

SPRING RECIPES

BUON APPETITO

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Spring Recipes

Spring time in Italy is a glorious affair. Like in Botticelli's "Primavera" it is a time of rebirth, offering warmer, longer days and plenty of fresh produce with delicate flavors. From fresh peas, to asparagus and artichokes you'd be hard pressed to find a better season to enjoy some of the exciting ways Italians can cook with vegetables.

Other seasonal ingredients we can include in our spring grocery list are zucchini (late spring/early summer) and lemons.

Below is a list of Italian recipes using ingredients from the season of Spring to prepare appetizers, primi first courses or main dishes and desserts.

Buon Appetito!

Georgette
Editor, Italy Magazine



Drinks



How to make Limoncello

In Italian supermarkets you can buy bottles of 95% proof alcohol, which the locals use to produce all sorts of infused liqueurs. Almost any kind of fruit is suitable (and even herbs such as rosemary or basil), but limoncello, known outside of Italy also as lemoncello, the liqueur made from lemons, is the most common. Every family has its own recipe. This one was given to me by Michelina, a friend from Sorrento, and was devised by her grandmother.

DRINKS



- **DIFFICULTY LEVEL** – LOW
- **COOKING TIME** – 1 HOUR
- **COST** – MEDIUM

INGREDIENTS

- LEMONS – 8-10
- 95% PROOF ALCOHOL – 1 L
- WATER – 1 L
- SUGAR – 1 KG

PREPARATION

Peel the lemons and add the peel to a litre of alcohol. (The inside of the fruit can be used for other purposes). Leave in a dark place for a week so that the flavours from the peel infuse into the liquid. After a week, you are ready to make the limoncello. Create a syrup boiling the water and dissolving the sugar in it. Allow this mixture to cool then add to the alcohol (now yellow and perfumed with lemon) having first removed the lemon peel. Decant into bottles in a dark place for ten days and serve chilled straight from the freezer. If you cannot find 95% proof alcohol, try using straight vodka instead.



Antipasto

The “antipasti” or appetizer course in Italy is the perfect time to use the plethora of delicious fresh Spring vegetables from your local market such as peas, artichokes and zucchini!

Fried Zucchini Blossoms

Zucchini is a very popular vegetable in Italy and as it is a country that is against food waste, the flowers are one example of how to make the side element of the vegetable the true star of the show. When it comes to one of the most satisfying starters or sides you can find this Spring in Italy, this recipe ticks off all of the boxes when it comes to the divine combination of “crunchy, salty, and utterly addictive”. These fried zucchini blossoms make for a delicious starter and the perfect way to ring in Spring.

Daniela Del Balzo

ANTIPASTO



- **DIFFICULTY LEVEL** – MEDIUM
- **COOKING TIME** – 20 MINUTES
- **COST** – LOW

INGREDIENTS

- ZUCCHINI FLOWERS – 12
- FLOUR – 100 G
- ICE-COLD SPARKLING WATER OR BEER – 1 CUP
- ANCHOVIES – 3
- MOZZARELLA – 3 SLICES
- CANOLA OR PEANUT OIL – 1 L

PREPARATION

Clean the zucchini blossoms: remove the hard, long stem inside each blossom and the thin thorn-like filaments running up from the bottom. Cut off the stem at the bottom, just where it meets the bud.

Prepare the batter mixing flour and cold sparkling water/beer in a large bowl.

Stuff the zucchini blossoms with chopped mozzarella and anchovies, then dunk a few stuffed blossoms in the batter and deep-fry in hot vegetable oil (Canola or Peanut oil) until they become crispy and golden on both side (turning once).

Remove them from the hot oil and place them on a dish lined with paper towels. Sprinkle with salt and serve.

Pea Pesto

Pea pesto, or *pesto di piselli*, is a flavorful sauce that is both practical and versatile. It's a variant to *pesto alla genovese* and is packed with peas, mint and basil. It's perfect to mix with a hot bowl of pasta for a satisfying vegetarian dish. Or, how about spreading this chunky pesto on toasted crostini and bruschetta for a simple appetizer that you can whip up in a matter of minutes. Looking for a quick dip? Serve it alongside seasonal raw veggies. The options are truly endless with this simple and delicious pea pesto.

