

SUMMER RECIPES

# BUON APPETITO

*italy*  
magazine



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## Summer Recipes

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Summertime in Italy is finally here. When the temperatures rise, time seems to slow down as everyone embraces the holiday-like atmosphere with trips to the beach or a countryside escape. With this warmer weather comes a delightful range of delicious palate-pleasing recipes using plenty of fresh, seasonal produce. From succulent tomatoes, peaches and eggplant you'd be hard pressed to find a better season to enjoy some of the exciting ways Italians can cook with vegetables and fruit. Our collection of Italian summer recipes includes ideas for appetizers, primi, main courses and desserts; perfect for embracing the Italian *sole* directly on your plate.

Buon Appetito!

Georgette  
Editor, *Italy Magazine*

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# Drinks

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# Fresh Mint & Raspberry Spritz

A refreshing and pretty twist on the classic spritz. Use peppermint, spearmint, or other variety of fresh mint to make the liqueur. For very sweet, syrupy results, use 2 full cups of sugar; otherwise 1 to 1 ½ cups. Once made, the liqueur keeps indefinitely (meaning you can make these spritzes all summer long!). The recipe here makes a rather punchy brew, so note that you can reduce the amount of alcohol or use a lower-volume alcohol. An alcohol-free mint-flavored syrup, such as the kind used in making Italian sodas, would also work.

Amy Gulick



- **DIFFICULTY LEVEL** – LOW
- **COOKING TIME** – 15 MINUTES (PLUS 1-2 DAYS FOR THE HOMEMADE LIQUEUR)
- **COST** – LOW

## INGREDIENTS

- MINT LEAVES – 40-50 FRESH LEAVES (1 LARGE HANDFUL)
- GRAIN ALCOHOL – 1/3 CUP (95% ABV)
- WATER – 2 FULL CUPS
- CASTER SUGAR – 1-2 CUPS
- MINT LIQUEUR – 1 OZ
- PROSECCO – 2 OZ
- TONIC WATER – 2 OZ
- RASPBERRIES – 2-5
- MINT LEAVES – EXTRA

## PREPARATION

Make the syrup in advance. Cover the mint leaves with the alcohol in a clear glass bowl, seal with cling wrap, and let soak 24-36 hours. Occasionally swirl the ingredients. The liquid will turn a lovely green color, while the mint leaves become crisp and desiccated. Strain well using a fine-mesh strainer and filter again if necessary through a thin layer of cotton. Press all the liquid through the filter.

Bring the water and desired amount of sugar just to a boil in a saucepan, stirring frequently, until the liquid is clear. Remove from the heat and let cool. Add the sugar water to the mint-infused alcohol and mix well. Transfer to a glass bottle.

Grind the ice cubes with a few mint leaves in the metal tumbler of a cocktail shaker. Add the mint liqueur, close and shake well. Add the Prosecco and stir. Pour into large wine glasses or glass tumblers. Top the glasses with the tonic water and garnish with the extra mint leaves. Decorate the rim of the glasses with the berries, or drop a few inside the glass (optional).



A close-up photograph of a rustic, dark brown woven basket filled with bright red cherry tomatoes. Some tomatoes are still attached to their green stems. The basket sits on a light-colored, textured stone surface. Several more cherry tomatoes are scattered on the surface around the basket. The background is softly blurred, showing more of the stone surface and a hint of a white cloth.

# Antipasto

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The “antipasti” or appetizer course in Italy is the perfect time to use the plethora of delicious fresh summer vegetables (or fruit) from your local market such as tomatoes, zucchini or figs.



# Whipped Feta, Tomato, Basil & Lemon Zest Bruschetta

Bruschetta is likely one of Italy’s most well known appetizers. Its versatility lends itself to a myriad of preparations. The common factor of all recipes is the toasted bread, while the toppings range from classic, simple ingredients – fresh-pressed olive oils, fragrant garlic, sea salt and black pepper, vine-ripened tomatoes, wild-grown oregano, handmade cheeses, cured meats – to creative combinations with international flavors. In Tuscany, the local bruschetta is called *fettunta*, in Piedmont *soma d’aj* and in Calabria *fedda ruscia*.

Cindy Swain



- **DIFFICULTY LEVEL** – LOW
- **COOKING TIME** – 10 MINUTES
- **COST** – LOW
- **SERVES** – 6-8

## INGREDIENTS

- BAGUETTE – 1 OR ARTISANAL LOAF OF BREAD
- FETA CHEESE – 8 FETA CHEESE, AT ROOM TEMPERATURE
- CREAM CHEESE – 1/3 CUP (2.6 OZ), AT ROOM TEMPERATURE
- GRAPE TOMATOES – 10, QUARTERED
- BASIL – 1 HANDFUL OF BASIL LEAVES, CHOPPED
- EXTRA VIRGIN OLIVE OIL
- LEMON – 1 ORGANIC LEMON, ZESTED

## PREPARATION

Slice and toast the bread. Add the feta and cream cheese to a food processor. Blend until well combined; about 3 minutes.

