

FALL RECIPES

BUON APPETITO

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Fall Recipes

The arrival of the autumn season is one that everyone typically embraces. Harvest period meets cooler temperatures tend to put a smile on everyone's face along with the delicious seasonal fare that will delight any palate. From mushrooms, truffles, a million ways to use pumpkin to grapes and chestnuts, trust us there is *plenty* to be excited about. Our collection of Italian Fall recipes includes ideas for appetizers, *primi*, main courses, and desserts, perfect for embracing everyone's favorite season on your plate.

Buon Appetito!

Georgette
Editor, Italy Magazine



Drinks

Grape Must Syrup

To make this recipe at home, you'll need to procure wine grapes or fresh grape must from a wine producer. I'm fond of using muscat grapes (both black varieties like Hamburg and white ones) but do feel free to use another type of grape too. Chances are, you'll really enjoy experimenting with different grape varieties and the unique aromas (and colours!) they yield. The magenta-tinted syrup I obtained from using musky *uva fragola* (Isabella grapes, which are a cultivar grown in Italy of mixed north American and European origin) was just spectacular!

Please note that the cooking time can also vary, depending on the grape's sugar content. The higher it is, the shorter the time it will take for the must to condense to the desired syrup. For this reason, the cooking time indicated above and below is approximate. For tell-tale signs that your grape must is cooked, look out for a thickened and syrupy consistency and a three-quarter reduction in the must's volume. To be sure of the latter, keep a measuring jug handy. After conserving your must in a sterilised swing-top bottle, leave it to age in a cool, dark place for several weeks, and, if you're patient enough, months. You'll find that your syrup undergoes a transformation, deepening in colour and mellowing in taste.

As for serving this old-world sweetener, you can use it much like honey or maple syrup. Try it as a topping on fresh ricotta cheese or Greek style yoghurt. Instead of forking out a substantial amount of money for a bottle of balsamic vinegar, why not use your homemade condiment to dress your salads instead? You may also wish to try your hand at baking with it, like I did with the *ciambelline al mosto cotto* in these pictures.

Remember to remove two-thirds of your recipe's sugar content if you do so.

Rosemarie Scavo


INGREDIENTS

- RIPE RED OR WHITE WINE GRAPES – 2 KG

PREPARATION

Wash and dry grapes. Remove carefully from stems and pass through a food mill in batches. Discard seeds and skins which will have accumulated on the top of your food mill's disc. Filter must through a fine-mesh sieve lined with cheesecloth. Pour filtered must into a heavy-bottomed stainless-steel saucepan and bring to boil. Lower heat to a gentle boil and remove any foam which rises to the top with a slotted spoon. Cook from 1 to 3 hours (the time will depend on the sugar content of your grapes). As the must cooks, it will reduce in volume, thicken and start to emit a cooked scent. Remove from heat when your must has reduced by at least three-quarters of its initial volume and has the consistency of a syrup. Cool syrup to room temperature. Strain it through a fine mesh sieve lined with damp cheesecloth. Using a funnel, pour syrup into a sterilised swing top glass bottle or bottles. Keeps in a cool, dark spot for a year.

- **DIFFICULTY LEVEL** – MEDIUM
- **COOKING TIME** – 1-3 HOURS
- **COST** – MEDIUM
- **SERVES** – YIELDS ABOUT 1.5 ML FRESH GRAPE MUST AND ABOUT 350 ML OF GRAPE MUST SYRUP

A photograph of three leeks with green tops and white stalks, arranged diagonally across the frame. They are resting on a light-colored, textured cloth napkin, which is placed on a dark, rustic wooden surface. The leeks have some water droplets on their stalks.

Antipasto

The “antipasti” or appetizer course in Italy is the perfect time to kick off your meal with a delicious start. Mix salty prosciutto with fresh leeks or consider a creamy cod appetizer that will have your guests raving about for weeks on end.

Prosciutto & Leek Involtini

Meaning something like ‘small bundle’, *involtino* is the diminutive of the Italian word *involto*, which in turn is rooted in the Latin *involvere* and *involutus* (wrap, envelope, curl up). In Italian cooking, *involtini* are typically comprised of thinly-sliced meat rolled around other meats, vegetables, cheeses, and so on, then secured, braised and/or stewed in sauce. *Involtini* made from vegetable slices are also common, such as *involtini di melanzana grigliata*, or grilled eggplant rolls. Cured meats like prosciutto or bresaola are well-suited for *involtini* as a snack or antipasto.

Amy Gulick

ANTIPASTO



- **DIFFICULTY LEVEL** – LOW
- **COOKING TIME** – 25 MINUTES
- **COST** – LOW
- **SERVES** – MAKES 10-12 INVOLTINI

INGREDIENTS

- LEEK – 1 LARGE
- OLIVE OIL – 2 TBSP
- PROSCIUTTO CRUDO – 10-12 SLICES
- GRATED PARMESAN CHEESE – 1/4 CUP
- CHIVES – 2-3 TBSP CIRCA CHOPPED (OPTIONAL)
- MILK – 150 ML
- ALL PURPOSE FLOUR – 2 TBSP
- BUTTER – 1 TBSP
- GROUND NUTMEG
- SALT

PREPARATION

Remove the outer layer of tough leaves from leek. Slice into 1/4-inch thick rounds and then rinse all the pieces well in a strainer and shake off the excess water.