Cindy Swain

ANTIPASTO



- **DIFFICULTY LEVEL** – LOW
- **COOKING TIME** – 5 MINUTES
- **COST** – LOW

INGREDIENTS

- EXTRA VIRGIN OLIVE OIL – 1/2 CUP + MORE IF NEEDED TO ARRIVE AT THE CONSISTENCY DESIRED
- PEAS – 1 CUP FRESH OR FROZEN
- LEMON JUICE – 1 TABLESPOON
- FRESH BASIL – 1 CUP (175 G) OR ARBORIO RICE
- GARLIC CLOVES – 1/2 CLOVE GARLIC, SKIN REMOVED
- WALNUTS – 1/3 CUP
- PARMIGIANO REGGIANO CHEESE – 1/4 CUP GRATED
- SALT & PEPPER – TO TASTE

PREPARATION

Add the peas to boiling salted water and cook for 2 minutes. Drain and rinse in cold water or put in an ice bath. Add the peas and the rest of the ingredients to a food processor and blend until smooth. Add more extra virgin olive oil if needed, and adjust with salt, black pepper and lemon, to taste.

Artichokes “Alla Romana”

The Romanesco artichoke variety is widely considered among the best. Its shape, size and almost round flower head make it the ideal artichoke to be stuffed.

It’s mainly grown on the coast north of Rome near Ladispoli and Cerveteri, and used in kitchens around the world. It derives from the Castellammare and Campagnano cultivars and produced in the provinces of Rome, Viterbo and Latina. The leaves are compact, green with purple streaks and, unlike other varieties, don’t have thorns; Carciofo Romanesco is only found in spring, from March to May.

Recently, the “Carciofo Romanesco del Lazio” has obtained the Protected Geographical Indication (IGP).

Artichokes were already widely known and used in antiquity. They were especially popular in the Mediterranean area and it is believed that the Etruscans were the first to grow them. We love this version of *carciofo alla romana*, made with breadcrumbs, garlic and parsley. Enjoy the recipe below!

Daniela Del Balzo

ANTIPESTO



- **DIFFICULTY LEVEL** – LOW
- **COOKING TIME** – 1 HOUR
- **COST** – LOW
- **SERVES** – 4

INGREDIENTS

- ARTICHOKES – 4
- MINT
- PARSLEY
- CLOVES – 1 GARLIC
- EXTRA VIRGIN OLIVE OIL – 3 TABLESPOONS
- WARM WATER – 1 CUP
- SALT
- PEPPER
- BREADCRUMBS – 2 TEASPOONS

PREPARATION

Snap off any tough outer leaves of the artichokes, trim the stems and put them in a bowl with water and lemon juice (this will prevent them from getting dark and brownish). In a small bowl mix the roman mint, parsley, chopped garlic salt, pepper and breadcrumb.

Use the mixture to fill the cavity of each artichoke.

Place the artichokes in a deep pan of the right diameters so that they stay close, add oil and let them become golden brown.

Add one cup of warm water, cover and simmer for 30 minutes.

Fava Beans and Pecorino

In Tuscany, fava beans and Pecorino Toscano cheese are a classic springtime combination because that's when the beans come into season. When the first Spring warm days arrive and you finally begin to organize picnics, in Tuscany there are two ingredients that are always present in every wicker basket: fresh fava beans and Pecorino Toscano.

“Bacelli” is the Tuscan name for fava beans: all Tuscan people love to eat them raw, with olive oil and fresh delicious cheese to complete this simple and very tasty recipe. Let's celebrate Spring and this marvelous warm sun, a presto in Toscana to enjoy all this together!

ANTIPASTO



INGREDIENTS

- RAW FAVA BEANS – 3 CUPS (400 G) SHELLED FAVA BEANS
- FAVA BEANS – 900 G, PEELED
- PECORINO TOSCANO – 110 G, SLICED INTO 1-M-LONG, MATCHSTICK-THICK SEGMENTS
- OLIVE OIL – 1/4 CUP / 55 ML
- FINE SEA SALT
- FRESHLY GROUND BLACK PEPPER

PREPARATION

1. Peel the fava beans. Peeling fava beans requires two steps: First, carefully remove the tough outer pod. (If you like, you can run a paring knife along the seam, but be careful not to push in too far or you'll cut the bean.) Then, carefully remove the skin that envelops each individual bean. One pound / 450 G of fava beans in the pod yields about 1/2 cup / 110g of beans.
2. Place the fava beans and pecorino in a small mixing bowl. Drizzle the olive oil over the top and season with salt and pepper. Toss very gently just to combine the flavors and being careful not to break the beans or crush the cheese.
3. Mound a quarter of the beans and cheese in the center of each of 4 salad plates.