Top the toasted bread with the whipped cheese mixture, tomatoes, basil, a swirl of extra virgin olive oil and lemon zest. *Buon appetito!*



# Zucchini in Carpione

In the Middle Ages, people extended the shelf life of fried fish and vegetables by marinating them in vinegar and spices. This method of preservation appears to have appealed to many peoples’ tastebuds and lives on in a variety of modern-day dishes such as the Spanish *escabeche*, the Venetian *sarde in saor* and southern Italian *zucchine alla scapece*.

The Piedmontese interpretation of this medieval preparation, *zucchine in carpione*, is made with fried zucchinis, onions, sage leaves and a marinade of vinegar and white wine. Zesty and aromatic, this summer appetiser is best prepared at least a day before so the flavours have had to time to infuse. Leave it chill in the fridge for 24 hours and, the next day, you’ll be grateful that you won’t have to sweat over a stovetop on a scorching summer’s day! The hard work will have been done already.

The method for making *zucchine in carpione* (Zucchini Marinated in Vinegar and Wine) detailed below is less of a recipe and more of a technique. If you wish to preserve a bigger batch of these summer squashes, feel free to fry more than the amount indicated. You can also adjust the amounts of the marinating liquids to your taste. Prefer something tangier? Use more vinegar for your marinade. Looking for a sweeter flavour? Then add more white wine. Please note that the wine’s alcohol content can be removed by bringing it boil.

Rosemarie Scavo

ANTIPASTO



- **DIFFICULTY LEVEL** – LOW
- **COOKING TIME** – 30 MINUTES + 24 HOURS FOR MARINATING
- **COST** – LOW

## INGREDIENTS

- ZUCCHINIS – 6-7 MEDIUM-SIZED
- SPRING ONIONS – 1 LARGE
- GARLIC CLOVES – 1
- SAGE LEAVES – A HANDFUL
- WHITE WINE VINEGAR – WHITE WINE
- OLIVE OIL
- SALT

## PREPARATION

Chop onion in half and slice into smiles.

Finely slice zucchinis lengthways.

Fill large and deep frying pan with olive oil until about two centimetres high. Put frying pan on low to medium heat.

When oil is hot add garlic and let it simmer until nice and golden. Remove from pan.

Add a handful of zucchinis to pan (try not to overcrowd pan), add a pinch of salt and cook until lightly golden. Transfer to plate lined with paper towels. (Repeat procedure until all the zucchini, onion and sage leaves have been fried).

Place zucchini, onion and sage in a container. Pour vinegar and white wine until zucchinis, onions and sage are completely covered.

Cover container with lid and leave to marinate in refrigerator for at least 24 hours before serving.

Serve cold, as an antipasto or as an accompaniment to a meat, chicken or fish dish.



# Mozzarella di Bufala Salad with Pepper Cream

Grilled and fried cheese dishes figure prominently in Southern Italian cuisine, often taking the place of meat at the table, served as a second course or main dish and accompanied by salad or vegetables. Out of this tradition we get some amazing recipes, such as grilled *scamorza* or *provola* and *frittelle di ricotta* (fried ricotta ‘pancakes’). The recipe here calls for buffalo mozzarella, arguably the superstar of the Italian cheese world, but could in fact be made with thick slices of different cheeses (those mentioned above, for example). The trick is in the double breading, which seals the cheese for frying. Served with a cool sauce and fresh, crisp greens, these at once crunchy and creamy slices of buffalo mozzarella make for a superb summer meal.

Amy Gulick

## PREPARATION

**Make the sauce first.** Grill the pepper, turning it often until it starts to char evenly on all sides and is so soft it ‘collapses’. When cool enough to handle, peel away the skin, cut open the pepper and clean out the seeds and any pulp. Cut the flesh into smaller pieces and place in a food processor along with the oil, optional chilli pepper, garlic, basil, salt and cream. Process until smooth. Taste and correct for salt. Now place in the fridge to thicken while you prep the cheese. Remember to remove the sauce about 5 minutes before serving and give it a good stir. Tips: You can make the sauce in advance to save time. It keeps in the fridge for a few days. If you want a thicker sauce, skip the olive oil.

**Prep the mozzarella.** Set out one small plate for flour another for the breadcrumbs. Beat the eggs in a shallow bowl. Drain the mozzarella and slice each ball in half. Gently pat both sides of the slices dry with a paper towel. Now dredge each piece in the flour, then the egg, then the breadcrumbs, making sure to cover the cheese entirely, and set aside. When you’ve finished, repeat the steps: flour, egg, breadcrumbs. This is a messy process but needed to create a seal as well as to obtain a nice crunchy outer shell.

Arrange the mixed greens now so they are ready to go. You can serve all the cheese on one platter with the salad, or as individually plated servings.

**Heat the oil.** You want at least an inch of cooking oil, so use a small-in-diameter pan and fry the cheese in batches if necessary. Test the oil to make sure it’s frying-ready before adding the cheese. Gently slide the slices in the oil. Keep an eye on them. You want to flip them only one time, so be patient. They are ready to flip after about 3 to 5 minutes, or when the face down side has turned golden brown and firm. Now gently turn them and cook for another 3 to 5 minutes. Keep in mind that flipping more than once could weaken the outer batter, and the melting cheese will start to spill out into the oil. Handle them as little and as delicately as possible.