Heat the olive oil in a large pan and cook the leek rounds for about 5 minutes, until soft but not mushy, stirring occasionally to ‘break up’ the rounds into ribbons. Salt and pepper lightly. Remove from the heat and transfer back to the strainer to let cool while also draining any liquid (there should not be much).

Make the béchamel by thoroughly combining the butter and flour in a non-stick saucepan over low heat until a thick paste forms. Add the milk and turn the heat to medium. Stir constantly until the mixture starts to thicken. Add a pinch of ground nutmeg and about 1/4 teaspoon salt and continue stirring. The goal is a small amount of very thick béchamel. Let cool to room temp. Stir the cooked leek and the cheese into béchamel.

Place about a tablespoonful of the creamy leek mixture onto one end of a prosciutto slice. Sprinkle with a pinch of the chopped chives and carefully roll the meat around the filling to create your involtino. Proceed with the remaining slices. Serve at room temperature or slightly chilled.

Baccalà Mantecato

In the 1400s, some shipwrecked Venetian sailors were saved by the inhabitants of the Norwegian island of Røst. On this island not far from the Arctic Circle, the local fishermen showed the sailors how they beheaded, gutted and dried seemingly infinite amounts of merluzzo or cod on large wooden racks along the shoreline. Impressed by their discovery, the sailors introduced Venice, then one of Europe’s most important trading powers, to the dried cod that had once sustained the Vikings in their sea voyages across the North Atlantic. Cheap, plentiful and long-lasting, this preserved fish quickly became an important ingredient in the local cuisine and elsewhere along the Italian peninsula too.

Today, *baccalà mantecato*, or creamed cod, is one of the maritime city’s most iconic dishes. This preparation, a fixture in the city’s *bàcari* or bars, is made by soaking, boiling and whipping stockfish with olive oil until mousse-like. The creamed cod is then spread on slices of bread or grilled white polenta and eaten as part of a *cichetto*, the city’s typical, almost *tapas*-like ritual bite to eat and drink.

Just for the record, *baccalà* refers to the salt-preserved variety of cod elsewhere in Italy. The Venetians, however, use the term *bacalà* (with one “c” in the Venetian dialect) to describe what other Italians call *stoccafisso*, stockfish or air-dried cod. If stockfish, which is usually sold whole, is not available, fillets of salt cod can be used to whip up your *baccalà mantecato* instead. In either case, before cooking, several days of soaking with frequent water changes are necessary for stockfish to become sufficiently tender (3-4 days) and for salt cod to taste palatable (2-3 days). If you haven’t planned your menu that far in advance, don’t worry. *Stoccafisso* and *baccalà* are often sold ready-soaked too.

The recipe below is for the dish in its simplest and, some would say, most traditional form. There’s none of the milk or finely chopped parsley some purists frown upon, just the option of infusing the fish with bay leaves and a clove of garlic while it is being boiled. As for beating technique, the old schoolers insist on whipping the cod with a wooden spoon. Surprisingly enough, this is easier than using a whisk. The rapidly-creaming fish has a tendency to get stuck inside the wire loops when beating with one of these. As for mixers, some traditionalists argue that the final result is too homogenised. Whatever utensil you opt for, remember that the technique for creaming the *bacalà* is not dissimilar to making mayonnaise: a slow and steady stream of olive oil until the cod begins to absorb the oil and turns into a mousse. Oh, and if you are beating by hand, you may want some company (i.e. an extra set of arms!) in the kitchen.

Rosemarie Scavo

ANTIPASTO



- **DIFFICULTY LEVEL** – LOW
- **COOKING TIME** – 15-20 MINUTES
- **COST** – MEDIUM
- **SERVES** – 4-6

INGREDIENTS

- SALT COD – 500 G OR STOCKFISH, SOAKED
- GARLIC CLOVES – 1, CLOVE, PEELED (OPTIONAL)
- BAY LEAVES – 2 (OPTIONAL)
- OLIVE OIL – 150 ML
- SALT – TO TASTE
- WHITE PEPPER – FRESHLY GROUND

PREPARATION

Bring stockfish or salt cod, along with bay leaves and peeled garlic clove, to boil in a large saucepan. Cook for 15 minutes or until the fish is tender. Reserve some of the cooking liquid and drain the fish. Discard the garlic and bay leaves. Remove the skin and bones from the fish. Place fish in a large mixing bowl and break the fish into small pieces. If the fish looks a bit dry, add a couple of spoonfuls of the reserved cooking liquid. With a wooden spoon or whisk, begin whipping in an energetic, circular motion to cream the fish while adding the olive oil in a slow, steady stream. As the fish begins to absorb the oil and the fish starts to take on a creamier consistency, add the oil at a slightly faster pace. Season with salt and some freshly ground white pepper. Serve as an appetiser, spread on slices of bread or grilled white *polenta*. For true Venetian *cichetto*-style, accompany with a glass of sparkling white wine from the surrounding region, such as *Prosecco* or *Cartizze*. Best consumed within two days.



Primo

For your *primi* or first courses, seasonal ingredients such as pumpkin make for an addictively-delicious risotto or stuffed into fresh tortelli. Let mushrooms be the star of the show in a pasta dish with our recipe with fresh pappardelle.

