oil, along with a chili pepper.
- ❖ Cook on a low-medium flame.
- ❖ When the artichoke has softened quite a lot (2-3 minutes) add the onions and garlic, salt and pepper and continue cooking (2 minutes) on a low flame, stirring well to prevent burning.
- ❖ Add the white wine and evaporate off.
- ❖ Add the tomato and cook for a further 2 minutes, until the artichoke is very soft.
- ❖ Add pepper and a good swirl of extra virgin olive oil when tossing with the pasta.

Notes

- ❖ Wear gloves to prevent your hands becoming blackened when you prepare the artichokes.
- ❖ Make sure you don't drink too special a wine when you eat artichokes – they will ruin any complex flavours.

Pasta con le Zucchine

Simple Zucchini Sauce

Seasons: Summer, Fall; **Vegetarian**

When the zucchini glut is upon us, we have this a couple of times a week. It's light but fragrant and satisfying.

For 4 people

Ingredients

- ❖ 8 medium-sized zucchini (around 750g, 1.5 lb)
- ❖ 10 leaves or so of basil
- ❖ 1 egg
- ❖ Plenty (2 cups) Parmesan cheese, grated
- ❖ Pasta quantities are very subjective, but for a relatively heavy sauce such as this one, calculate 60-80 g/2-3 oz as a starter, or 140- 160 g/5-6 oz as a main course.

Directions

- ❖ Cut the zucchini into relatively fine (2mm) discs.
- ❖ Beat the egg and set aside. Heat a good swoosh of olive oil in a heavy-based frying pan and sauté the zucchini (add salt and pepper) on a high heat, until some are very brown (almost burning!)
- ❖ Add the egg and turn off the heat, stirring so that the egg cooks but re- mains moist.
- ❖ Rip up the basil leaves and add to the pan.
- ❖ Cook the pasta in plenty of boiling water, salted just before you add the pasta. Cook it al dente (a good minute or two less than the packet instructions, until it is cooked but still firm to the bite).
- ❖ In a warmed bowl, combine the pasta with the pasta sauce. Add a good swirl of raw olive oil and a little of the cooking water if necessary. Either add freshly grated Parmesan cheese now or at the table.

Sugo di Melanzane

Eggplant, Tomato and Basil Sauce with Ricotta

Season: Summer; Vegetarian

This simple sauce relies on good eggplants (aubergine), tasty, ripe tomatoes, fresh basil and a good ricotta cheese.

For 4 people

Ingredients

- ❖ 3 eggplants/eggplant
- ❖ 300 g/10 oz ripe (but not squashy) tomatoes (Good canned tomatoes work fine for this sauce too)
- ❖ 10-15 leaves fresh basil
- ❖ Olive oil
- ❖ 2 cloves of garlic, squashed but left whole
- ❖ 200 g ricotta cheese
- ❖ Pasta quantities are very subjective, but for a light sauce such as this one, calculate 60-80 g/2-3 oz as a starter, or 140-160 g/5-6 oz as a main course.

Directions

- ❖ Slice the eggplant into thin discs. Grill, either in the oven with very little olive oil and salt, or on a griddle pan.
Warning! This will take quite a long time!
- ❖ Leave the tomatoes in just-boiled water for a few minutes. Remove from the water and the skins should slip off easily.
- ❖ Dice the tomatoes.
- ❖ Heat a splash of olive oil in a pan and add the garlic.
- ❖ Fry for a few seconds, being careful not to burn the garlic.
- ❖ Add the diced tomato and cook very little, just enough to soften the tomato (1 minute approx). Add salt and plenty of black pepper. Tear the basil leaves and add to the sauce.
- ❖ Cook the pasta in plenty of boiling water, salted just before you add the pasta. Cook it al dente (a good minute or two less than the packet instructions, until it is cooked but still firm to the bite). Keep some cooking water.
- ❖ In a warmed bowl, combine the tomato sauce (remove the garlic, or use a garlic press to squeeze it back into the sauce, as you prefer), ricotta and grilled eggplant. Add the pasta, a good swirl of raw olive oil, and as much cooking water as necessary to help the pasta amalgamate with the sauce.

Pommarola

Simple Fresh Tomato and Basil Sauce

Season: Summer

This simple sauce relies on good, tasty, ripe tomatoes, fresh basil and a good olive oil.

For 4 people

Ingredients

- ❖ 400 g/12 oz. ripe (but not squashy) tomatoes
- ❖ 10-15 leaves fresh basil
- ❖ Olive oil
- ❖ 2 cloves of garlic, peeled and quartered
- ❖ Pasta quantities: these are very subjective, but for a light sauce such as this one, calculate 80-100 g/3-4 oz as a starter, or 160-180 g/5-6 oz as a main course.

Directions

- ❖ Leave the tomatoes in just-boiled water for a few minutes. Remove from the water and the skins should slip off easily.
- ❖ Dice the tomatoes. Heat a splash of olive oil in a pan and add the garlic.
- ❖ Fry for a few seconds, being careful not to burn the garlic.
- ❖ Add the diced tomato and cook very little, just enough to soften the tomato (2-3 minutes approx). If using canned tomatoes, cook for longer. Add salt and plenty of black pepper. Tear the basil leaves and add to the sauce.
- ❖ If you like, press the garlic through a garlic press back into the sauce. If not, discard. Stir well.
- ❖ Cook the pasta in plenty of boiling water, salted just before you add the pasta. Cook it al dente (a good minute or two less than the packet instructions, until it is cooked but still firm to the bite).
- ❖ In a warmed bowl, combine the pasta with the pasta sauce. Add a good swirl of raw olive oil. Either add freshly grated Parmesan cheese now or at the table.

Main Courses



Zucchini Ripiene

Stuffed Round Zucchini/Courgettes



Season: Summer; Vegetarian

This recipe looks particularly good made with the cute round zucchini, but is equally tasty made with the long variety. Remember to be careful to reduce cooking times if your zucchini are small.

Prep time: 15 mins | Cook time: 15 mins | Servings: 5

Ingredients

- ❖ 10 small round zucchini/courgettes
- ❖ 1 egg
- ❖ half a cup of breadcrumbs
- ❖ 100 g (3 oz) Seitan (wheat protein), minced in a food processor
- ❖ 2 cloves garlic, chopped
- ❖ small bunch parsley, chopped
- ❖ vegetable stock (or water)

Directions

- ❖ Carefully cut the top off each of the zucchini (half an inch down) and scoop half the flesh out of them. Chop this flesh.
- ❖ Combine the chopped zucchini flesh and the rest of the ingredients, adding salt and pepper.
- ❖ Fill the zucchini and dip the filled ends in breadcrumbs. .
- ❖ Fry gently in very little oil on all sides to brown, then add a little vegetable stock and cover.
- ❖ Cook for 10-15 minutes, checking the level of the liquid and add more when it evaporates. The zucchini should be tender but not losing their shape.
- ❖ You can make croquettes from the leftover filling to serve with the zucchini. Just form balls, roll in breadcrumbs and cook with the zucchini in the last 5 minutes of cooking time.

Polpettone

Tuscan Meatloaf



We always hesitate to call this dish “meatloaf” because of the possible negative connotations of the word. Rest assured – this dish is colourful, moist, flavoursome and very comforting.

Prep time: 40 mins | Cook time: 45 mins | Servings: 8

Ingredients

For the decoration inside

- ❖ 2 boiled carrots
- ❖ 2 lightly boiled zucchini
- ❖ 2 hard-boiled eggs

For the polpettone itself

- ❖ 2 lbs very lean, quality ground beef
- ❖ 1 to 1.5 teaspoons nutmeg, grated (adjust quantity to taste)
- ❖ 2 eggs
- ❖ 1 cup parsley, chopped
- ❖ 2 cloves garlic, chopped
- ❖ 3 oz Parmesan cheese
- ❖ 3 oz ricotta cheese
- ❖ 2 boiled, mashed medium potatoes
- ❖ 3 heaped tablespoons flour
- ❖ 1 glass white wine (for basting)
- ❖ 1.5 oz multicereal bread to coat (optional)
- ❖ Breadcrumbs (to coat)

For the sauce

- ❖ 2 pounds ripe tomatoes, skinned and chopped
- ❖ 4 cloves garlic, whole
- ❖ Bunch basil (40 leaves), chopped

Directions

- ❖ Mix the primary ingredients for the polpettone very well, using your hands.
- ❖ Roll out into a dinner plate size shape.