When golden and crunchy on all sides, transfer the cheese to paper to drain off some oil and lightly salt them. Let them cool slightly, but be sure to serve them warm-hot. You can slice them in half (as pictured). Drizzle the pepper cream sauce directly over the cheese or serve separately in small bowls, and garnish with a bit more fresh basil, if you like.

ANTIPESTO

- **DIFFICULTY LEVEL** – MEDIUM
- **COOKING TIME** – 40 MINUTES
- **COST** – MEDIUM

## INGREDIENTS

- BUFFALO MOZZARELLA – 1 LARGE BALL (CIRCA 200 G) FOR EVERY 1 OR 2 SERVINGS
- BREADCRUMBS
- ALL PURPOSE FLOUR
- SALT & PEPPER
- EGGS – 2 OR 3
- OIL FOR FRYING
- RED BELL PEPPER – 1 LARGE
- MASCARPONE CHEESE – 1/3 CUP OR CRÈME FRAÎCHE
- EXTRA VIRGIN OLIVE OIL – 1/4 CUP
- GARLIC CLOVES – 1 (FRESH OR ROASTED)
- CHILLI PEPPER – 1 SMALL (OPTIONAL)
- HANDFULS OF BASIL LEAVES



# Fig and Honey Focaccia: Focaccia di fichi e miele

The Etruscans settled in the west coast of central Italy in roughly the 8th Century BC. Although there are many surviving stone tablets with Etruscan writing, scholars have not yet been able to translate their language. However, from archeological remains, we know that they made a sort of thick dough from ground grains, which was baked underneath hot cooking ashes. The cooked dough was then topped with seasoned oils, herbs, and other available ingredients. The Romans called these ashcakes, “panus focus” which evolved into the Italian, *focaccia*.

*Al fico l’acqua, alla pesca il vino*, “Give figs water, peaches wine,” is an Italian expression which is sort of the equivalent of “To each his own” and refers to the fact that Italians generally serve figs in a bowl of water to cool them, while peaches are often served sliced in a glass of wine. Take advantage of fig season with this fragrant and unusual focaccia. With a satisfying mix of crunch and chewy, the honey gives it just the right touch of sweetness. Focaccia with fruit is often eaten in Italy as a midmorning snack, but its great with afternoon tea or served with cheese as an aperitivo nibble.



- **DIFFICULTY LEVEL** – MEDIUM
- **COOKING TIME** – 25 MINUTES, PLUS 24 HOURS TO REST IN THE REFRIGERATOR
- **COST** – MEDIUM
- **SERVES** – 6-8

## INGREDIENTS

- ALL PURPOSE FLOUR – 10 1/2 OZ, ABOUT 2 CUPS
- FAST ACTING YEAST – 1 PACKET, 1/4 OZ
- EXTRA VIRGIN OLIVE OIL – 2 TBSP
- SUGAR – 1/2 CUP
- SALT – 1/2 TSP
- FIGS – 18 SMALL
- HONEY – 3 TBSP, PLUS MORE AS NEEDED
- SALT – 1/4 TSP
- FRESH ROSEMARY – A FEW SPRIGS
- LEMON – JUICE OF 1/2 LEMON

## PREPARATION

Sprinkle the yeast over 1/2 cup of warm water, and let the yeast bubble, about 2 minutes. Sift the flour onto a clean work surface or into a large bowl. Make a well in the center and fill with the water. Add the oil, sugar and salt, and slowly begin to incorporate the flour into the center hollow, combining with each addition, until dough forms. Add a few drops more water if needed. Knead the dough until smooth, and let rest in a lightly oiled bowl until it doubles, about 1 hour.

Preheat the oven to 350° F and oil a 10 -inch cake pan.

Using your hands, press out the dough into a circle about 10 inches in diameter. Place on the prepared pan. Pierce the dough throughout with a fork.

Carefully cut a cross on top of one of the figs, halfway down, so the figs opens like a flower. Press it into the center of the dough.

Remove the stems from the 17 remaining figs, slice them in half, and arrange them around the focaccia, cut side up, pressing them into the dough as far as possible. (Cook’s note: if you can’t find small figs, use medium or large and just cut them in thirds or quarters).

Put the honey and rosemary into a small bowl and heat for a few seconds in the microwave or over boiling water. Stir in the lemon juice. Using a pastry brush, spread the mixture over the top of the figs and foccaccia dough. Bake for about 25 minutes, until golden and cooked through. Remove from the oven and drizzle with more honey and sprigs of rosemary. Serve warm.

Francine Segan



# Primo

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For your primi or first courses, seasonal ingredients such as eggplants make for an addictively-delicious caponata (Sicilian dish) or baked into a hearty parmigiana. Let tomatoes be the star of the show in one of Tuscany's best summer "salads", *panzanella*.



# Sicilian Eggplant Caponata

Eggplants were introduced to the island of Sicily by the Arabs in the Middle Ages and since then, this bulbous fruit has become a fixture in the island’s cookery. As Mary Taylor Simeti, author of *Sicilian Food* states, any discussion of the myriad Sicilian recipes including *melanzane* (the Italian word for eggplants) should begin with the sublime appetiser *caponata*. This dish, essentially a relish with an *agrodolce* (‘sweet-sour’) twist, consists of the following base ingredients: eggplant, onion, tomato sauce, celery, vinegar, capers, olives, basil, sugar and salt. There are, however, many variations on this base all over the Sicilian isle, thus the origins of this *caponata* are shrouded in mystery.