Pumpkin Ravioli or Tortelli

A classic recipe from Lombardy and Emilia Romagna which is one of my favorite North-Italian recipes. In a recent visit to Cremona and Parma I kept ordering ‘tortelli di zucca’ as I couldn’t have enough. There is a special ingredient they add to the filling that we have not included in the recipe below because it is not easy to find or to make. This is ‘Savor’, a sort of paste which is usually prepared in September and October, mixing equal parts of diced fruit (pears, apples, peaches and so on), yellow pumpkin and wine must and letting the mixture simmer for about 4 hours, stirring frequently. So have fun with the recipe below, but do not miss the chance to try the original ones during your next visit to Italy!



PRIMO

- **DIFFICULTY LEVEL** – MEDIUM
- **COOKING TIME** – 1 HR
- **COST** – MEDIUM

INGREDIENTS

- 00 FLOUR – 350 G
- EGGS – 3
- PUMPKIN – 1 KG (PREVIOUSLY BAKED)
- GRATED PARMESAN CHEESE – 230 G
- NUTMEG – 1/2 GRATED
- WHITE PEPPER
- BUTTER – 50 G
- SALT
- AMARETTI – 100 G

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.

Prepare the filling: Cut the pumpkin into chunks and bake it in a preheated oven at 140°C for 40 to 50 minutes, or until it becomes soft. Let it cool down. Then, take the chunks of baked pumpkin and discard the seeds and skin.

Dice it and place it in a bowl with 200 grams grated parmesan cheese, 1/2 grated nutmeg, the powdered amaretti and a teaspoon of salt and some freshly ground pepper. Mix well together until you get a workable filling. If it is too wet, add some breadcrumbs.

For the tortelli: Sift some of the flour onto a board and make a well in the middle. (You can use all the flour, but it is a good idea to leave some behind for adding later to make sure you get the correct consistency). Break the eggs into the well and add the salt. Either with a fork or your hands, gradually incorporate the flour. Keep adding flour until the mixture is of the correct consistency – basically a soft dough.

Knead the dough with the heel of your hand until it is smooth and elastic, and then leave it to rest for about 10 minutes.

Place the dough on a board or work surface and start rolling away from you. Cut the pasta dough into long sheets and spread out on a work surface sprinkled with flour. Put teaspoons of the mixture on the pasta sheets at 2-3 cm intervals. Lay another pasta sheet on top to cover the filling and press down all around to stick the pasta together. Cut the ravioli into squares with a serrated pasta wheel, or a ravioli stamp and set aside.

Plunge the ravioli into slightly salted boiling water and cook for 4-5 minutes, drain carefully with a slotted spoon and pile in a warm serving dish. Cover with melted butter and Parmesan cheese and serve.

Katia Amore

Pappardelle with a Creamy Mushroom Sauce

Autumn in Tuscany means *pappardelle ai funghi e panna*, a classic seasonal pasta dish with hearty mushrooms and cream sauce. Porcini are typically the mushroom of choice, found wild throughout the forests in Tuscany and prevalent after rainfall. Tourists and Italians alike flock to these areas to go mushroom hunting or to participate at many of the *sagre*, “festivals” that give homage to this prized ingredient. Apart from fresh mushrooms, the key to making this dish sing is to make your own homemade *pappardelle*. Silky egg based pasta dough is rolled out and cut into long noodles around 1 inch wide. In Tuscany, *pappardelle* are often served with mushrooms or a rich ragu made with wild boar meat (*cinghiale*).

Cindy Swain



- **DIFFICULTY LEVEL** – LOW
- **COOKING TIME** – 1 HOUR
- **COST** – LOW
- **SERVES** – 2-4

INGREDIENTS

- ALL PURPOSE FLOUR – 200 G
- EGG – 1
- SALT – A PINCH OF SEA SALT AND A FEW GRINDS OF BLACK PEPPER
- EXTRA VIRGIN OLIVE OIL – 2 TBSP
- BUTTER – 2 TBSP
- ONION – 1/2, FINELY CHOPPED
- GARLIC CLOVES – 1 CLOVE, SKIN REMOVED, FINELY CHOPPED
- MUSHROOMS – 8 OZ (250 G) MUSHROOMS (PORCINI, PORTOBELLO, CHAMPIGNON OR A MIX), CLEANED AND CUBED
- WHIPPING CREAM – 1/4 CUP HEAVY WHIPPING CREAM
- PARMIGIANO REGGIANO – 1 CUP GRATED
- FRESH PARSLEY – 1 TBSP
- SALT AND PEPPER TO TASTE

PREPARATION

Make the dough: Attach the dough hook to the stand mixer and add the flour, salt and eggs. Mix on speed 1 for 3-5 minutes, stopping the stand mixer at least once to scrape down the sides. When the mixture comes together as a homogeneous ball, check to see if it’s the right consistency by pushing against the dough with your finger. If it leaves an imprint (like a ripe peach) and doesn’t stick to your finger, it’s ready. If the dough, however, is sticky turn the stand mixer back on and gradually add a little more flour, stopping every so often to check the consistency until it no longer sticks to your finger. If the dough doesn’t come together in a ball, add a tablespoon of water at a time until it does. (If you add too much just incorporate more flour until arriving at the consistency mentioned above.)

If you don’t have a stand mixer, make a well with the flour on a large workspace, add the salt and eggs. Use a fork beat the eggs and gradually push the flour towards the egg and beat all together until the mixture comes together in a single mass. Knead by hand until it’s homogeneous; about 10-15 minutes.