- ❖ Place the vegetables on the rolled mixture



- ❖ Roll up into a “Yuletide log” shape.



- ❖ Toast the multicereal bread, crumbed, in a little oil with a clove of garlic.
- ❖ Add plain breadcrumbs to the multicereal breadcrumbs.



- ❖ Roll the meatloaf in the breadcrumbs.



- ❖ Cook in the oven for 30-40 minutes on 200°C/400°F until well browned.
- ❖ Add the glass of white wine, baste well and return to the oven for five minutes or so.
- ❖ Meanwhile, make a tomato sauce by cooking the tomatoes slowly with olive oil and garlic, adding basil at the end. Save some leaves for decoration.
- ❖ If you like, press the garlic through a garlic press back into the sauce. If not, discard.
- ❖ Cook the meatloaf for an additional few (around 10) minutes in the sauce. Decorate with basil leaves.

Notes

- ❖ You can serve this dish with or without the sauce, as you wish. Without the sauce, it makes great picnic food, served at room temperature.

Arrosto di Manzo alle Erbe

Herby Roast Beef



The herby flavours take this simple classic dish to another level. Completely different from any roast beef you've had at home!

Ingredients

- ❖ Joint for roast beef (1-1.2 kg/2- 2.5 lb)
- ❖ Knob of butter
- ❖ Two half cups olive oil
- ❖ Herbs (rosemary sage, marjoram etc)
- ❖ Salt, pepper

Directions

- ❖ Finely mince the leaves of 3 sprigs of rosemary and roll the joint in the rosemary, salt and pepper.
- ❖ Warm half the olive oil in a heavy bottomed pan. Put a knob of butter on the top of the roast and brown the joint well on all sides, turning frequently (15 minutes approx).
- ❖ Throw away the oil you have used and wipe out the pan well.
- ❖ Finely mince herbs of your choice (sage, rosemary, marjoram, oregano etc).
- ❖ Roll the joint in these herbs and return to the pan, using clean oil.
- ❖ Add a cup of vin santo (or another sweet wine).
- ❖ Turn frequently and cook for a further 30 minutes.
- ❖ Leave to rest for 10 minutes before slicing, very finely.
- ❖ Serve the delicious herby juices at the table to spoon over the meat.

Notes

- ❖ For different effects, use red or white wine instead of vin santo.

Sformati

Soufflé-Like Vegetable Flans



Vegetarian

Italian sformati are more rustic and forgiving than their French cousins. They do not have to be eaten when just risen. In fact they are easier to cut and serve when they have cooled down a little. They are even delicious eaten cold.

For 4 people as a starter

Ingredients

- ❖ 4 eggs
- ❖ EITHER 3 small bunches of asparagus OR a small cauliflower OR equivalent quantity of a vegetable which can have much of its water removed
- ❖ 500 ml/1 pint milk
- ❖ Nutmeg
- ❖ 1-2 tablespoons (1-2 oz) of flour
- ❖ Two knobs of butter and a swish of oil
- ❖ Breadcrumbs
- ❖ A cup of freshly grated Parmesan cheese

Directions

- ❖ Preheat the oven to 180°C/350°F
- ❖ Steam the vegetables or sauté them so that they lose as much water as possible.
- ❖ If the vegetables are steamed, sauté them in a little butter so that they lose even more water.
- ❖ Purée the vegetables and leave them to cool.
- ❖ Make a béchamel:
- ❖ Melt one knob of butter in a saucepan and add the swish of oil and the flour, mixing well with a whisk to remove any lumps.
- ❖ Add the milk little by little, whisking well, on a low heat. Grate a quarter of a nutmeg into the mixture.
- ❖ Continue until the mixture begins to thicken but is still quite liquid.
- ❖ Separate the eggs and reserve the whites.
- ❖ When the béchamel has cooled, add the puréed vegetables and the egg yolks.

- ❖ Butter a high-sided ovenproof dish and coat the butter with breadcrumbs.
- ❖ Beat the egg whites to stiff peaks.
- ❖ Carefully fold in the egg whites to the vegetable-béchamel mixture.
- ❖ Sprinkle the cheese on top.
- ❖ Transfer the mixture carefully to the ovenproof dish and bake for 20 minutes or until the cheese is browned and a skewer inserted into the centre of the sfornato comes out clean.
- ❖ Serve with a cheese sauce (optional):
- ❖ Use a cheese that will melt well and not go stringy: pecorino, emmenthal, gruyère etc. Melt the cheese with a little cream in a bain-marie (a pan or bowl set within another pan with hot water inside). Once the cheese is melted, you can turn off the heat, but keep the sauce in the pan until just before you are ready to serve, otherwise it will solidify.

Stracotto di Manzo

Tuscan “Overcooked” Beef



The vegetables in this slow cooked dish produce a velvety-textured sauce which goes perfectly with the tender meat.

Ingredients

- ❖ 500 g (1 lb) joint of beef, tied (a slightly fatty cut would work well, or you can use a roast beef joint)
- ❖ 2 carrots
- ❖ 2 onions
- ❖ 3 sticks celery
- ❖ 7 sage leaves
- ❖ 2 bay leaves
- ❖ 2 cloves garlic
- ❖ Half a bottle of red wine
- ❖ Vegetable stock

Directions

- ❖ Brown the meat very well (10-15 minutes) in a heavy pan with a few tablespoons of olive oil, turning frequently.
- ❖ At the same time, chop the onions, carrots, celery, garlic and sage (not very finely) and sauté in olive oil with the bay leaves, until softened.
- ❖ Add to the meat u Add the red wine to almost cover the meat.
- ❖ Evaporate off the wine on a medium heat.
- ❖ Cook slowly in vegetable stock to cover, turning occasionally and adding more stock gradually if needed, for at least two and a half hours.

Melanzane alla Parmigiana

Cheesy Baked Eggplant



Seasons: Summer, Fall; Vegetarian

This Italian restaurant classic is a little time-consuming (the grilled eggplant takes a while) but your guests will tell you that it is well worth all the effort.

Ingredients

Serves 6 as a main, 12 as a starter

Ingredients

- ❖ 2 large eggplants
- ❖ 1 kg/2 lb ripe tomatoes (or good bottled or canned crushed tomatoes)
- ❖ 2 cloves garlic, peeled but left whole
- ❖ 200g/7 oz mozzarella, ripped into small pieces
- ❖ 60 g/2 oz Parmesan cheese, freshly grated
- ❖ Sprig of basil, leaves only

Directions

- ❖ Slice the eggplant lengthways into thin (6 mm or ¼ in) slices.
- ❖ Sprinkle them lightly with salt and leave between two tea towels (dishtowels) for an hour, weighed down with some plates. Any bitter residue should seep out into the cloths.
- ❖ Brush the eggplant slices with olive oil and grill for 4-5 minutes per side until golden brown. Set aside. You will be making several such batches, which will take time to grill!
- ❖ Plunge the tomatoes into a pan of just-boiled water (switch off the heat) and leave for a couple of minutes. You should then be able to remove the skins easily.
- ❖ Chop the tomato into small pieces.
- ❖ Make a sauce by stir-frying the garlic in a little oil and cooking with the tomato and basil for 10 minutes. You can either use a garlic press to press the garlic back into the sauce, or discard it.
- ❖ In a 7"x10"x2" ovenproof dish, place three alternating layers of eggplant slices and tomato sauce. In the second layer and on the top, add the cheeses.
- ❖ Bake at 180C / 350°F for 15 minutes, then broil for 2-3 minutes until the cheese on the top is golden brown.

Notes

- ❖ If you are pressed for time, you can skip step two. Modern eggplant varieties have little bitterness. If you do skip this step, remember to add salt to the eggplant as you grill them.