Recipe provided by: KM Zero Tours



Primo

For your primi or first courses, seasonal ingredients such as fava beans make for an addictively-delicious stew or throw in an anchovy or two for extra flavour in one of our favorite lemon, roasted cherry tomato pasta dishes.

Pici With Roasted Cherry Tomatoes, Fresh Anchovies and Lemon

Pici is the Maremma Tuscany's favourite pasta. It's the predecessor to spaghetti and is hand-rolled. If you're pressed for time, just use fresh spaghetti. The sauce is rich, but fresh, making it a great warm Spring day's lunch dish.

Elisa Scarton Detti

PRIMO



- **DIFFICULTY LEVEL** – MEDIUM
- **COOKING TIME** – 30 MINUTES
- **COST** – MEDIUM

INGREDIENTS

- EXTRA VIRGIN OLIVE OIL – 2 TABLESPOONS, PLUS MORE FOR GARNISH
- ALL PURPOSE FLOUR – 800 G
- EGG – 1
- EXTRA VIRGIN OLIVE OIL – 1 TABLESPOON
- WARM WATER – 500 ML
- SALT
- GARLIC CLOVES – 2 (DICED)
- LEMON ZEST – OF 1/2 LEMON
- PACHINO TOMATOES – 250 G (CUT IN HALF)
- ANCHOVIES – 250 G (CLEANED AND FILLETED)

PREPARATION

Place your flour in a bowl. Make a well in the centre and add all the remaining ingredients except the semolina. Gently mix in the flour with a fork. Turn onto a work surface and knead to get a smooth dough. Add more flour or water if you need to. Shape the dough into a ball, rub with a little olive oil and leave to rest covered with a clean tea towel for 30 minutes.

Meanwhile prepare your sauce by heating a tablespoon of olive oil in a large saucepan over medium heat. Add your garlic and fry for 1-2 minutes. Then add the lemon zest and the tomatoes cut side down – this helps to the caramelise them and realise their juices. Add all but a handful of the anchovies to the pan and fry for 8-10 minutes or until cooked. Remove from the heat and set aside.

Roll your dough out into a rough ½ centimetre thick rectangle. Generously coat the surface with olive oil. This stops the pasta drying out while you roll your pici. Using a pizza cutter or a sharp knife, cut ½ centimetre strips. Roll each strip back and forth on your kitchen counter to round out the edges. Dust generously with semolina to stop the pici sticking to one another.

Heat a splash of olive oil in another saucepan over medium heat. Add the remaining anchovies and cook until browned on both sides (8 minutes), taking care not to break up the flesh. Remove from the pan and set aside.

Bring a big pot of salted water to the boil and cook your pici for 5 minutes. Drain and toss in the pan with the sauce to heat through. Serve with the remaining anchovies arranged on top. Feel free to add some more lemon zest for garnish.

Scafata – Fava Bean Stew

Scafata is a typical recipe from the region of Umbria made with a variety of spring vegetables. The word *scafata* derives from the name *scafo* which is dialect for the fava pod. This dish is considered to be part of *la cucina contadina* or “the farmer’s cuisine”, because this simple recipe uses everything that can be easily procured from the land. Pancetta is included in the traditional recipe, but for a vegetarian version like this, it can simply be left out.

Fava beans, or broad beans, are the oldest known beans in the world and are the star of this recipe and used as well in a variety of other Mediterranean dishes. They grow in a soft fuzzy pod, and are much larger than peas. Although in some countries it is custom to peel the transparent skin off the bean, here in Italy, the fava beans are often just shucked from the pod and cooked.