Wrap the dough with plastic wrap and place it in the refrigerator for 30 minutes.

Make the sauce: In a large skillet, heat the extra virgin olive oil and butter over medium heat. Add the garlic and sauté until soft and translucent; about 5-6 minutes. Add the garlic and cook for another minute. Add the chopped mushrooms, salt and pepper to taste and continue to cook until soft; 7-8 minutes. Pour in the cream, Parmigiano Reggiano cheese and parsley and cook for 1 minute until the cream is slightly reduced. Remove from heat.

Make the pappardelle: Attach the pasta roller accessory and sprinkle some flour on top. Divide the dough into four pieces. Take one and shape it into a flat rectangle and flour generously on top and bottom. Keep the rest of the dough covered with plastic wrap. Pass the rectangular shaped dough through the machine on speed 1 at 0 thickness setting. Fold the two ends towards the center then pass it through again. Repeat one more time so the edges are rectangular, then pass the dough through the roller reducing the thickness from number 0 to 5 each time. Keep the sheet and roller floured as you go. Generously flour a large wooden board and lay the pasta sheet on top. Repeat for the remaining dough.

If you are rolling out the dough with a rolling pin, roll it out on a lightly floured work space.

Lightly flour both sides with semolina and let the pasta sheets dry out for 5-10 minutes. Roll each side of the sheet towards the middle and cut 1 inch slices. Unravel the rolled dough so that the long ribbons lay out.

Cook the pasta: Bring a large pot of water to boil. Generously salt the water and taste it. It should taste salty like the sea.

Cook the *pappardelle* for 4-5 minutes then check one to see if it is ready. The pasta should be “al dente” or slightly firm. If it is not ready, continue to cook for 1 minute and check again. Drain the pasta, reserving 1/2 cup of pasta water.

Return the skillet with the mushroom sauce to cook on low heat. Add the cooked pasta to the mushroom sauce along with a tablespoon or two of pasta water. Heat until liquid has reduced and stir until well combined. Serve hot with more Parmigiano Reggiano if desired.
Buon appetito!

Pumpkin Risotto

Although you'll find risotto often listed on the menu of fancy restaurants, it is the essence of simple Italian home style cooking. It is a comfort food that bears roots from the *cucina povera* or peasant cooking, but its simplicity conquers even the most refined palates around the world.

While you'll find countless variations of risotto, one of the most popular is the *Risotto alla Zucca* or pumpkin risotto. It is a traditional dish from Northern Italy and it's particularly popular in the region of Lombardy thanks to the prestigious qualities of pumpkins grown around the beautiful town of Mantova.

Cindy Swain

PRIMO



- **DIFFICULTY LEVEL** – LOW
- **COOKING TIME** – 12-18 MINUTES
- **COST** – LOW

INGREDIENTS

- VEGETABLE BROTH – 4 CUPS (ABOUT 1 LITER)
- EXTRA VIRGIN OLIVE OIL – 1 TBSP
- SHALLOT – 1, FINELY CHOPPED
- CARNAROLI RICE OR ARBORIO RICE – 1 CUP (175 G)
- DRY WHITE WINE* – 1/4 CUP (59 ML)
- PUMPKIN – 10.7 OUNCES (300 G) PUMPKIN OR SQUASH, SKIN REMOVED, SEEDS DISCARDED, AND THE REST CHOPPED IN SMALL CUBES.
- BUTTER – 2 TBSP
- PARMIGIANO REGGIANO – 1/2 CUP (40 G)

PREPARATION

Bring the vegetable broth to a simmer in a medium saucepan.

Pour the extra-virgin olive oil in a medium pot, add the chopped shallot and cook for 5 minutes over medium heat until translucent. Pour in the rice and toast for 1 minute stirring frequently. Add the white wine and cook until evaporated, stirring frequently so the rice doesn't stick to the bottom of the pan.

When the wine has evaporated, add the pumpkin cubes and 1 to 2 ladles of vegetable broth to barely cover the rice and pumpkin. As soon as the rice mixture begins to dry out, add another ladle of broth and stir occasionally. Keep adding more broth, a ladle at a time, when the rice dries out while stirring occasionally in between to make sure that the rice doesn't stick to the bottom of the pan. At the 12 minute mark taste the risotto. It should be al dente or firm to the bite, but not hard nor mushy. If needed continue cooking until the 18 minute mark checking every minute to see if its done beforehand.

When the rice is finished, remove from heat and stir in the butter and Parmigiano Reggiano cheese. Serve immediately otherwise it will lose it's creamy, silky texture. *Buon appetito!*

* If you don't have white wine on hand, you can simply use a ladle of vegetable broth. The white wine gives more depth of flavor.

Fettuccine with Bolognese Sauce

When it comes to belly-pleasing recipes, you can't get better than a heaping bowl of Italian fettuccine topped with a richly-flavored Bolognese ragu. Trust us when we say that making the pasta from scratch is worth it because the tender noodles together with the meaty sauce are practically a symphony to the taste buds. This dish is most definitely a family favorite!