Tacchino al Latte

Herby Turkey Breast Cooked in Milk



This is a Piattelli family dish which has been passed down through the generations and adapted a little. A butterflied turkey breast is stuffed with herbs and grapes, rolled up and tied and cooked in milk. The result is a complex-flavoured unusually juicy turkey dish.

Prep time: 50 mins | Cook time: 1 hours | Servings: 6

Ingredients

- ❖ 1 medium turkey breast (calculate around 120g/4 oz per person)
- ❖ 4 cloves garlic
- ❖ 3 large sprigs rosemary
- ❖ 25 sage leaves
- ❖ 1 cup white wine
- ❖ half litre (1 pint vegetable stock – see separate recipe)
- ❖ 3 cups of milk
- ❖ 10-15 large grapes, peeled and deseeded (use small pieces of apple if grapes are not in season)
- ❖ olive oil
- ❖ a little flour for dredging
- ❖ salt, pepper

Directions

- ❖ Chop the sage and 2 of the garlic cloves very finely. Season with salt and pepper and set aside.
- ❖ Open out the turkey breast and pound (not too violently), so that you have a flat surface.
- ❖ Spread the inside with the sage and garlic, add the grapes/apple and roll closed.
- ❖ Tie the roll closed with kitchen string, sealing well.
- ❖ Heat the oil in a pan
- ❖ Roll the turkey very lightly in flour and place in the pan.
- ❖ Brown on all sides for 10 -15 minutes. Careful that you don't get spattered by the hot oil!
- ❖ Discard the burnt oil carefully and return the turkey to the pan.
- ❖ Add a cup of white wine.
- ❖ When the wine has evaporated, add the warm stock and cook on a medium flame for 15-20 minutes, until evaporated off.
- ❖ Add the milk, salt and pepper and cook on a low flame for a further 15-25 minutes, until a thick sauce has formed. Be careful not to burn the milk.
- ❖ Add the rosemary and 2 garlic cloves (finely chopped) and cook for a further 2 minutes.

❖ Allow to cool a little, cut into slices and serve with the sauce on the slices.

Spezzatino di Maiale

Herby Pork Stew



The wine, stock and slow cooking make the pieces of pork really melt in your mouth. A great dish for when it's cold out.

Prep time: 45 mins | Cook time: 2 hours | Servings: 6

Ingredients

- ❖ 500 g/1 lb cubed pork (slightly fatty cuts are best for this dish)
- ❖ a little flour to coat the pork
- ❖ 3 celery
- ❖ 1 onions
- ❖ sage (first try—10 leaves—about half a Melissa's package)
- ❖ bay leaves (first try—2 leaves, chopped)
- ❖ rosemary (first try—1 tsp, chopped—the leaves from two 6- to 8-inch sprigs)
- ❖ 2 cloves garlic
- ❖ half a bottle white wine
- ❖ Vegetable stock

Directions

- ❖ Put the pork into a large bowl and coat the pieces very lightly with the flour.
- ❖ Chop the onion, celery, garlic and herbs finely (not a mush—small bite sized) and sauté in olive oil until softened.
- ❖ Add the pork and fry until the meat is browned.
- ❖ Add the white wine to almost cover.
- ❖ Evaporate off the wine on a medium heat.
- ❖ Cook slowly in vegetable stock to cover, adding more stock gradually if needed, for at least an hour and a half.

Pollo alla Cacciatora

Chicken Cacciatore

The hint of orange rind and the tang of the olives make this chicken dish very special.

For 4 people:

Ingredients

- ❖ 1 medium chicken, cut into small pieces (ask your butcher to do this)
- ❖ 4 sticks of celery
- ❖ 4 carrots
- ❖ 2 onions
- ❖ 5 cloves of garlic
- ❖ A handful of sage (10 leaves)
- ❖ Half a bottle of decent red wine
- ❖ Olive oil
- ❖ A bay leaf
- ❖ Dried sage and rosemary (a good pinch)
- ❖ A handful of black olives
- ❖ Juice of half an orange and a little orange zest

Directions

- ❖ At least 1 hour before you make the dish (even 24 hours before), marinade the pieces of chicken in the red wine with a good pinch of dried rosemary and sage and some salt (Italian stores sell this as “salamoia”. Use this if you can get it)
- ❖ Prepare a vegetable stock by boiling a litre (2 pints) of water with a stick of celery, a carrot and an onion (either whole or in large pieces) and a good bouillon cube for at least an hour.
- ❖ Take the remaining celery, carrots and onion, and with the sage and parsley, chop into coarse pieces with a mezzaluna or knife.
- ❖ Drain the chicken (trying to get as much liquid off it). Reserve the wine.
- ❖ Heat some oil (be generous) in a pan and brown the chicken pieces on all sides. Careful that you don't get burned by the hot oil spitting!
- ❖ Add the vegetables to the chicken, and cook for a few minutes on a high heat, mixing well.
- ❖ Squash the garlic (leave whole) and add this to the frying vegetable mixture. Cook until the vegetables are soft 10-15 minutes).
- ❖ Add 2 or 3 ladlefuls of stock, partially cover the pan and begin to cook on a low flame.
- ❖ When the liquid has almost evaporated, add a ladleful of the wine from the marinade.
- ❖ Continue the slow cooking, alternating the stock and the wine, for another 30-40 minutes or so (the times depend on the type of chicken and size of the pieces).
- ❖ When the chicken is almost cooked (test it with a knife – it should be soft but not falling off the bone), add the bay leaf, olives, the orange zest (don't overdo it, a few inches of peel should do) and the orange juice.
- ❖ Continue cooking (alternating stock and wine) until the chicken is completely cooked and tender (it should come off the bone very easily).
- ❖ Remove the bay leaf before serving.

Arista

Tuscan-Style Roast Pork

This is one of the classic Tuscan roast meat dishes, herby and succulent.

For 4 people

Ingredients

- ❖ 1.5 lb/ 800 g rib joint (loin) of pork, on the bone if possible.
- ❖ Ask your butcher to make a cut between the bone and the rest of the joint, so that this can be filled with herbs and tied back up with string.
- ❖ A bottle of good white wine
- ❖ A large handful of sage and rosemary
- ❖ 8 cloves of garlic
- ❖ 3 teaspoons fennel seeds
- ❖ Salt and pepper
- ❖ String to tie the joint

Directions

- ❖ Preheat your oven to 225°C/440°F
- ❖ Crush the fennel seeds in a mortar and pestle.
- ❖ Finely chop the sage leaves, rosemary and garlic and mix with the fennel seeds and a large pinch of salt and pepper.
- ❖ Spread half this mixture, in the cut between the bone and the rest of the meat. Reconstruct the joint and tie with string.
- ❖ Roll the joint in the remaining seasonings, coating well. u Cook for 25 minutes on 225°C/440°F, or until you see a crust forming on the meat.
- ❖ Lower the heat to 180°C/360°F and cook for a further 30-60 minutes (de- pending on the size of the roast). Add glasses of white wine periodically through this time. Check with a knife or a metal skewer that no blood runs out of the centre of the roast. If it does, cook it a little longer.

Carciofi Ripieni

Stuffed Artichokes

Season: Spring; Vegetarian

You can use the filling here to fill other vegetables, such as peppers, zucchini etc.

Ingredients

- ❖ 6 medium artichokes
- ❖ 1 egg
- ❖ half a cup of breadcrumbs
- ❖ 100 g (3 oz) Seitan (wheat protein), minced in a food processor
- ❖ 2 cloves garlic, chopped
- ❖ small bunch parsley, chopped
- ❖ vegetable stock (or water)

Directions

- ❖ Trim the artichokes, removing the tough outer leaves, discarding the hairy choke and hollowing out the middle (save these tender leaves and chop finely)
- ❖ Combine the chopped artichoke centres and the rest of the ingredients, adding salt and pepper.
- ❖ Fill the artichokes and dip the filled ends in breadcrumbs. Fry gently in very little oil on all sides to brown, then add a little vegetable stock and cover.
- ❖ Cook for 10-15 minutes, checking the level of the liquid and add more when it evaporates. The artichokes should be tender.
- ❖ You can make croquettes from the leftover filling to serve with the artichokes. Just form balls, roll in breadcrumbs and cook with the artichokes in the last 5 minutes of cooking time.