- **DIFFICULTY LEVEL** – LOW
- **COOKING TIME** – 40 MINUTES
- **COST** – LOW
- **SERVES** – 4-6

INGREDIENTS

- RAW FAVA BEANS – 3 CUPS (400 G) SHELLED FAVA BEANS
- COARSE SALT – 1/2 TABLESPOON
- EXTRA VIRGIN OLIVE OIL – 2 TABLESPOONS
- TROPEA ONION – 1 (FINELY CHOPPED)
- GARLIC CLOVES – 1 (FINELY CHOPPED)
- PEAS – 2 CUPS (285 G) SHELLED PEAS (OR FROZEN)
- CHERRY TOMATOES – 13.5 OZ (400 G) CHERRY OR DATTERINI TOMATOES, WITHOUT THE SKINS*
- SWISS CHARD – 12.5 OZ (350 G)
- BASIL – 1 HANDFUL BASIL OR MINT, CHOPPED
- BLACK PEPPER – SALT AND FRESHLY CRACKED BLACK PEPPER, AS NEEDED

PREPARATION

Bring a medium pot of water to boil. Salt the water then add the fava beans and cook for 2-3 minutes. Drain them and reserve the hot water.

Heat the extra virgin olive oil in a skillet then add the onion and cook for 3-4 minutes over medium heat. Add the garlic and continue cooking for another minute.

Now add the fava beans, tomatoes, swiss chard and half of a ladle of the hot water. Cover the skillet and cook for 15-20 minutes, stirring occasionally and adding more water if necessary to keep the mixture from sticking to the pan.

Now that the *scafata* is ready, boil the peas for 1-2 minutes in the reserved water, drain and add to the fava mixture. Adjust the flavor with salt and pepper to taste. Serve warm o cold. This dish is best made a day or two in advance and eaten cold or reheated.

* To easily remove the tomato skins, stick the tomatoes in the freezer over night then run them under warm water to easily remove the skin. Alternatively, you can blanch them for 1 minute and then run them under cold water and the skins will easily come off quite easily.

Cindy Swain

Gnocchi with Artichokes Cream and Crunchy Bacon

PRIMO



INGREDIENTS

FOR THE GNOCCHI:

- POTATOES – 1 KG
- 00 FLOUR – 300 G
- EGG – 1
- FINE SALT

FOR THE SAUCE:

- ARTICHOKE – 4
- LEMON – 1/2
- ONION – 1/2
- SMOKED BACON – 50 G
- GRATED PECORINO CHEESE – 50 G
- VEGETABLE BROTH – 250 ML
- FRESH PARSLEY
- EXTRA VIRGIN OLIVE OIL
- SALT AND PEPPER



Recipe provided by: Eat & Walk Italy

PREPARATION

To prepare the potato gnocchi, start by boiling these: place the potatoes in a large pot and cover with plenty of cold water. From the moment the water boils, count about 30-40 minutes, depending on their size; do the fork test and if the prongs get into the middle without difficulty then you can drain them.

Peel them while they are still hot and immediately crush them on the flour you have poured into the pastry board. Then add the lightly beaten egg together with a pinch of salt and knead everything with your hands until you get a soft but firm dough. Remember that working them too much, the dumplings will become hard during cooking, so limit yourself to kneading the necessary.

Take a part of the dough and spread it with your fingertips to make round strips 2 centimeters thick: to do this, help yourself by flouring the pastry board, occasionally, with the semolina. In the meantime, cover the remaining dough with a cloth to prevent it from drying out.

Then cut the loins into small pieces and with a light pressure with your thumb, drag them on the gnocchi line to obtain the classic shape. If you don't have this tool, you can use a fork and drag them on the prongs: also in this case, use the semolina flour to prevent them from sticking.

In the meantime, clean the artichokes by removing the hardest external leaves and the woody part of the stem.

Cut them into wedges and eliminate any fluff present in the heart, then leave them in a bowl with water acidulated with ½ lemon juice.

Pour the broth into a saucepan and heat it over medium heat.

Finely chop the onion and let it dry in a non-stick pan with a round of extra virgin olive oil. Add the artichokes into wedges, season with salt and pepper and cook for a few moments on medium heat.

Add the broth and parsley, cover and cook for about 10 minutes, stirring occasionally. In the meantime, cut the diced bacon and cook it in a non-stick pan until crispy.

When the artichokes are cooked, pour them into the glass of the mixer and blend them until creamy, return the cream to the pan and add a little grated pecorino cheese, mix to mix everything well.

As you prepare the potato gnocchi place them on a tray with a lightly floured cloth, well spaced from one another. If you intend to cook them you can pour them in boiling salted water. As soon as the gnocchi come to the surface they are considered cooked and then ready to be drained and pour it directly into the pan with the artichoke cream.

Skip the gnocchi briefly, adding a little cooking liquid should it become too thick.