PRIMO



INGREDIENTS

FOR THE PASTA:

- 00 FLOUR – 400 G
- EGGS – 4 MEDIUM
- PINCH OF SALT – 4

FOR THE SAUCE:

- LEAN MINCED BEEF – 150 G
- MINCED PORK – 150 G
- CARROTS – 1
- CELERY – 1 STEM
- ONIONS – HALF
- WHITE WINE – HALF GLASS
- TOMATO SAUCE – 750 ML
- WATER – 1 L (IN THE SAME BOTTLE OF THE TOMATO SAUCE)
- OLIVE OIL – 4 SPOONS
- SALT AND PEPPER TO TASTE
- NUTMEG (IF YOU LIKE IT)

PREPARATION

First of all, put the flour in the shape of a pyramid and make a hole in the centre. Add a pinch of salt and put the egg in the middle.

Begin to work it with a fork and slowly add the flour. Once the ingredients are blended, knead the dough for 10 minutes, roll and cut. Let to rest the pasta for 1 hour.

Now let's prepare the sauce.

To prepare Bolognese sauce, chop down celery, carrot and onion.

In a saucepan warm oil over medium heat, add onion, celery and carrots and cook for about 10 minutes, stirring occasionally. Add the pork and beef and let it cook for another 10 minutes, stirring occasionally.

Once it is getting dry add the white wine, cook it until it is getting dry again. Add salt and pepper.

Add the tomato sauce and after add 1 liter of water; add the salt and pepper, lower the flame to the minimum and cover with lid: leave it cooking for one hour.

Once one hour passed, add half liter of water and cook one more hour. Besides, it is important to check from time to time.

Put water in a pot and add a handful of salt. Once the water boils, throw the homemade pasta and wait until it rises to the surface. After that, drain and put your Bolognese sauce and mix everything together.

Serve immediately with grated Parmesan on.

Enjoy your Fettuccine with Bolognese sauce.



Recipe provided by: Eat & Walk Italy



Secondo

For your second course in Italy, we give you a variety of options that include a typical dish from Abruzzo, fish with succulent mushrooms and roasted porcini that will have you coming back for seconds and thirds.

Arrosticini | Lamb Skewers

As teenagers, my friends and I spent many a summer night venturing into the hills above our beach town in Abruzzo in search of *arrosticini* – lamb skewers cooked over an open flame. We didn’t have a particular destination in mind; we would just zigzag up the narrow hill roads until we found a sign, usually hand-written, with an arrow pointing us in the right direction. Even without it, all we had to do was follow the enticing, smoking aroma of grilled meat through the trees and around the next bend to find the clearing outfitted with rustic wooden tables and grills.

Even though *arrosticini* are composed of just two ingredients – tiny pieces of fatty lamb or mutton and salt – they are packed with savory flavor. The marbled meat is prepared in a peculiar but rather brilliant way; small wooden skewers are driven into big blocks of meat, which is then cut precisely into centimeter-sized cubes. The threaded skewers are grilled over special narrow braziers called canali. The cutting and threading was, once upon a time, done by hand but is now done mostly by machine. Originally a quick-cooking portable meal for shepherds who traveled Abruzzo’s transumanza, driving sheep down into Puglia for winter and then back into Abruzzo in summer, *arrosticini* have become one of the region’s most famous foods.

One of the best ways to enjoy *arrosticini* is on Campo Imperatore, the high plain near the summit of the Gran Sasso mountain range. There you will find scattered rifugi, rustic shelters with rows of narrow grills set up outside and, inside, a deli counter of sorts in which you can buy ready-to-cook *arrosticini* by the kilo, along with local cheeses, salumi, bread, and beverages. Every September (barring a pandemic) my tour partners and I bring our guests up to Campo Imperatore for a memorable picnic with the mountain’s peak as our backdrop. We supplement the *arrosticini* and cheeses with homemade pickles, fresh fruit, and lots of good local wine. The highlight? Teaching our guests how to properly eat *arrosticini* by holding the one horizontally and using the teeth to slide the nuggets of freshly grilled lamb off the little wooden skewer.

My homestyle *arrosticini* are a slight variation of what you might find at a rifugio. I cut my lamb into slightly larger, more manageable pieces than traditional *arrosticini*, and I add a non-traditional finishing touch: I brush the just-grilled skewers with a rosemary branch dipped in olive oil. Grilled bread on the side is a must.

Domenica Marchetti



- **DIFFICULTY LEVEL** – LOW
- **COOKING TIME** – ABOUT 5 MINUTES, PLUS THE TIME TO HEAT THE GRIL
- **COST** – MEDIUM
- **SERVES** – 6

INGREDIENTS

- 2 LBS (1 KG) BONELESS LEG OF LAMB WITH SOME MARBLING OF FAT, CUT INTO PRECISE 3/4-INCH (2 CM) CUBES
- FINE SEA SALT
- EXTRA-VIRGIN OLIVE OIL
- A BRANCH OF FRESH ROSEMARY

PREPARATION

1. Soak a handful of small wooden skewers, 8 to 12 inches (20 to 30 cm) in length in cold water for 30 minutes. Prepare a fire in a charcoal grill or preheat a gas grill to high.
2. Thread the cubes of lamb onto the skewers, packing them tightly with no space between the spaces, taking care to add some fatty bits among the pieces. Place the skewers on the grill grate directly over the heat and sear until browned on the bottom side, about 3 minutes. Turn and grill until browned on the other side, another 2 minutes or so. A minute or so before removing the skewers from the grill, sprinkle them lightly with salt.
3. Transfer the skewers to a platter and use the rosemary sprig to brush them lightly with good olive oil. Serve hot.