The recipe below is based on the city of Palermo’s interpretation of this dish, which also includes pine nuts and sultanas. For best results, planning ahead is advised. You’ll need to set aside an hour to purge the eggplants and about 40-50 minutes for frying the eggplants and simmering these with the rest of the ingredients. After that, leave your caponata to rest for several hours (or better yet, overnight) to best appreciate that meltingly sweet yet tangy combination we are sure you will love.

Rosemarie Scavo

PRIMO



- **DIFFICULTY LEVEL** – LOW
- **COOKING TIME** – 3 HOURS AND 50 MINUTES
- **COST** – MEDIUM

## INGREDIENTS

- LARGE AUBERGINES (EGGPLANTS) – 2 MEDIUM-LARGE-SIZED, CHOPPED INTO 2 CM CHUNKS
- ONION – 1 LARGE, FINELY SLICED
- CELERY – 2 STALKS, CHOPPED INTO 2 CM CHUNKS
- OLIVES – 150 G GREEN OLIVES, PITTED AND DRAINED
- TOMATO PASSATA – 500 ML
- WHITE WINE VINEGAR – 100 ML
- SUGAR – 25 G
- CAPERS – 40 G, SOAKED FOR 1 HOUR, RINSED AND WITH EXCESS SALT REMOVED IF SALT-PACKED
- SULTANAS – 20 G, SOAKED FOR 1 HOUR, DRAINED AND SQUEEZED OF EXCESS LIQUID
- PINE NUTS – 20 G
- SALT – TO TASTE
- OLIVE OIL – FOR FRYING
- HANDFULS OF BASIL LEAVES – A HANDFUL, FOR GARNISH

## PREPARATION

In a colander, place eggplant chunks and sprinkle generously with salt. Place a plate and another heavy object on top to so as much bitter juice is extracted from eggplant chunks as possible. Leave to sit for an hour. Rinse eggplant chunks with water to remove excess salt. Squeeze eggplant chunks to draw out all the moisture and pat dry thoroughly with a paper towel or cloth.

Heat olive oil in a large frying pan. Fry the eggplant chunks. Take care not to overcrowd the pan. With the amount indicated in this recipe, fry a third of the chunks at a time. When the chunks are crisp and golden brown, remove from the pan with a slotted spoon and transfer to a plate lined with absorbent paper towels.

Fry the onion slices until they are translucent in colour. Add the celery chunks, the green olives and the tomato passata and simmer covered on low to medium heat for 10 minutes.

At this point, add the capers, the fried eggplant, the pine nuts, the sultanas, the vinegar and the sugar. Stir ingredients so they are well-combined, taste for and add salt. If using salt-packed capers, you probably will not need much. Leave to simmer uncovered on low-medium heat for 20 minutes or until excess liquid has reduced.

Transfer to serving bowl, cover with aluminium foil and leave to rest for 2 hours at room temperature. If leaving your caponata for the following day, place in the refrigerator. Remove from the fridge one hour before serving to best enjoy the dish’s flavours. Garnish with a couple of basil leaves. Serve as an appetiser (ensure there is plenty of bread on hand!) or as an accompaniment to a fish-based main course.



# Panzanella: Italian Bread Salad

If you’ve never tried *Panzanella*, you’re in for a treat. This classic Tuscan recipe is a much loved *piatto povero* (peasant dish). It consists of reutilizing dry stale bread to create a delicious – can’t-stop-eating-it – Italian bread salad. The majority of Italian recipes call for soaking both the bread and the red onions in a water and vinegar mixture to rehydrate and sweeten respectively; yet, I’ve found that creating a vinaigrette with the sweet tomato juices, vinegar and extra virgin olive oil it creates an even richer flavor profile and saves time. If you don’t have old bread to use up, you can simply toast fresh bread cubes in the oven until crunchy to achieve the same delicious results.

Cindy Swain



- **DIFFICULTY LEVEL** – LOW
- **COOKING TIME** – 20 MINUTES
- **COST** – LOW
- **SERVES** – 6

## INGREDIENTS

- TOMATOES – 2 LB RIPE TOMATOES, PREFERABLY A MIX OF VARIETIES AND COLORS, CUT INTO SMALL CHUNKS
- RED ONION – 1/4, THINLY SLICED
- SALT – 1 TSP
- RUSTIC BREAD – 3/4 LB, CUT INTO CUBES
- EXTRA VIRGIN OLIVE OIL – 10 TBSP, DIVIDED
- WHITE WINE VINEGAR – 2 TBSP
- BLACK PEPPER – TO TASTE
- CUCUMBER – 1/2 CUCUMBER, THINLY SLICED IN HALF MOONS
- FRESH BASIL – 1/4 CUP BASIL LEAVES, TORN

## PREPARATION

Preheat the oven to 350°F.

Put the tomatoes in a colander with a bowl underneath to collect the juices. Add the red onion and salt; toss to coat.

Put the bread cubes on a cookie sheet and toss with two tablespoons extra virgin olive oil. Bake until crunchy, but not browned; about 15 minutes.