Notes

- ❖ Wear gloves to prevent your hands becoming blackened when you prepare the artichokes.
- ❖ Make sure you don't drink too special a wine when you eat artichokes – they will ruin any complex flavours.

Torta Salata di Verdure

Italian Vegetable Quiche

Vegetarian

Use what you have around! Italians love quiches and love using all sorts of leftovers in them. A classic is sautéed spinach with plenty of nutmeg.

Ingredients

For the shortcrust pastry

- ❖ 300 g (10 oz) flour
- ❖ 70 g (2.5 oz) butter
- ❖ 2 tablespoons olive oil
- ❖ Salt
- ❖ 2 eggs

Or

- ❖ One pre-made deep-dish pie crust

For the filling (example)

- ❖ 4 eggs
- ❖ 100 g (3 oz) Ricotta cheese
- ❖ 100 g (3 oz) other cheeses
- ❖ 200 g (7 oz) sautéed vegetables (12 oz if using spinach)
- ❖ 1 cup of milk

Directions

For the scratch crust:

- ❖ Dump the flour on a flat surface. Make a well in the centre.
- ❖ Add a pinch of salt, the oil and the butter, cut into pieces.
- ❖ Work in the butter gently but thoroughly with your fingertips, until all the butter is incorporated into the flour.
- ❖ Break the eggs into the mixture and continue to work the mixture until you have formed a smooth, homogeneous dough.
- ❖ Wrap in cling wrap and leave in the refrigerator for at least 30 minutes (2 hours is better).
- ❖ Roll out the dough to fit a tart dish lined with greaseproof paper.
- ❖ In an oven preheated to 160°C/320°F, blind bake the pastry to dry it out a little.

Or for the pre-made crust:

- ❖ Pierce liberally with a fork and bake according to package directions

Finishing the quiche:

- ❖ Fill with sautéed vegetables (e.g. spinach or zucchini or mushrooms) to cover the bottom of the dish.
- ❖ Dot with pieces of cheese (mozzarella, fontina, smoked cheeses all work well).
- ❖ Pour over 4 eggs, well beaten with half a cup of milk, the ricotta, and seasoned with salt and pepper.
- ❖ Return to the oven, still at 160°C/320°F, and bake for a further 30 minutes, until golden on the top.
- ❖ Wait for the quiche to cool until attempting to cut it.

Pollo ai Semi di Finocchio

Chicken with Fennel Seeds

An aromatic, original twist on a simple dish.

Ingredients

- ❖ 1 medium, cleaned chicken (1.2 kg approx)
- ❖ 200g (7 oz) pancetta strips
- ❖ 2 cloves chopped garlic
- ❖ Plenty of chopped sage, parsley and rosemary
- ❖ 1 teaspoon fennel seeds, ground
- ❖ Olive oil
- ❖ Salt and pepper

Directions

- ❖ Preheat your oven to 200°C
- ❖ Mix together the garlic, fresh herbs and fennel. Add salt and pepper.
- ❖ Stuff the chicken with this mixture and tie up.
- ❖ Cover the breast of the bird with pancetta to help it dry out less.
- ❖ Add salt and pepper to the outside of the chicken too, and a splash of olive oil.
- ❖ Roast in the preheated oven at 200°C for approximately an hour.

Finocchi Gratinati

Fennel Gratin

Seasons: Fall, Spring, Winter; Vegetarian

A simple yet delicious way to prepare this nutritious and aromatic vegetable.

Ingredients

- ❖ 4 large fennel bulbs
- ❖ 2 tbsp breadcrumbs
- ❖ 1 tsp fennel seeds
- ❖ 2 tbsp freshly grated Parmesan
- ❖ cheese 70 g/2 oz butter

Directions

- ❖ Wash and trim the fennel, reserving the dark green fronds. Cut the fennel into pieces the size of an egg (more or less...)
- ❖ Steam the fennel for a few minutes, until tender but not mushy.
- ❖ Arrange the fennel pieces in an ovenproof dish.
- ❖ Sprinkle with salt, pepper, the fennel seeds, breadcrumbs and parmesan.
- ❖ Decorate with the fennel fronds.
- ❖ Grill for 8-12 minutes, or until browned on top.

Cardi Rifatti

Cardoons in a Tomato Sauce



Season: Spring, Fall; Vegetarian

Cardoon, or thistle, grows everywhere and is from the same family as the artichoke and as well as being nutritious (plenty of potassium, calcium and iron) is incredibly tasty. See <http://www.saveur.com/article/Kitchen/The-Noble-Thistle> for a nice article on cooking thistles.

Ingredients

- ❖ 1 kg (2 lb) cardoons
- ❖ 4 cloves garlic
- ❖ 300 g (10 oz) ripe tomatoes, peeled and chopped

Directions

- ❖ String the cardoons as you would celery.
- ❖ Cut into 2 cm (1 inch) pieces and leave in a bowl with water and lemon juice.
- ❖ Boil until tender in plenty of salted, boiling water with a quartered lemon.
- ❖ Cooking time will vary, but will be around 2 hours. Drain.
- ❖ Stir fry the garlic (whole) in a good swoosh of olive oil.
- ❖ Add the tomato. Cook for a few minutes.
- ❖ Add the drained cardoons and cook for a further 10 minutes.
- ❖ Dress with raw olive oil at the table.

Notes

- ❖ A pressure cooker will reduce cooking time to 25 minutes.

Side Dishes



Pomodori Ripieni

Baked Tomatoes Filled with Rice



Season: Summer; Vegetarian

These baked tomatoes are quick, easy and make a great accompaniment to meat and fish dishes.

Total time: 35 min | Servings: 6

Ingredients

- ❖ 8 medium ripe round tomatoes
- ❖ 4 tablespoonfuls of parboiled rice
- ❖ 10 basil leaves
- ❖ 2 cloves of garlic
- ❖ Olive oil, salt, pepper to taste
- ❖ Half teaspoonful of sugar

Directions

- ❖ Cut off the top fifth of the tomatoes, so that you have a cap. Set aside the caps.
- ❖ Empty out the flesh of the tomatoes with a spoon. Add this flesh to the basil, salt, pepper, garlic and oil. Mince in a blender and add the raw rice. Mix well.
- ❖ Fill the tomatoes up to a little over halfway up. Replace the caps and brush with a little oil and the sugar.
- ❖ Place in a baking dish which has a little oil in it and bake for 20-30 minutes at 160 Celsius/ 320 F.

Notes

You can only use parboiled rice in this recipe since the grains stay separate. Non parboiled rice will turn into a sticky blob!

Cavolfiore Rifatto

Cauliflower with Tomato, Rosemary & Fennel Seeds



Seasons: Spring, Winter; **Vegetarian**

Even self-professed cauliflower haters will love this dish, if you can convince them to try it.

Ingredients

- ❖ 1 large cauliflower
- ❖ 2 cloves garlic, cut in half
- ❖ 1 small sprig of rosemary
- ❖ 1 teaspoon fennel seeds
- ❖ 500g /1lb ripe tomatoes
- ❖ 1 litre (2 pints) vegetable stock

Directions

- ❖ Peel the tomatoes, loosening the skins by plunging into hot water. Chop into medium sized pieces.
- ❖ Cut the cauliflower into florets (use the tender leaves too if there are any).
- ❖ Sauté the cauliflower in plenty of olive oil, with the garlic, rosemary and fennel seeds (2 minutes).
- ❖ Add the tomato, season with salt and pepper and cook for a further 5 minutes.
- ❖ Add stock to cover, cooking slowly, covered, for another 10-15 minutes, until the cauliflower is tender but not yet mushy.

Cipolle Ripiene

Stuffed Baked Onions



Vegetarian

Simple flavours – onion and smoked cheese – that combine perfectly for a dish that complements practically all main courses.