Roasted Porcini Mushrooms

In Italy, the four most common porcino varieties grow under chestnut, beech, oak, and pine trees in not-too-densely forested areas, thriving on a vigorous combination of sunlight and rain. Although wild mushrooms have long been harvested commercially here, only recently has the porcino’s popularity exploded, cementing its reputation as the country’s most beloved *fungo*. The fundamental association of the porcino mushroom with Italian cuisine is, in fact, the result of a long and complex history of local commercial activity, import and export patterns, fluctuating demand, and clever marketing.

Amy Gulick

SECONDO



- **DIFFICULTY LEVEL** – LOW
- **COOKING TIME** – 45 MINUTES
- **COST** – MEDIUM

INGREDIENTS

- PORCINI MUSHROOMS – 2-4 MEDIUM PORCINI CAPS PER SERVING
- FRESH PARSLEY – CHOPPED
- GARLIC – FRESH
- OLIVE OIL
- SALT & PEPPER

PREPARATION

Preheat the oven to 180°C / 355°F.

The porcino is a very spongy mushroom that you really don’t want to wet. To clean them, start by cutting the bottom inch or so, usually quite dirty, off the stem. Using a fine brush, give the entire mushroom a thorough brushing to remove as much dry dirt as possible (mushroom gatherers sometimes do this in the forest to spread the spores around). Next, gently wipe them down with a damp, soft tea towel. Be careful not to wipe away the cap’s thin layer of skin. Let them recover a few minutes and brush them again if necessary.

Remove the caps from the stems with a gentle twist. If the cap resists, use a dull kitchen knife or teaspoon to gently pry the cap from the stem. The idea is to not break the cap, if possible. The stems can be set aside to be dried later (see below). Place the caps in a baking dish. Drizzle them with olive oil, dust with chopped fresh parsley and salt and pepper to taste. Toss a clove of garlic in the baking dish or grate the clove over the caps (optional). Bake for about 20 minutes. The mushrooms are done when they are slightly wrinkled, very soft, and have shrunk in size a little. Serve them with the pan juices.

To dry the stems: Slice them lengthwise into about 1/4 inch strips. String them together using a needle and thread and hang in a dry place, preferably one that gets sunlight (something like an enclosed porch is ideal). Or, place the pieces on a gauze cloth and store in a dry, sun-lit place, turning them periodically. Once fully desiccated, store them in a glass jar in the pantry.

* Sitta, N. & Floriani, M (2008). Nationalization and Globalization Trends in the Wild Mushroom Commerce of Italy with Emphasis on Porcini (*Boletus edulis* and Allied Species). *Economic Botany* 62(3), 307.

Red Mullet with Chanterelles

It is unnecessary to say that the common denominator of all the given recipes is mushrooms, and these are an autumn specialty 'par excellence'. People in all European countries wait impatiently for the time to arrive when they can go and pick for free what most of the gourmet cooks and chefs of the world regard as highly prized specialties. The extremely elusive truffle holds pride of place among gourmet food. The cheaper black, or the very expensive white truffle, is used sparingly to impart a specific taste, which affects all your senses. In the autumn however, there is the largest collection of *funghi* (mushrooms) available, which either you can pick yourself, or buy from specialist shops. Or alternatively come to my restaurant to sample some. However mushrooms are cooked, they are always delicious, and enrich an autumn menu and other specialties. I hope you will take the chance to go into the woods with an expert, to see what nature has in store for you!

Antonio Carluccio

SECONDO



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

INGREDIENTS

- CHANTERELLES – 250 G
- RED MULLET FILLETS – 4 (ABOUT 400 G IN WEIGHT)
- EXTRA-VIRGIN OLIVE OIL – 6 TBSP
- LIME JUICE
- SPRING ONIONS – 1, VERY FINELY CHOPPED
- BRANDY – 1 TBSP
- DOUBLE CREAM – 4 TBSP
- PARSLEY – 1 TBSP FINELY CHOPPED
- SALT
- PEPPER

PREPARATION

Clean and trim the mushrooms. Marinate the fish fillets in 2 tablespoons of the oil with the lime juice and some salt and pepper for 2 hours. In a pan, heat the rest of the oil and fry the spring onion gently to soften. Add the mushrooms and fry gently for 5 minutes. Add the brandy and, once the alcohol has evaporated, add the cream, salt, pepper and parsley.

In a non-stick frying pan, fry the fish skin side down until the skin is crisp and the flesh is cooked. This should take about 5-8 minutes. Add any remaining marinade to the pan and heat gently. Serve the fish immediately on hot plates with the mushrooms at the side. Eat with bread.

A close-up, artistic photograph of chocolate shavings, almonds, and cocoa powder on a dark surface. The chocolate shavings are dark and glossy, with some showing a marbled pattern. The almonds are light brown and scattered around the chocolate. The cocoa powder is a fine, reddish-brown dust, scattered in the air and on the surface. The background is a dark, textured surface.

Dolce

No true Italian meal would be complete without a dolce or sweet finale. You'll want to dive face-first into our ricotta and chocolate crostata while equally as delicious is this flourless pumpkin and almond cake. For wine lovers, we have crunchy cookies made from red wine and fennel that are seriously addictive!