Now add the tomatoes and bread cubes to a large bowl.

Add the vinegar and 1/2 cup olive oil to the tomato juices and whisk until the mixture is thick. Add black pepper to taste. Pour the vinaigrette over the tomatoes and bread. Stir in the cucumbers and basil. Enjoy immediately or refrigerate for up to 6 hours. This is a great make-ahead dish. *Buon appetito!*



# How to Make Great Eggplant Parmigiana

During our years running Tours with Espresso Travel we've lost track of how many time guests have told us they don't like eggplant, only to witness their minds change once they try the *Parmigiana di Melanzane* of the Salento, the southernmost tip of Puglia's peninsula.

Even though Parmigiana is popular across the Italian south, there's something particularly magical about the Cucina Salentina version of the dish that goes beyond the sun-kissed, flavor-packed locally grown eggplants. With every bite, you can taste hundreds of years of history.

PRIMO



- **DIFFICULTY LEVEL** – LOW
- **COOKING TIME** – 1 HOUR
- **COST** – LOW
- **SERVES** – 4-6

## INGREDIENTS

- MEDIUM AUBERGINES (EGGPLANTS) – 3-4 EGGPLANTS (ABOUT 750 G)
- MOZZARELLA – 300 G FRESH MOZZARELLA OR SCAMORZA
- PARMIGIANO REGGIANO – 100 G GRATED
- TOMATO PASSATA – 700 ML
- GARLIC CLOVES – 1 CLOVE OF GARLIC, HALVED WITH CENTER GERM REMOVED, AND/OR ONE SMALL ONION, HALVED (SEE NOTE 1)
- FRESH BASIL – A BUNCH
- EGGS – 2
- FLOUR – 100 G
- PEANUT OIL – PEANUT OIL OR OLIVE OIL, FOR DEEP FRYING
- OLIVE OIL – AS NEEDED
- SALT & PEPPER – AS NEEDED

## PREPARATION

**Make the Sauce:** In a pan, heat two tablespoons of olive oil and the garlic and/or onion, cut side down. Once fragrant, add tomato passata (see Note 2) and some fresh basil leaves and leave to cook while you prepare the rest of the dish. You don't want the sauce to be too reduced, so keep a close eye on it. If it is getting too thick, reduce the heat and cover.

**Prepare the Eggplants:** Wash the eggplants, cut off the ends and slice them into 1cm-thick discs. If using older eggplants, lightly salt and let stand for a few hours to remove any bitterness and drain them on paper towels. Heat a pan with enough oil to deep fry the eggplants. Season the eggs with salt and pepper and beat. Dredge the eggplant slices, first in flour and then in the beaten eggs. Deep-fry until golden brown.

**Assemble and bake the Parmigiana:** Preheat oven to 180°C/355°F. In a baking dish pour some tomato sauce on the bottom and place the first layer of fried eggplants, overlapping them slightly. Spread over chopped mozzarella, Parmigiano Reggiano, fresh basil, and more tomato sauce. Cover with another layer of eggplants and continue layering the same order until you finish your ingredients, ending with eggplants, a generous amount of tomato sauce and Parmigiano. Bake for 25-30 minutes, until you see a crust on the top. Delicious served hot, warm or even at room temperature. Better still the day after!

## NOTES

1. Typically in the Salento, onion and garlic are not used together as there is a belief that their strong flavors clash and mask the natural flavors of the food. They are also considered to be indigestible together. However, both can be used together if preferred (just don't tell the Salentini).
2. Fresh tomato passata (also called strained tomatoes) is preferable, but you can also use a good brand of prepared passata, or crush whole peeled tomatoes with your hands and add to the sauce. Always try to buy good 100% Italian tomatoes.

*Recipe provided and sponsored by Gianna Greco of Cooking Experience Lecce, official cooking school of Espresso Travel's Puglia Tours, and an expert on the food and wine of the Salento (as seen on TV in Italy and internationally).*



# Pasta alla Checca

A lovely taste of Rome, this fresh-for-summer pasta blends fresh tomatoes with mozzarella with a kick of garlic and basil to make this a true crowd pleaser at the dinner table. Its origins are shrouded in mystery, there are different hypothesis on what ‘alla checca’ means. Some say it was the name of a restaurant from which the recipe is born, ‘la sora checca’, which doesn’t exist anymore. Others say it refers to a woman called Francesca, *checca* being a diminutive form of the name. The best part is, it can be served both warm or cold! So, leftovers are more than welcome.

PRIMO



- **SERVES** – 2

## INGREDIENTS

- 240 G PASTA (DITALI)
- 250 G CHERRY TOMATOES
- 250 G MOZZARELLA
- GARLIC
- SALT
- PEPPER
- EXTRA VIRGIN OLIVE OIL
- BASIL

## PREPARATION

To prepare the *Pasta alla Checca*, first of all boil the water in a saucepan, salt and pour the pasta. In the meanwhile, cut the mozzarella into cubes.

Wash the tomatoes under fresh running water and cut them into quarters. Put them into a bowl with a chopped clove of garlic, extra virgin olive oil, salt, pepper and basil.

Drain the pasta al dente e move it in the bowl.

Add the mozzarella and mix well everything.

Remember to remove the garlic.