Ingredients

- ❖ 10 medium onions
- ❖ 60 g (2 oz) scamorza affumicata (or another smoked cheese)
- ❖ 60 g (2 oz) fontina (or another melty cheese such as Gruyère)
- ❖ Breadcrumbs

Directions

- ❖ Peel and boil the onions until tender but not mushy (about 10-15 minutes).
- ❖ Leave to cool. Halve the onions and remove the inner third of the flesh.
- ❖ Finely mince the onion centres with the cheese, adding salt and pepper.
- ❖ Use this mixture to fill the holes in the onions and to cover them.
- ❖ Sprinkle with breadcrumbs and a little olive oil.
- ❖ Bake at 180°C/350°F for 15 minutes or until browned on top.

Fagioli in Agrodolce

White Beans Cooked in Rosemary, Tomato and Balsamic Vinegar

Creamy white beans in a tangy, herby tomato sauce – this is a Greek-style interpretation of the Tuscan fagioli all'uccelletto. These beans are great served hot or cold, either as an antipasto or as a side dish.

Serves 8 as a side dish

Ingredients

- ❖ 500g dried cannellini or butter beans
- ❖ 1 litre (2 pints) good crushed tomato
- ❖ large sprig rosemary
- ❖ 2 medium onions
- ❖ 1 chili pepper
- ❖ 3 tablespoons balsamic vinegar
- ❖ olive oil

Directions

- ❖ Soak cannellini or butter beans overnight.
- ❖ Slow cook for 2 hours.
- ❖ Chop the onions finely and fry in a little olive oil with the rosemary and chili.
- ❖ When the onions are translucent but not yet browning, add the tomato and vinegar.
- ❖ Cook for 10 minutes and then add the beans and a cup or two of the cooking water. Add salt to taste.
- ❖ Cook for a further 15-20 minutes on a low heat, stirring well.
- ❖ Serve dressed with a swirl of fresh olive oil.

Notes

- ❖ Cooking with pieces of kombu seaweed improves the digestibility of legumes/pulses.

Carciofi Piccanti

Spicy Artichokes

Seasons: Spring, Fall

These make a tasty little side dish to have with a main course such as the salt cod in an almond crust.

Ingredients

- ❖ 6-10 medium-sized artichokes
- ❖ parsley, chopped, half a cup
- ❖ garlic, finely chopped, 2 cloves
- ❖ 6-10 small chili peppers
- ❖ olive oil

Directions

- ❖ Prepare the artichokes by cutting off the stalks, removing the outer leaves until you come across much paler, more tender leaves and cutting all the spiny parts off the “flower” end. Put into a bowl with lemon juice as you prepare them to prevent them from going brown.
- ❖ Make space in the middle of each artichoke with your finger. u Fill with a pinch of salt, a chilli pepper and a good pinch of parsley and garlic. Close up the artichoke as best you can.
- ❖ Brown in a little oil in a pan with a lid.
- ❖ Once browned on all sides, add a little water, white wine or stock. Cover.
- ❖ Check the liquid every couple of minutes and add more if there is none left. Cook like this for approximately 10-12 minutes or until the outer leaves are tender.

Notes

- ❖ Wear gloves to prevent your hands becoming blackened when you prepare the artichokes.
- ❖ Make sure you don't drink too special a wine when you eat artichokes – they will ruin any complex flavours.

Fagioli all'Uccelletto

Cannellini Beans with Tomato and Herbs

Seasons: Fall, Winter; **Vegetarian**

Literally the name means “in the manner of little birds”: this is the way that small birds were cooked up when they were brought home from a morning’s hunting. Cannellini beans are so much nicer...

For 6-8 people

Ingredients

- ❖ 250g (8 oz) dried cannellini beans, soaked the night before in plenty of water
- ❖ A few small pieces kombu seaweed (optional)
- ❖ 650 g (1.5 lb) ripe tomatoes, skinned and chopped
- ❖ 2 cloves garlic, squashed
- ❖ 10 sage leaves
- ❖ Olive oil

Directions

- ❖ Change the water that the beans have soaked in overnight. Do not add salt to the water. Add the seaweed to improve digestibility.
- ❖ Bring to the boil then turn down and simmer slowly for an hour and a half or until the beans are tender but not mushy. You can use a pressure cooker to save time.
- ❖ Heat a good swirl of olive oil in a pot and add the garlic and sage leaves. Allow to fry a little but don’t let the garlic brown.
- ❖ When the garlic just begins to brown, add the tomatoes and cook on a low heat for 10 minutes.
- ❖ Add the drained beans and cook on a low heat for a further 20 minutes or until the sauce has reduced considerably and coats the beans thickly.
- ❖ Serve dressed with more raw olive oil swirled on top.

Notes

- ❖ Cooking with pieces of kombu seaweed improves the digestibility of legumes/pulses.

Fagiolini al Pomodoro

Slow-Cooked Green Beans in Tomato Sauce

Vegetarian

This is one of Tina's father's signature dishes. You may say that you like your green beans to be firm and crunchy, but after tasting this dish you may also appreciate their sweet, melt-in-the-mouth quality when slow cooked.

Ingredients

- ❖ 500g /1 lb fresh green beans, topped and tailed
- ❖ 20 large, ripe cherry tomatoes, cut in half (or a small can of good tomatoes)
- ❖ 2 cloves garlic
- ❖ 2 carrots
- ❖ 1 onion
- ❖ 2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
- ❖ vegetable stock
- ❖ 8 leaves fresh basil
- ❖ salt

Directions

- ❖ Peel the garlic cloves and cut them in half.
- ❖ Chop the carrots and the onion very finely and put in a heavy-based frying pan in the cold oil.
- ❖ Put the pan over the heat and when the garlic and onion start to sizzle, add the tomatoes.
- ❖ Cook for about 5 minutes and add the green beans. Season with salt and cover.
- ❖ Cook for about 30-40 minutes on a low heat, stirring occasionally.
- ❖ If the beans are getting too dry add some vegetable stock.
- ❖ At the very end add the basil leaves, torn into pieces.

Notes

- ❖ The secret to this recipe is to overcook the beans to the point of caramelizing them.
- ❖ Cooking with pieces of kombu seaweed improves the digestibility of legumes/pulses.

Polpettine di Patate

Tuscan Potato Croquettes

Vegetarian

The flavours of the nutmeg, garlic and parsley really stand out in this simple peasant side dish/appetizer.

Ingredients

- ❖ 4 large potatoes
- ❖ 2 eggs
- ❖ parsley, chopped, half a cup
- ❖ garlic, finely chopped, 2 cloves
- ❖ nutmeg
- ❖ breadcrumbs
- ❖ olive oil for shallow frying

Directions

- ❖ Boil the potatoes in their skins.
- ❖ When they are soft, allow them to cool a little, peel and mash (preferably with a potato ricer – the result is very fine and fluffy)
- ❖ Add salt, pepper, plenty of nutmeg, the parsley and garlic and the eggs.
- ❖ Mix together well.
- ❖ Add enough breadcrumbs to the mixture to obtain a firm yet malleable texture.
- ❖ With your hands, form balls (golf-ball size is fine) or cylinder shapes.
- ❖ Roll the balls in breadcrumbs.
- ❖ Fry lightly in hot oil until golden. Serve immediately.

Desserts

Crostata di Frutta

Fruit and Custard Tart



Season: Summer; Vegetarian

This is a tart to rival a patisserie bought one. Delicious with soft fruit such as raspberries.

Serves 8-12 people

Ingredients

For the rich shortcrust

- ❖ 500g (1 lb) plain (all-purpose) flour
- ❖ 300g (10 oz) butter
- ❖ 200g (7 oz) sugar
- ❖ 4 egg yolks
- ❖ Zest of 1 untreated lemon

For the custard

- ❖ 125 g (4 oz) sugar
- ❖ 500 ml (1 pint) milk
- ❖ 4 egg yolks
- ❖ 2 tablespoons flour
- ❖ 1 fresh vanilla pod
- ❖ 250 ml (1/2 pint) whipping cream
- ❖ Fruit to cover (that will not go black) e.g. strawberries, kiwi, figs, raspberries etc.