Ricotta and Bittersweet Chocolate Crostata

More than a decade ago, on a visit to Lucca years ago, my family and I rented bicycles and cycled around the broad, elevated tree-lined boulevard that forms the outer wall of the medieval Tuscan city. At Osteria Baralla, the food was good, typical Tuscan fare, but what really caught my attention was a deeply dark chocolate crostata resting in a display case that we passed as we made our way to our table. My son and I looked at each other and we knew instantly what we would be having for dessert. The crostata did not disappoint; the thick layer of chocolate ganache topped a creamy filling of fresh ricotta and cream.

Domenica Marchetti

DOLCE



- **DIFFICULTY LEVEL** – LOW
- **COOKING TIME** – 1 HOUR, PLUS ADDITIONAL TIME TO CHILL THE PASTRY AND THE BAKED TART
- **COST** – MEDIUM

INGREDIENTS

- 2 1/2 CUPS (390 G) UNBLEACHED ALL-PURPOSE FLOUR, PLUS MORE FOR DUSTING
- 1/2 CUP (100 G) GRANULATED SUGAR
- FINELY GRATED ZEST OF 1 SMALL LEMON
- 1 TSP BAKING POWDER
- 1/8 TSP FINE SALT
- 1/2 CUP (115 G) COLD UNSALTED BUTTER, CUT INTO DICE
- 2 LARGE EGGS
- 1 LB (500 G) FRESH SHEEP'S MILK OR WELL-DRAINED COW'S MILK RICOTTA
- 1/4 CUP (30 G) CONFECTIONERS' SUGAR
- 1/2 TSP PURE VANILLA EXTRACT
- 1 CUP (250 ML) PLUS 2 TABLESPOONS HEAVY CREAM
- 8 OUNCES (250 G) BITTERSWEET CHOCOLATE, COARSELY CHOPPED
- 2 TBSP UNSWEETENED COCOA POWDER

PREPARATION

1. In a food processor, combine the flour, granulated sugar, lemon zest, baking powder, and salt and pulse to mix. Add the butter and pulse until the mixture is crumbly. Add the eggs and process just until the dough comes together. Turn the dough out onto a lightly floured surface, divide it in half, and pat it into two disks. Wrap one half in plastic wrap and freeze for another use. Wrap the second piece and refrigerate it for 1 hour.
2. Remove the pastry disk from the refrigerator. On a lightly floured surface, roll the disk into a 12-inch (30 cm) circle. Carefully transfer the dough to a 10-inch (25 cm) round tart pan with a removable bottom. Gently press the dough into the bottom and up the sides of the pan. Trim the overhang. Refrigerate for 1 hour (or up to overnight).
3. Preheat the oven to 350°F (180°C). Remove the tart shell from the refrigerator. Prick the bottom of the crust with a fork. Bake until the edges are just beginning to turn golden, about 10 minutes. Transfer to a wire rack and let cool for 10 minutes. Leave the oven on.
4. In a large bowl, combine the ricotta, confectioners' sugar, vanilla, and 2 tablespoons heavy cream and mix well. Spoon the mixture into the crust. Bake until the filling is set, 20 to 25 minutes. Transfer to a wire rack and let cool to room temperature.
5. In a heatproof bowl, combine the chocolate and cocoa powder. Pour the remaining 1 cup cream into a small saucepan and heat on medium until small bubbles form around the edges of the pan. Pour the hot cream over the chocolate and cocoa and stir until the mixture is dark, glossy, and smooth and all the chocolate has melted. Carefully spread the chocolate ganache over the cooled filling, starting in the middle and creating a thick layer that stops just short of the crust.
6. Refrigerate the crostata until thoroughly chilled, about 2 hours. Remove the sides from the pan and set the crostata on a serving plate. Let stand a few minutes, then cut into wedges and serve.

Artusi’s Flourless Pumpkin and Almond Cake

This recipe is one that highlights the pumpkin’s sweeter attributes. It is inspired in great part by Pellegrino Artusi’s (author of the seminal late nineteenth century cookbook, *Science in the Kitchen and the Art of Eating Well*) recipe for *torta di zucca gialla*, or pumpkin and almond cake. With almond meal holding it all together, this flourless cake has a moist consistency not dissimilar to a pumpkin pie filling.

Since pumpkins started appearing at my local market, I’ve made this cake several times, with a couple of variations on Artusi’s original recipe. There’s the method for making the pumpkin puree, most notably. Artusi calls for the very time-consuming task of grating raw pumpkin flesh, wrapping it in a towel and squeezing it until drained of almost two thirds its original weight.

I’ve simplified the method to some degree by cutting my pumpkin into large slices, roasting it in the oven until tender, scraping its pulp and passing that through a food mill. I then use a sieve lined with tightly woven cheesecloth to remove the resulting puree’s excess liquid. As a general rule, for every kilo of pumpkin used, your puree should be drained until it weighs 300 grams. As for the variety of pumpkin, Artusi appears to be referring to butternut squash when he says *zucca gialla* but I’ve also made this cake with a drier fleshed Red Kuri squash I found myself admiring while market shopping one day.

The pink-skinned beauty I fell in love with yielded a wonderfully mellow, almost chestnut-like flavour and gave the cake a vibrant orange hue. So, in short, do feel free to experiment with the pumpkins you have on hand and the colours and flavours each bring.