Your pasta is ready to be eaten! You can also serve it cold.

Enjoy your *Pasta alla Checca*!



Recipe provided by: Eat & Walk Italy



# Tajarin Pasta with Brown Butter and Sage Sauce

When it comes to Italy's region of Piedmont, a must-try is their iconic *Tajarin*: a local pasta very similar to spaghetti. Tajarin actually is the Piedmontese dialect for *Tagliolini* or *Tagliarini* and is the thinnest and richest pasta of the land. Tajarin can contain up to 40 egg yolks per kilogram (2.2 pounds) of pasta dough, according to Matt Kramer in "A Passion for Piedmont: Italy's Most Glorious Regional Table" (1997). It is best served with a classic sauce of brown butter and sage – comfort food of the finest degree!

PRIMO



## INGREDIENTS

### FOR THE PASTA DOUGH

- 250 G 00 FLOUR
- 8 RED EGG YOLKS (IF YOU CAN'T FIND RED YOLKS, SUBSTITUTE WITH NORMAL HIGH QUALITY EGGS)
- 1 TSP EVO
- 1 PINCH OF SALT

### FOR THE BROWN BUTTER SAGE SAUCE

- 100 G ALPINE BUTTER
- SMALL PACK OF SAGE, LEAVES PICKED
- 1/2 LEMON JUICE AND LEMON ZEST
- HAZELNUTS
- GRATED PARMESAN CHEESE



Recipe provided by: I Eat Food Tours

## PREPARATION

Put the flour on the work top. Make a well in the middle and break the 8 red eggs into it.

Add a pinch of salt, 5 ML (1 teaspoon) oil and knead until it becomes a firm dough.

*If you're a beginner, you may have to knead the pasta dough for about 40/50 minutes before having the right mixture.*

*This recipe, due to the high ratio of egg yolks, requires strength and perseverance; the more you practice, the easier it will become.*

Now Rub the surface with oil and let the pasta ball stand for 2 hours.

At the end of two hours, knead the pasta ball again and then roll it out into a thin sheet.

Let it stand for a few minutes then roll it up and slice it into very thin ribbons.

Unroll the strips and place them on a dish towel to dry.

Cook the tajarin in boiling salted water for not longer than 2 or 3 minutes;

Serve with the brown butter sage sauce (recipe follows).

Melt the butter over medium heat in a pan with a light-colored bottom, if possible, so you can see the butter goes from white, to gold, to brown ("noisette").

Add the sage and season with some salt and pepper: make sure you cook it very briefly, until the sage becomes crispy.

Then remove it and let it dry on kitchen paper.

In a small skillet, roast the hazelnuts with 1 teaspoon of oil until they become golden brown. Season them with salt and pepper and let them dry on kitchen paper.

When the tajarin is cooked, lift them from the pot with a slotted spoon and add them to the pan. Add a little of the cooking water to lighten up the sauce and sprinkle some lemon zest over the Tajarin: toss very gently to coat, let the sauce becomes one with pasta; add now half a lemon, juiced, and serve them warm with hazelnuts, sage garnish and Parmesan: you really are ready to taste Piedmont bites after bites: *buon appetito!*





# Secondo

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For your second course in Italy, we give you a variety of options including a roasted chicken dish, baked fish with summer vegetables and a new potato/asparagus medley that will have you coming back for seconds and thirds.



# Pollo in Potacchio

Essentially, cooking in *potacchio* entails braising meat, fish or vegetables at moderate to high heat in a reduced sauce traditionally made of olive oil, white wine, garlic, onion, fresh herbs (often rosemary) and a minimal amount of tomato. The result, despite the crisp, charred skin on the outside, is surprisingly tender meat underneath. Paola Bacchia, author of the recently published cookbook *Adriatico*, rightly instructs readers in her introduction to her *pollo in potacchio* recipe, ‘Don’t be tempted to put the lid on the pan and reduce the heat during cooking; stand near the stove and watch the chicken pieces cook, turning them over occasionally and adding a bit of water if needed. And certainly, don’t be tempted to add any wine from the glass you are holding as you make this dish – that is for you to enjoy while you breathe in the lovely aroma of the garlicky chicken’.

After several takes at making this dish for my family, I’m becoming more used to stepping back from my stovetop and refraining from reducing the heat. Of course, if the sauce reduces too much or the chicken pieces stick to your pan, you can add a spoonful or two of hot water, but no more.

Whatever type of cooking vessel you opt for, ensure that it is wide enough to contain all the pieces of chicken at one level.

Rosemarie Scavo

SEONDO



- **DIFFICULTY LEVEL** – MEDIUM
- **COOKING TIME** – 50-70 MINUTES
- **COST** – LOW
- **SERVES** – 4

## INGREDIENTS

- CHICKEN – 4 CHICKEN THIGHS AND 4 DRUMSTICKS
- EXTRA VIRGIN OLIVE OIL – AS NEEDED
- GARLIC CLOVES – 2-3 CLOVES, PEELED AND CRUSHED
- ONION – 1 SMALL ONION, MINCED
- FRESH ROSEMARY – 2-3 FRESH ROSEMARY SPRIGS
- FRESHLY CRACKED BLACK PEPPER
- FRESHLY GROUND BLACK PEPPER, TO TASTE
- DRY WHITE WINE – 125 ML
- TOMATO PURÉE – 125 ML

## PREPARATION

Wash the chicken pieces and pat dry with a clean tea-towel.