Distribute the artichoke cream gnocchi in the individual bowls, decorate with the cubes of toasted smoked bacon and a sprinkling of grated pecorino cheese.

Enjoy your gnocchi with artichokes cream and crunchy bacon!

Secondo

For your second course in Italy, we keep to local traditions (Easter is a big one in Italy) with an herb-scented roasted lamb recipe and fish dish with seasonal asparagus and leeks. Normally you would add a few “contorni” (side dishes) such as roasted potatoes, or a simple salad to complete the meal.

Monkfish With Shaved Asparagus and Leeks

Monkfish, also called frog-fish and sea-devil, is an anglerfish that inhabits the Mediterranean Sea and is popular in Italian cuisine. Known as *coda di rospo* or *rana pescatrice* in Italian, the monkfish is a versatile fish that is baked, sautéed or often served in soups and stews.

In the past monkfish was considered the “poor man’s lobster” for its similar taste and texture. Throughout the years it has gained popularity in the food scene and although no longer a “poor man’s food”, it is still less expensive than lobster and perfect for special occasions.

Cindy Swain

SECONDO



- **DIFFICULTY LEVEL** – LOW
- **COOKING TIME** – 20 MINUTES
- **COST** – MEDIUM
- **SERVES** – 2

INGREDIENTS

- EXTRA VIRGIN OLIVE OIL – 1 TABLESPOON
- GARLIC CLOVES – 2, SKIN PEELED BUT LEFT WHOLE
- LEEK – 1, WHITE PART ONLY, THINLY CUT INTO JULIENNE STRIPS
- ASPARAGUS – 1 BUNCH (ABOUT 12 STICKS), THE BOTTOMS SNAPPED OFF THEN SHAVED WITH A VEGETABLE PEELER OR THINLY CUT INTO JULIENNE
- FRESH PARSLEY – 2 HANDFULS (FLAT LEAF)
- LEMON – 1/2 SMALL (JUICED)
- EXTRA VIRGIN OLIVE OIL – 3+ TABLESPOONS (START WITH 3 THEN INCREASE TO ARRIVE AT THE CONSISTENCY DESIRED)
- GINGER – 1/4 TEASPOON (GRATED)
- GARLIC CLOVES – 2 COOKED (THOSE USED FOR THE VEGGIES ABOVE)
- PAPRIKA – 1/8TH SWEET (OR ADJUST ACCORDING TO YOUR TASTES)
- SALT & PEPPER – TO TASTE

PREPARATION

1 tablespoon extra virgin olive oil. 13 OZ (790 G) Monkfish (or other firm fish), skinned, deboned and cut into cubes.

For the asparagus and leeks: Heat the extra virgin olive oil in a large skillet. Add the garlic and leeks; cook over medium heat for 5-6 minutes. Add the shaved asparagus and cook for another 3-4 minutes until soft.

For the parsley pesto: In a food processor blend together the parsley, lemon, extra virgin olive oil, pine nuts, ginger, garlic cloves from the vegetables, sweet paprika, salt and black pepper. If needed, add more extra virgin olive oil to arrive at the consistency desired. Adjust the paprika, salt and pepper to taste.

For the monkfish: Heat the extra virgin olive oil in a skillet, add the monkfish and cook on medium-high heat for 2-4 minutes, or until the fish has changed from transparent to white. The fish will leave a white milky liquid; drain and discard.

To serve: Use a pastry ring and divide the vegetable mixture. Top with the monkfish and drizzle the parsley sauce on top.

Grilled Lamb with Rosemary

Like many traditions in Italy, “Pasqua” or Easter is best celebrated best at the lunch or dinner table. As the family comes together for a long lunch that typically lasts several hours followed by a walk or a nap, one of the most popular recipes in Italy is that of cooking suckling lamb studded with slivers of garlic, crowned with sprigs of rosemary and roasted to a deep, golden hue. Here is one go-to recipe that will definitely have everyone coming back for seconds.

Germaine Stafford

SECONDO



- **DIFFICULTY LEVEL** – MEDIUM
- **COOKING TIME** – 1.5 HOURS
- **COST** – MEDIUM
- **SERVES** – 4-6

INGREDIENTS

- LEG OF LAMB – 1 (APPROXIMATELY 2 KG)
- LEMON JUICE
- EXTRA VIRGIN OLIVE OIL
- ROSEMARY
- GARLIC – 8-10 LARGE CLOVES
- SALT
- BLACK PEPPER

PREPARATION

Two or three days before you intend to cook the lamb, mix the lemon juice with an equal quantity of olive oil.