Directions

For the rich shortcrust

- ❖ Line an ovenproof tart dish with baking paper.

- ❖ On a wooden work surface, mix together the flour, sugar and butter, cut into little pieces. Rub the butter into the flour and sugar, until it is completely worked in. Work lightly so that the butter does not melt.
- ❖ Make a mound out of this mixture and make a well in the centre. Add the eggs yolks and lemon zest (careful not to grate the bitter pith in too!)
- ❖ Work the ingredients together, first with a fork, then with your hands, until you have a smooth, soft pastry dough.
- ❖ Wrap the pastry dough in plastic wrap and refrigerate it for at least 30 minutes (ideally 2 hours, especially in warm weather).
- ❖ Preheat the oven to 160°C/320°F.
- ❖ When the pastry has rested in the refrigerator, roll out to the size of the tart dish, cover with more baking paper and weigh down with dry beans, rice, or another, smaller, baking dish. This will prevent the pastry rising. You should try and achieve a 1 cm (half-inch) thickness. If you have pastry left over, use to make delicious cookies!
- ❖ Bake at 160°C/320°F for 15-20 minutes, until the pastry is golden. u Remove the beans etc and baking paper and allow to cool.

For the custard

- ❖ Split open the vanilla pod and place in a saucepan with the milk. Bring to the boil gently.
- ❖ In a large bowl, vigorously beat the egg yolks with the sugar until the result is light in colour and frothy.
- ❖ Add the flour and beat well.
- ❖ Add the milk gradually, (remove the vanilla pod, scraping the seeds back into the milk) beating constantly with a whisk.
- ❖ Slowly reheat, stirring constantly only in one direction until quite thick. The custard will thicken even more once it cools. Allow to cool, covering with clingfilm/saran wrap to avoid a skin forming.

To assemble

- ❖ Fold whipped cream into the cooled custard. Fill the base with this and decorate with fruit.
- ❖ This pie is best enjoyed at room temperature soon after it has been made, i.e. not refrigerated.

Schiacciata con l'Uva

Tuscan Grape Harvest Cake



Season: Summer; Vegetarian

In Tuscany, this complex-flavoured but simple to make cake is only made for a few weeks a year, when the small, sweet, seedy red grapes are around (many are “gleaned” in the vineyards after the harvest). Use the sweetest red grapes you can.

Prep time: 20 mins | Cook time: 45 mins | Servings: 6

Ingredients

- ❖ 200g (7 oz) white flour
- ❖ 100g (3 oz) light brown sugar, and a little for the top
- ❖ Half sachet baking powder (enough for 250g/8oz flour)
- ❖ 1 egg
- ❖ 4 large sprigs rosemary
- ❖ 100g (3 oz) walnuts, shelled and broken up
- ❖ Half a cup extra virgin olive oil
- ❖ 1 kg (2 lb) small flavoursome red grapes, washed (the Tuscan ones have lots of seeds!)

Directions

- ❖ Preheat your oven at 175°C/ 350°F
- ❖ In a large bowl, mix together the flour, sugar, baking powder and the egg.
- ❖ Remove the rosemary from the stems and add to the olive oil in a saucepan.
- ❖ Put this on a slow flame and allow to bubble gently for a few seconds.
- ❖ Add the oil and rosemary to the flour mixture.
- ❖ Mix this well to amalgamate the ingredients.
- ❖ Work in the grapes and walnuts using your hands, breaking up the grapes a little but not too much.
- ❖ Line a baking dish with baking paper and use your hands to spread out the mixture.
- ❖ Sprinkle with sugar.
- ❖ Bake for approximately 45 minutes.

Budino Cremoso

Italian Crème Caramel



Vegetarian

Traditionally a “budino” is made in a large mould, not little individual moulds. It makes for a more spectacular sight when it is served, but be careful when you turn it upside down to serve!

Ingredients

- ❖ 100 g sugar for the caramel
- ❖ ½ litre milk
- ❖ 4 eggs (of which you use 3 whole eggs and 1 yolk)
- ❖ 100 g sugar
- ❖ A squeeze of lemon juice
- ❖ A squeeze of orange juice (optional – but nice if you are using orange rind instead of vanilla)
- ❖ 1 vanilla bean OR 2 strips of orange rind

Directions

- ❖ Caramelize the sugar with a few (we use 7) drops of lemon juice, by putting the sugar in a heavy-bottom pan on a low-medium heat and mixing until a caramel has formed.
- ❖ Before turning off the heat, add 2 teaspoonfuls of orange juice (optional).
- ❖ Place all of this in a 1.5 pint (0.7 litres) mould.
- ❖ Gently heat the milk, adding either a split vanilla pod or the orange rind.
- ❖ Beat the 3 whole eggs and 1 yolk with the sugar.
- ❖ Continue beating, adding the milk with the vanilla bean/orange rind removed (but if using vanilla, add the seeds to the milk).
- ❖ Pour the mixture in the mould, filtering with a sieve.
- ❖ Cook in a bain marie in the oven for 1 hour at 130°C/265°F.

Notes

- ❖ Try out the different orange or vanilla versions!

Torta della Nonna

Custard Pie with Pine Nuts & Almonds



Vegetarian

In this traditional Tuscan dessert the combination of rich pastry, delicate custard and toasted nuts makes for a special treat indeed. *Torta della Nonna* translates as the “Grandmother’s cake”.

Prep time: 90 mins | Cook time: 30 mins | Servings: 8-12

Ingredients

For the pastry

- ❖ 500g (1 lb) plain (all-purpose) flour
- ❖ 300g (10 oz) butter
- ❖ 200g (7 oz) sugar
- ❖ 4 egg yolks
- ❖ Zest of 1 untreated lemon

For the custard filling

- ❖ 125 g (4 oz) sugar
- ❖ 500 ml (1 pint) milk
- ❖ 4 egg yolks
- ❖ 2 tablespoons flour
- ❖ 1 fresh vanilla pod

Directions

For the custard

- ❖ Split open the vanilla pod and place in a saucepan with the milk. Bring to the boil gently.
- ❖ In a large bowl, vigorously beat the egg yolks with the sugar until the result is light in colour and frothy.
- ❖ Add the flour and beat well.

- ❖ Add the milk gradually (remove the vanilla pod, scraping out the seeds into the milk), beating constantly with a whisk.
- ❖ Slowly reheat, stirring constantly, always in the same direction, until quite thick. It will thicken even more once it cools. Allow to cool with clingfilm (saran wrap) touching it so that a skin does not form.
- ❖ Add the toasted pine nuts to the cooled custard.

For the base

- ❖ Line a large (30 cm, 12 in) ovenproof tart dish with baking paper.
- ❖ On a wooden work surface, mix together the flour, sugar and butter, cut into little pieces. Rub the butter into the flour and sugar, until it is completely worked in. Work lightly so that the butter does not melt.
- ❖ Make a mound out of this mixture and make a well in the centre. Add the eggs yolks and lemon zest (careful not to grate the bitter pith in too!)
- ❖ Work the ingredients together, first with a fork, then with your hands, until you have a smooth, soft pastry dough.
- ❖ Wrap the pastry dough in clingfilm and refrigerate it for at least 30 minutes (ideally 2 hours, especially in warm weather).

To assemble

- ❖ Preheat the oven to 160°C/320°F
- ❖ When the pastry has rested in the refrigerator, divide in two, and delicately roll out one half to the size of the tart dish (approx 1 cm/half inch thickness).
- ❖ Pour on the custard. Roll out the remaining pastry dough and place on top of the custard, closing the pie. Decorate with almonds. Try not to handle the pastry too much at this stage.
- ❖ Bake at 160°C/320°F for 25-35 minutes, until the pastry is golden and the almonds toasted.
- ❖ Leave to cool and dust with icing sugar.

Tiramisù

Tiramisu



Vegetarian

Tiramisu (literally “Pick me up”) seems to have been around for generations, but is in fact a creation from the 1980s! Our version uses custard. At home in Italy, people will often use raw eggs, beating the yolks with the sugar and mascarpone, then folding the whites in very gently.