Pour enough olive oil to coat a saucepan large enough to fit all the chicken pieces. Heat the saucepan and add the chicken. Cook on one side for 4-5 minutes or until the skin browns, then turn over and cook for another 4-5 minutes to brown the other side. Remove chicken from saucepan and set aside.

Reduce the heat and add the crushed garlic and minced onion. Saute until the garlic releases its aroma and the onion softens and is translucent, about 5-7 minutes. Return browned chicken pieces to the saucepan, along with 2-3 sprigs of fresh rosemary. Raise the heat, add the white wine and allow it to sizzle and evaporate for few minutes. Add the tomato puree and a generous seasoning of salt and pepper.

Continue to cook the chicken pieces, on moderate to high heat, turning them over every ten minutes. If the wine and tomato-based liquid becomes too dry or the chicken is sticking to the bottom, add a spoonful or two of hot water. Cook until the chicken pieces are pleasantly charred and the juices of their meat run clear when prodded with a fork. Depending on their size, this could take 30-50 minutes.

Arrange the charred chicken pieces on a warmed serving platter and pour the remaining sauce from the pan on top. Serve with mash or roast potatoes and lots of crusty, country bread to *fare la scarpetta* or mop up the delicious sauce.



# Baked Sole with Roasted Tomatoes

When talking about “sole” in English, we are referring to the delicate white fish. In Italian, the word sole means sun, and is pronounced “so-lay” while the fish, on the other hand, is called *sogliola*. If you get the chance to visit an Italian farmer’s market, you’ll typically find this fish sold whole. Don’t be intimidated. Simply ask the fishmonger to skin it, but you don’t need to fillet it for this mouthwatering recipe. The flesh rests on top of the bones and when baked, it glides off easily when pricked with a fork. (Although, if you can only find sole fillets readily available, they work too, just reduce the baking time.)

A common way to serve sole in Italian home kitchens is to layer with crispy bread crumbs and top with fresh herbs, tomatoes, or for an added kick, anchovy fillets. Drizzle with extra virgin olive oil, season with salt and black pepper and bake in the oven until the white meat flakes away from the bone. This is one dish where you can enjoy Italian simplicity at its best.

Cindy Swain



SECONDO

- **DIFFICULTY LEVEL** – LOW
- **COOKING TIME** – 25 MINUTES
- **COST** – LOW
- **SERVES** – 2

## INGREDIENTS

- SOLE – 2 WHOLE SOLE, SKIN REMOVED
- BREAD CRUMBS – 1/4-1/2 CUP
- GRAPE TOMATOES – 1 CUP GRAPE OR CHERRY TOMATOES, QUARTERED
- EXTRA VIRGIN OLIVE OIL
- SALT AND PEPPER

## PREPARATION

Preheat the oven to 350°F (175°C).

Line a baking sheet with parchment paper. Add the sole and top with bread crumbs, tomatoes, a swirl of extra virgin olive oil and season with salt and black pepper. Bake for 15-25 minutes, depending on the thickness of the fish. It’s ready when the meat is white and easily flakes away from the bone when scraped with a fork.



# Asparagus and New Potato Salad

Asparagus, like broad beans, are ancient plants funnily enough belonging to the lily family. Known already in Roman times who found several medicinal benefits, they belong to the super food group possessing all of the vitamins– A, B, C, D, E and K – as well as folate and minerals.

The quicker they are picked (or cut) and eaten the sweeter they taste. The first asparagus usually receive so much reverence that we can only conceive of cooking them in the simplest way; quickly steamed in lightly salted water and served with melted butter and grated Parmesan. A few weeks and several spears later though my attention wanders towards variations on the theme and I start adding a few more ingredients, still in full season.

Francesca Re Manning

SEONDO



- **DIFFICULTY LEVEL** – LOW
- **COOKING TIME** – 35 MINUTES
- **COST** – LOW
- **SERVES** – 2

## INGREDIENTS

- NEW POTATOES – 450 G
- OLIVE OIL – 2 TBSP
- SALT & PEPPER
- EGGS – 2 FREE RANGE EGGS
- ASPARAGUS – A BUNCH OF ASPARAGUS, WOODY ENDS REMOVED
- SPRING ONIONS – 2, HALVED
- ANCHOVIES PRESERVED IN EXTRA VIRGIN OLIVE OIL – 2
- CAPERS – 3 TSP
- EXTRA VIRGIN OLIVE OIL– 3 TBSP
- CHIVES – FINELY CHOPPED
- MUSTARD– 2 TSP WHOLEGRAIN MUSTARD

## PREPARATION

Toss the potatoes in oil and season thoroughly. Bake in a pre-heated oven at 200°C for 20-25 minutes until the skin starts slightly to char and the potatoes have caramelized a little.

In the meantime cook the eggs in water and boil them for 7-8 minutes. Run them under cold water, peel them and cut them into quarters.

Prepare the dressing by mixing the mustard, capers, and anchovies.