Place the leg of lamb in a deep container and rub with the oil and lemon juice. Season with salt and pepper and throw in a few sprigs of fresh rosemary and two or three cloves of garlic cut in half. Cover, place in refrigerator and turn a few times each day to ensure all of the lamb comes in contact with the marinade.

On the day you want to cook the lamb, remove from refrigerator and allow to come to room temperature. Make deep slits all over the surface of the meat where you will insert quartered cloves of garlic and small pieces of rosemary.

Season once more with salt and pepper. Prepare grill or barbeque so it gives off a low, constant heat and place leg of lamb on a medium rack above heat. Turn lamb regularly to ensure it cooks evenly and after an hour or so begin to test to see if meat is done. Be careful not to overcook as spring lamb is at its best done pink. Serve with parmesan roast potatoes.

Dolce

No true Italian meal would be complete without a dolce finale or sweet ending. We include a recipe for hot cross buns done the Italian way and include an Easter lemon-spice cake for lovers.



Pandiramerino (Rosemary and Sultana Buns)

Florentine *pandiramerino* are made with an olive oil-enriched bread dough and studded with fresh rosemary and sweet sultanas. These delightfully sticky, criss-crossed buns were traditionally served on *Giovedì Santo* or Holy Thursday in the Renaissance city. Like many other Italian treats that were originally made on designated feast days, *pandiramerino* are now available in Florentine bakeries year around. This recipe was adapted from one by Emiko Davies in her stunning cookbook *Florentine* – I’ve come up with after many an excuse to turn the oven on.

Rosemarie Scavo

PREPARATION

Pour tepid water in a large mixing bowl and add yeast and sugar. Stir and leave to sit until the yeast dissolves and foam rises to the surface (about 10 minutes). Add the flours and mix until the ingredients come together as a dough. Roll into a ball, score the dough with a cross on top and place in a large, lightly-greased bowl. Cover with plastic wrap and leave to rise in warm place away from draughts until doubled in size (about 1–2 hours).

In the meantime, soak the sultanas in just enough vin santo and the finely chopped rosemary and pinch of salt in the olive oil. Set aside to soak and infuse until the dough has risen.

Drain sultanas of excess liquid, and along with the rosemary, oil and salt, combine with the dough. Knead until all the oil has been absorbed and the rosemary and sultanas are evenly distributed throughout the dough. Transfer dough to a lightly dusted work surface and divide into eight small balls, weighing about 80-85 g each. Place the buns on a lined baking tray and cover loosely with a tea-towel. Leave to prove for another half an hour.

Preheat oven to 200 °C.

Brush the tops with olive oil and slash a noughts-and-crosses grid over each one with a sharp knife or razor. Prove for another 10-15 minutes, then bake in the oven for 20 minutes.

Meanwhile, prepare the hot syrup. Place sugar and water in a small saucepan and bring to boil. Remove from heat once all the sugar has dissolved and brush the hot-out-of-the-oven buns with the hot syrup.

These sticky buns are best eaten on the day they’re made. They do keep well though for up to two days in an airtight container. Serve them as treat for afternoon tea or as part of a sweet, Italian-style breakfast. *Buon appetito e buona Pasqua!*

- **DIFFICULTY LEVEL** – LOW
- **COOKING TIME** – 20 MINUTES
- **COST** – MEDIUM
- **SERVES** – MAKES 8 BUNS

INGREDIENTS

- FRESH YEAST – 12-15 G FRESH YEAST (OR 5 G ACTIVE DRIED YEAST)
- SUGAR – 15 G
- TEPID WATER – 180 ML
- BREAD FLOUR – 150 G SIFTED STRONG BREAD FLOUR
- FLOUR – 150 G SIFTED PLAIN (PREFERABLY STONE-MILLED) FLOUR, PLUS EXTRA FOR DUSTING
- SULTANAS – 70 G
- VIN SANTO – FOR SOAKING SULTANAS
- FRESH ROSEMARY – 2 FRESH ROSEMARY SPRIGS, FINELY CHOPPED
- EXTRA VIRGIN OLIVE OIL – 60 ML EXTRA VIRGIN OLIVE OIL, PLUS EXTRA FOR GREASING
- SALT – A PINCH OF SALT
- SUGAR (FOR HOT SYRUP) – 55 G
- WATER (FOR HOT SYRUP) – 40 ML

Ciaramicola: Easter Lemon-Spice Cake for Lovers

Ciaramicola, a lemon spice cake, covered with merengue and topped with sprinkles, is a classic Easter cake from the Perugia province of Umbria. It is customary for a woman to give one to her lover or fiancé on Easter morning as a symbol of her affection.