Prep time: 25 mins | Total time: 1 hour, 25 mins | Servings: 8

Ingredients

- ❖ Savoiardi (Ladyfinger) biscuits, around 300-400g (10-13 oz), depending on the size of your dish
- ❖ 12 espresso cups of espresso coffee, cooled
- ❖ A good splash (100 ml/3 ozs) of marsala wine or sweet dessert wine/liqueur
- ❖ 125 g (4 oz) sugar
- ❖ 500 ml (1 pint) milk
- ❖ 3 large or 4 medium egg yolks
- ❖ 2 tablespoons flour
- ❖ 1 fresh vanilla pod
- ❖ 450 g (1 lb) mascarpone cheese
- ❖ Good quality bitter cocoa powder to decorate

Directions

- ❖ Make the coffee and allow to cool in a bowl. Add the liqueur.
- ❖ Split open the vanilla pod and place in a saucepan with the milk. Bring to the boil slowly.
- ❖ In a large bowl, vigorously beat the egg yolks with the sugar until the result is light in colour and frothy.
- ❖ Add the flour and beat well.
- ❖ Remove the vanilla pod from the milk, after scraping the seeds into it.
- ❖ Add the milk to the bowl gradually, beating constantly with a whisk.
- ❖ Slowly reheat, stirring continuously in the same direction, until quite thick. It will thicken even more once it cools. Allow to cool, with clingfilm (saran wrap) touching it so that a skin does not form.
- ❖ Add the mascarpone cheese to the custard mix.

- ❖ In your serving dish, spread out a little custard, then cover with the ladyfinger biscuits, first dipping them lightly (get them nice and wet but don't get them soggy!) in the coffee and liqueur mix.
- ❖ Carefully spread half the rest of the custard mixture on top, and add another layer of biscuits dipped in the coffee and liqueur mix.
- ❖ Finish with the remaining custard and decorate with dusted cocoa powder.
- ❖ Leave to rest in the fridge for a couple of hours at least before serving.

Panna Cotta

Italian Cooked Cream



Vegetarian

The secret to a good panna cotta is achieving something that sets, but is still wonderfully creamy. Experiment with agar- agar quantities since they do vary! The alternatives (using gelatin or fish glue) are to our tastes just too jelly-like and not creamy enough.

For 6-8 small crème caramel-type moulds:

Ingredients

For the base

- ❖ 1 litre of cream (or 3/4 litre cream and 1/4 of full cream milk)
- ❖ 3 level teaspoons of sugar Half a fresh vanilla pod
- ❖ Approx 5g agar-agar in powder, flakes or sticks

For the sauce

- ❖ 300 g (10 oz) of ripe strawberries, kiwis or mango
- ❖ Sugar

Directions

- ❖ Split open the vanilla pod and place in a saucepan with the sugar and cream (and milk if using). Bring to the boil, stirring constantly.
- ❖ When the mixture has come to the boil, add the agar-agar, lower the heat and leave for a further two or three minutes.
- ❖ Pour the mixture into the moulds, allow to cool and place in a refrigerator for at least 2 hours before serving.
- ❖ Wash and prepare the fruit, cutting it into small pieces.
- ❖ Add just enough sugar to sweeten (approx 1-2 teaspoons, depending on the fruit).
- ❖ Heat on a low flame for a few minutes, just enough for the fruit to soften.
- ❖ Leave to cool. Serve spooned over the panna cotta once out of its mould.

Crostata di Mele con Frangipane

Apple Tart with Frangipane Layer



Vegetarian

Moist, deliciously simple tart.

Serves 8-12 people (two 9-inch pies)

Ingredients

For the rich shortcrust

- ❖ 500g (1 lb) plain (all-purpose) flour
- ❖ 300g (10 oz) butter
- ❖ 200g (7 oz) sugar
- ❖ 4 egg yolks
- ❖ Zest of 1 untreated lemon

For the frangipane layer

- ❖ 100g (3 ½ oz) butter at room temperature
- ❖ 100g (3 ½ oz) icing sugar
- ❖ 100g (3 ½ oz) finely ground peeled almonds
- ❖ 30g (1 oz) flour
- ❖ 2 eggs

To top

- ❖ 4 apples, peeled, cored and sliced (squeeze a little lemon juice on them so they don't oxidise)

Directions

For the shortcrust dough

- ❖ Line an ovenproof tart dish with baking paper.
- ❖ On a wooden work surface, mix together the flour, sugar and butter, cut into little pieces. Rub the butter into the flour and sugar, until it is completely worked in. Work lightly so that the butter does not melt.
- ❖ Make a mound out of this mixture and make a well in the centre. Add the eggs yolks and lemon zest (careful not to grate the bitter pith in too!)
- ❖ Work the ingredients together, first with a fork, then with your hands, until you have a smooth, soft pastry dough.
- ❖ Wrap the pastry dough in clingfilm and refrigerate it for at least 30 minutes (ideally 2 hours, especially in warm weather).

For the frangipane layer

- ❖ Mix together the ingredients, first the icing sugar and butter, then the remaining ingredients.

To assemble

- ❖ Roll out the pastry dough carefully onto greaseproof (parchment) paper and place in your tart dish. You should try and achieve a 1 cm (half-inch) thickness. If you have pastry left over, use to make delicious cookies! If the dough is too dry, add vodka a tablespoon or so at a time to moisten (the vodka will allow the dough to be worked, but evaporates readily so the crust is still crunchy).
- ❖ Spoon the frangipane mixture over the pastry.
- ❖ Arrange the apples on top.
- ❖ Cook in an oven preheated to 180°C/350°F for 35 minutes, or until the pastry is golden brown.

Cantuccini

Tuscan Almond Biscotti



Vegetarian

The classic “biscotti” as they are often known in the US (in Italian, this just means any “biscuits”). Using the finest flour available (Italian “00” is the best) results in the most mouthwatering biscuits.

Prep time: 35 mins | Cook time: 45 mins | Servings: 20+

Ingredients

- ❖ 3 ¾ cups /500g/1 lb plain (all-purpose) flour
- ❖ 1 ½ cups/400g/ 13 oz sugar
- ❖ 8 oz/250g whole almonds, toasted
- ❖ 3 eggs
- ❖ 3 egg yolks
- ❖ 3.5 Tbsp/50g melted butter
- ❖ 2 tsp/5gm/1 sachet “natural” baking powder
- ❖ 1 glass sweet *vin santo* or sweet cream sherry
- ❖ pinch of salt
- ❖ good pinch of anise seed

For glaze

- ❖ 1 egg yolk, half an egg white, anise seed

Directions

- ❖ Preheat your oven to 170°C/340°F
- ❖ With the flour, make a well on your work surface.
- ❖ Put all the other ingredients into the well, except the almonds.
- ❖ Working first with a fork and then with your hands, amalgamate all the ingredients.
- ❖ Add the toasted, cooled almonds to the mixture.

- ❖ With a large metal spoon, spoon strips (approx 2 inches by 8 inches/4 cm by 15 cm) onto a floured surface. Roll in the flour and place on a baking sheet with baking paper on top.
- ❖ Bake in an oven on 170°C/340°F for approximately 30 minutes or until golden.
- ❖ Take out of the oven, cut the strips diagonally into biscuits approximately 1 cm (half inch) thick, and brush with the glaze.
- ❖ Return to the oven and bake for a further 10-15 minutes until golden and glazed.

Crostata di Fichi e Pere

Pear and Fig Tart



Season: Summer; Vegetarian

You can make this tart with pretty much any fruit, but the combination of figs and pears is divine!

Serves 8-12 people

Ingredients

For the rich shortcrust

- ❖ 500g (1 lb) plain (all-purpose) flour
- ❖ 300g (10 oz) butter
- ❖ 200g (7 oz) sugar
- ❖ 4 egg yolks
- ❖ Zest of 1 untreated lemon

For the topping

- ❖ 10 small ripe pears
- ❖ 16 fresh ripe figs
- ❖ 50 g butter
- ❖ 100 g sugar

Directions

For the shortcrust dough

- ❖ Line an ovenproof tart dish with baking paper.
- ❖ On a wooden work surface, mix together the flour, sugar and butter, cut into little pieces. Rub the butter into the flour and sugar, until it is completely worked in. Work lightly so that the butter does not melt.
- ❖ Make a mound out of this mixture and make a well in the centre. Add the egg yolks and lemon zest (careful not to grate the bitter pith in too!)
- ❖ Work the ingredients together, first with a fork, then with your hands, until you have a smooth, soft pastry dough.