When the potatoes are almost ready, add the asparagus and spring onions and leave everything in the oven to finish cooking for another 5 minutes. Add more oil if you think the asparagus look a bit dry.

Take out of the oven the potatoes and asparagus mix. Move them onto a serving plate and add the cut eggs. Sprinkle the chopped chive and dressing.

Serve with a nice glass of white wine ideally in the garden enjoying the Spring sun.





# Dolce

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No true Italian meal would be complete without a dolce – or sweet ending. When life gives you lemons, we say try making our limoncello sorbet or what about an easy-yet-satisfying coffee dessert: *affogato al caffè*.



# Limoncello Sorbet

With so many Italian specialty products, speculation, anecdote, and long-held rivalries tend to supplant hard facts. The lemon liquor limoncello is no exception. According to some accounts, limoncello has been around for little over a century, first served by a woman named Maria Antonia Farace at her pensione on Capri in the early 1900s. (Farace’s grandson, in fact, was the first certified producer of limoncello, which may account for this tale.) Others dispute this, pointing to limoncello’s popularity among Sorrento’s upper class families during this same period, or even to the Amalfi fishermen several centuries prior said to drink lemon liquor come a chilly morning. While it’s likely true limoncello was born in one of these above-mentioned places, who can say with certainty what genius of the past first decided to soak lemon zest in alcohol and combine with sugar and water to give us this delightful concoction? No matter. The important thing is that limoncello was invented — and in a relatively short span of time has all but conquered the world.

To make this easy sorbet, start with either your own batch of homemade limoncello, or look for a bottle bearing the IGP (Protected Designation of Origin) label and made with lemons from Sorrento or the Amalfi Coast. The flavor is spot on, like eating frozen limoncello.

Amy Gulick

DOLCE



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

## INGREDIENTS

- WATER – 2 CUPS
- SUGAR – 1 1/4 CUPS
- FRESH LEMON JUICE – 1/2 CUP
- LIMONCELLO – 1/2 CUP
- LEMON ZEST – TWO LEMONS
- SALT – 1 PINCH
- LEMON RIND – 1 CARVED PER SERVING (OPTIONAL)

## PREPARATION

Bring the water and sugar just to a boil in a sauce pan, stirring frequently, until you have a thick, clear syrup. Turn off the heat and let cool. Transfer the syrup to a bowl and add the lemon juice, lemon zest, limoncello, and salt. Stir well and transfer to a ceramic baking dish or plastic container, cover, and freeze for at least 3 hours. Check the sorbet periodically and move it around with a fork. When ready, fork the sorbet then use an ice cream scoop to serve.

To make the lemon cups, slice 3/4 of an inch off the stem side of the lemons. Using a paring knife and teaspoon, carefully cut and scoop out the lemon pulp. Do this over a bowl so you can save the juice. Slice about 1/4 inch from the bottom of the lemons so they will stand up, being careful not to cut so much you make a hole on this side, otherwise the sorbet will leak through the bottom. Freeze the cups along with the sorbet. When the sorbet is ready, fill the cups and place them back in the freezer until serving. You can make a batch of several sorbet cups in advance.



# Affogato al Caffè: Italy’s Effortless Coffee Dessert

If you are looking for a beautiful and effortless Italian dessert, *Affogato al caffè* is your go-to solution. It’s made with a scoop or two of gelato drowned (affogato) with a hot shot of espresso. The steaming coffee (caffè) slowly melts the creamy gelato resulting in a kind of adult milkshake. To make this dessert even sassier, add a splash of amaretto, a sweet Italian liquor that originates from Saronno, Italy and tastes of almonds.

Cindy Swain

DOLCE



- **DIFFICULTY LEVEL** – LOW
- **COOKING TIME** – 2 MINUTES
- **COST** – LOW

## INGREDIENTS

- GELATO – 1-2 SCOOPS OF VANILLA GELATO OR ICE CREAM
- ESPRESSO COFFEES – 1 SHOT

## PREPARATION

Put the vanilla gelato or ice cream into a glass. Top with the hot espresso and enjoy immediately. You can use regular or decaf espresso.



# Cooking Schools

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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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cultural and culinary vacations

### CONTACT

- Email: [info@buonjourneyitaly.com](mailto:info@buonjourneyitaly.com)
- Phone: +39 0541 1794280
- Website: [www.buonjourneyitaly.com](http://www.buonjourneyitaly.com)







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### CONTACT

- Email: [eatandwalkitaly@gmail.com](mailto:eatandwalkitaly@gmail.com)
- WhatsApp/iMessage: +39 3939085086
- Website: [www.eatandwalkitaly.it](http://www.eatandwalkitaly.it)







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### CONTACT

- Email: [info@ieatfoodtours.it](mailto:info@ieatfoodtours.it)
- Phone: +39 393 12 70 929
- Website: [www.ieatfoodtours.co.uk](http://www.ieatfoodtours.co.uk)





A photograph of three round loaves of dough resting on a rustic wooden surface. The dough is light-colored and has a slightly textured, wrinkled appearance. A light-colored, textured cloth is draped over the left side of the frame. Sprinkles of white flour are scattered across the wooden surface, particularly around the loaves. In the center-right, there is a black rectangular box containing the 'italy magazine' logo in white text.

italy  
magazine

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