The cake, with its red and white hues matching the city’s colors, was created as an omage to Perugia, and is an unofficial symbol of the city. It’s said that the cake’s colors represents features of Perugia – Red for the Porta S. Angelo district, which is where firewood traditionally entered the city. White for the Porta Sole district because of its many marble and travertine facades. Blue for the district of Porta Susanna which leads to the lovely blue Lake Trasimeno. Green for the district of Porta Eburnea that lead towards the pastoral mountains and vineyards of the area. Yellow for Porta S. Pietro, the gateway to Perugia’s lush wheat fields. The cake dough is seasoned with lemon and spicy Alchermes liqueur, which gives it a lovely red tinge, and shaped like a large ring, crossed in the center with two ropes of dough.



- **DIFFICULTY LEVEL** – LOW
- **COOKING TIME** – 1.5 HOURS
- **COST** – LOW

INGREDIENTS

- BUTTER – 6 OUNCES, 3/4 CUP, 1 1/2 STICKS, UNSALTED BUTTER, ROOM TEMPERATURE, PLUS MORE FOR THE PAN
- ALL PURPOSE FLOUR – 3 CUPS, SIFTED, PLUS MORE AS NEEDED
- EGGS – 2, LARGE
- EGG YOLKS – 3, LARGE
- SUGAR – 1 CUP
- BAKING POWDER – 2 TEASPOONS
- BAKING SODA – 1 TEASPOON
- LEMON – ZEST AND JUICE OF 1 LEMON
- ALCHERMES LIQUEUR – 1/2 CUP ALCHERMES LIQUEUR OR SUBSTITUTE*
- SALT – 1/2 TEASPOON
- EGG WHITES – 3 LARGE EGG WHITES
- SUGAR – 1 1/4 CUPS CONFECTIONERS’ SUGAR
- SPRINKLES – MULTI-COLORED SPRINKLES OR NONPAREILS

PREPARATION

Francine Segan

Preheat the oven to 350°. Butter and flour a Bundt pan. Put the eggs, yolks and granulated sugar, into a bowl and beat, with an electric handheld mixer, until smooth and creamy. Add the butter and beat until creamy. Beat in the baking powder, baking soda, lemon zest and lemon juice, liqueur and salt and beat until combined. Sift in the flour, a little at a time, combining with a wooden spoon or your fingers, until a thick batter forms. The batter will be dense and sticky.

Spoon the batter into the prepared pan and let rest for 30 minutes so it can rise and settle into the pan. Bake 35-40 minutes until a toothpick inserted into the center section of the cake comes out clean. Remove the pan from the oven. Slide a knife around the edges of the cake and carefully turn it out onto a baking sheet. Turn the heat off in the oven, but keep the oven door closed.

Just a few minutes before the cake is ready to come out of the oven, make the meringue topping. In a bowl, using an electric hand mixer, beat the egg whites and confectioners sugar until you get a very glossy thick, dense meringue. Top the fully baked cake with the meringue, sprinkle with the sugar balls, and return to the warm oven until the glaze dries and sets, about 15 minutes.

Remove from the oven and serve.

* If you cannot find Alchermes substitute the following mixture: 1/4 cup white rum, 1/4 cup water, 1/4 teaspoon vanilla extract, 3 tablespoons sugar, 1 teaspoon orange blossom or rose water, a few drops of red food coloring plus a pinch of each of the following spices: ground cinnamon, ground coriander, grated nutmeg or ground mace, ground cardamom, ground cloves, ground star anise.



Cooking Schools

There is no better way to learn about Italy than through its cuisine. Italy is home to a vibrant culinary landscape with an emphasis on regional dishes that reflect the season. For those who want to dive a little deeper into what makes our “bel paese” tick, a course at one of these cooking schools is a fun way to experience the local gastronomic culture first-hand.



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- Discover the fascinating trabocchi fishing huts
- Meet local artists and artisans
- Milk a cow and make ricotta cheese
- Hunt truffle



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