- ❖ Wrap the pastry dough in clingfilm and refrigerate it for at least 30 minutes (ideally 2 hours, especially in warm weather).

For the tart

- ❖ Peel, core and halve the pears. Halve the figs.
- ❖ In 50 g of butter and 100 g of sugar, caramelise the fruit, covering the pan for the first 10 minutes so that the fruit releases its liquid. Then continue to cook without the lid for a further minutes, until the fruit is covered with a thick syrup.

Assembling

- ❖ Arrange the syrupy fruit in the tart dish in a circular pattern, remembering to put the side that will be visible face down.
- ❖ Roll out the pastry dough carefully and place over the fruit, pressing the edges of the dough into the sides of the dish. You should try and achieve a 1 cm (half-inch) thickness. If you have pastry left over, use to make delicious cookies!
- ❖ Cook in an oven preheated to 180°C/350°F for 35 minutes, or until the pastry is golden brown.
- ❖ Turn upside down carefully onto a plate.
- ❖ Serve with whipped cream or custard (see the tiramisù recipe), or even whipped cream folded into custard.

Torta di Carote

Dairy-Free Carrot Cake



Vegetarian

Hardly a dieter's cake – the 5 eggs probably make up for any points you gain by not having dairy, but light nonetheless.

Ingredients

- ❖ 250g (8 oz) carrots, peeled
- ❖ 250g (8 oz) almonds, peeled
- ❖ 150g (5 oz) sugar
- ❖ 1 lemon
- ❖ 70g (2 oz) plain flour
- ❖ 5 eggs
- ❖ Icing sugar and lemon juice to glaze (to taste)

Directions

- ❖ Preheat your oven to 180°C/350°F
- ❖ Finely chop the carrots using a food processor.
- ❖ Finely chop the almonds using a food processor.
- ❖ Mix these together in a bowl. Add the juice of the lemon and the grated rind.
- ❖ Separate the eggs, and put aside the whites. Whisk together the sugar with the egg yolks until the resulting mixture is frothy and a pale yellow.
- ❖ Add to the carrot and almond mixture, along with the flour. Mix well.
- ❖ Beat the egg whites to stiff peaks. Fold carefully into the carrot mixture.
- ❖ Bake for 45 minutes, or until a skewer placed in the middle of the cake comes out clean.
- ❖ Add lemon juice to icing sugar and use this to glaze the cake while still hot.

Torta di Ricotta

Italian Cheesecake

Vegetarian

Try this and it may well become your favourite baked cheesecake recipe! In any case it will be very different from any cheesecake you have had in the past.

For 8-12 people

Ingredients

- ❖ 300 g/10 oz. Graham crackers (US)/Rich Tea (UK) biscuits or similar
- ❖ 100 g butter, at room temperature
- ❖ 250 g (8 oz) Quark cheese or similar (e.g. creamy crème fraîche – not too runny)
- ❖ 250 g (8 oz) Ricotta
- ❖ 250 g (8 oz) Greek yogurt or similar (creamy – not too runny)
- ❖ A little whipped cream, If necessary
- ❖ 150 g sugar
- ❖ 3 eggs
- ❖ Small jar good fruit jam/jelly

Directions

- ❖ Preheat the oven to 180°C (350°F)
- ❖ Line an ovenproof tart dish (30 cm/12 in approx) with baking paper.
- ❖ In a bowl, crumble the Graham crackers into small pieces (you can use a food processor) and work in the butter with your hands.
- ❖ Press this base mixture into your ovenproof dish, packing it in well.
- ❖ Separate the eggs and reserve the whites.
- ❖ Add the sugar to the yolks and beat well. Add the ricotta, quark and yogurt.
- ❖ Whip the egg whites to stiff peaks, and fold into the cheese mixture carefully.
- ❖ If the mixture seems very solid, fold in a little whipped cream (100 ml/3 oz)
- ❖ Spread this mixture on top of the base, smoothing the surface.
- ❖ Bake for 30-40 minutes at 180°C (350°F)
- ❖ When you can tap on the door of the oven and the cheese mixture does not move, it is set. Switch off the oven. You can leave the cake inside for another half an hour to set further, or take it out of the oven to cool, if you prefer it softer.
- ❖ When the cake has cooled a little, warm the jam/jelly in a saucepan until it is liquid. With a spatula, apply it to the surface of the cake.
- ❖ Leave to cool.

Zuppa Inglese

Tiramisu-Like Dessert

Vegetarian

This dessert often gets translated as “trifle”. It is a layered dessert like trifle, but is as far as one can get from the jelly and sherry of British offerings.

Ingredients

- ❖ Savoiardi (Ladyfinger) biscuits, around 300-400g (10-13 oz), depending on the size of your dish
- ❖ 6-8 espresso cups of espresso coffee, cooled
- ❖ A good splash (100 ml) of marsala wine or sweet dessert wine/liqueur
- ❖ 125 g (4 oz) sugar
- ❖ 500 ml (1 pint) milk
- ❖ 4 egg yolks
- ❖ 2 tablespoons flour
- ❖ 1 fresh vanilla pod
- ❖ 250 ml (1/2 pint) whipping cream, 30 g (1 oz) sugar
- ❖ 100 g (3 oz) good quality bitter cocoa powder
- ❖ Chocolate shavings to decorate

Directions

- ❖ Make the coffee and allow to cool in a bowl. Add the liqueur.
- ❖ Split open the vanilla pod and place in a saucepan with the milk. Bring to the boil.
- ❖ In a large bowl, vigorously beat the egg yolks with the sugar until the result is light in colour and frothy.
- ❖ Add the flour and beat well.
- ❖ Add the milk (remove the vanilla pod) gradually, beating constantly with a whisk.
- ❖ Slowly bring back to the boil. The custard should be quite thick but will thicken even more once it cools. Allow to cool.
- ❖ Set aside half the custard. To the other half, add the cocoa powder and mix in well.
- ❖ Whip the cream until it is stiff, adding the sugar towards the end.
- ❖ In your serving dish, spread out the custard, then cover with the ladyfinger biscuits, first dipping them lightly (don't get them soggy!) in the coffee and liqueur mix.
- ❖ Carefully spread the chocolate custard on top, and add another layer of biscuits dipped in the coffee and liqueur mix.
- ❖ Finish with the layer of whipped cream (and chocolate shavings if you like).

Torta di Mele

Moist Apple Cake



Vegetarian

Manuela's mother's recipe. Thanks Licia!

Prep time: 35 mins | Cook time: 40 mins | Servings: 8

Ingredients

- ❖ 5 apples
- ❖ Juice of 1 lemon
- ❖ 200 g/7 oz. sugar
- ❖ Seeds scraped from 1 vanilla pod or a few drops of good vanilla essence
- ❖ 5 eggs
- ❖ 300g/10 oz. plain flour
- ❖ 150 g/5 oz. butter
- ❖ Natural baking powder (cream of tartar) for 300 g/10 oz flour
- ❖ 50 g pine nuts, toasted

Directions

- ❖ Preheat the oven to 170°C/340°F. Put the butter into a pot and melt in the oven, taking care that it doesn't burn.
- ❖ Peel the apples and cut them into small pieces. Add the lemon juice and 50 g of the sugar. Mix together and set aside.
- ❖ Break the eggs into a large bowl. Add the remaining sugar and beat together well.
- ❖ Add the melted butter, the vanilla, the flour and the yeast, mixing well.
- ❖ Add the apples.
- ❖ Put the mixture in a cake tin, sprinkle the toasted pine nuts on top and bake for 40 minutes or until a skewer inserted in the centre of the cake comes out clean.
- ❖ Serve with whipped cream, custard or vanilla ice cream.