Rosemarie Scavo

DOLCE



- **DIFFICULTY LEVEL** – LOW
- **COOKING TIME** – 50 MINUTES - 1 HOUR
- **COST** – LOW

INGREDIENTS

- PUMPKIN – 1 KG OR BUTTERNUT SQUASH
- EGGS – 3
- SUGAR – 100 G
- ALMONDS – 100 G FINELY GROUND OR ALMOND MEAL
- CORNSTARCH – 30 G, DISSOLVED IN JUST ENOUGH COLD WATER
- SALT – 1/2 TSP
- GROUND NUTMEG – 1/2 TSP (PREFERABLY FRESHLY GROUND)
- BUTTER – FOR GREASING BAKING DISH
- FLOUR – FOR DUSTING BAKING DISH
- ALMONDS FLAKES – A HANDFUL SLIVERED ALMONDS, FOR DECORATION (OPTIONAL)
- ICING SUGAR – FOR SERVING (OPTIONAL)

PREPARATION

Preheat oven to 180°. Cut squash/pumpkin in half and remove seeds from centre. Cut pumpkin into large pieces, place on baking tray and roast in oven until tender (45 minutes to 1 hour). Scrape the roasted pulp off the skin and pass in batches through a food mill. Transfer *purée* to a sieve lined with tightly woven cheesecloth and drain until all excess liquid has been removed and the resulting *purée* weighs 300 grams. Beat eggs with sugar until the latter dissolves. Add the almond meal, dissolved cornstarch, nutmeg and salt and mix until well combined. Stir in the cooled squash/pumpkin puree and transfer batter to greased and dusted baking dish. Smooth surface and, if using, sprinkle slivered almonds on top. Bake for 50 minutes to 1 hour, or until set, golden on top and with sides that have shrunk away slightly from the edges of your baking dish. Leave to cool and, if desired, serve with icing sugar dusted on top.

Autumn on Your Table: Funghetti di Offida

Autumn has always been one of my favourite seasons. The falling leaves, the colours, the smell of the earth so strong and pungent, the chill in the air in the morning. And of course the food that goes with it. Chestnuts, pumpkins, apples, and mushrooms.

It is mushrooms that drew me to these biscuits of Le Marche, a less known region of Italy, tucked between Umbria and Abruzzo, rich of beautiful villages, gentle hills and a relaxing coast, and the birth place of some of the key figures of Italy culture from the poet Giacomo Leopardi to the revolutionary educator Maria Montessori. Urbino alone deserves a weekend trip.

The food from Le Marche finds ancient origins and often based on very few and simple ingredients. These biscuits are the perfect example.

After several sieges during the XIV century people were left with very little. The women of Offida, a hill side village near Ancona, decided to create a simple, cheap but energetic snack for their men and children by mixing just flour, honey (which then got replaced by sugar), a bit of water, and aniseed which during those days was mainly used for beverages. Cooked quickly and let dry for a few days they could last for days and enjoyed on their own or with a drink. Given the lack of moulds the Offida women used small tin circles which gave the the typical shape of small mushrooms. They can now be found in bags at most bakeries and at stalls during festivities. Given its historical importance the funghetto has even been granted denomination of counsel (a sub-category of the more known denomination of region or of origin). Happy mushroom hunting to all!

Francesca Re Manning

DOLCE



- **DIFFICULTY LEVEL** – MEDIUM
- **COOKING TIME** – 10 MINUTES (+20 MINUTES FOR BAKING)
- **COST** – LOW
- **SERVES** – 25 SMALL/MEDIUM FUNGHETTI

INGREDIENTS

- ALL PURPOSE FLOUR – 250 G
- SUGAR – 150 G (OR YOU CAN USE HONEY 150 ML)
- WATER – 1 GLASS
- ANISEEDS – 2 PINCHES

PREPARATION

In a large bowl mix the flour, sugar, and aniseeds. Add the water and work the flour to make into a soft dough. Make 25 small balls and let them dry on baking paper for at least 30 minutes (you could even leave them for the entire night). Place the balls in a small muffin tin ensuring that they touch the edges of the moulds. Cook them in the oven at 180°C for 20 minutes. Serve them warm with a glass of sweet wine.

Ciambelline al Vino (Red wine & Fennel Ring Biscuits)

‘They’re a bit hard’, I was warned as my hosts laid down a trayful of sugar-coated, ring-shaped biscuits at the centre of the dinner table. Unperturbed, I grabbed one and took a couple of small, studious bites. The purplish-tinged biscuit was hard, but not jaw-breakingly so. I inspected its crumb. As suspected from those first morsels, there were fennel seeds dotting its interior. Everyone else sitting around the table was dunking the biscuits into their glasses of dessert wine. I would have been happy to eat them as they were but I quickly got in on the act. It seemed to be the done thing in this part of Italy.

Upon my return from the shores of Lazio’s Lake Bolsena last summer, I learned from my hosts and some regional Italian cookbooks that what I’d eaten that evening were *ciambelline al vino*, or red wine and fennel ring biscuits. As it turned out, they were remarkably simple to replicate in my northern Italian kitchen, requiring minimal preparation time, no special equipment and basic pantry staples such as wine, flour, sugar and olive oil. I was hooked and have been making them for my family and I – to dunk in coffee, as well wine – on and off, ever since.

Like other hard-as-rocks ringed-shaped baked goods (think Puglia’s *friselle* and *taralli*) *ciambelline al vino* appear to have originated as a subsistence food. Drier-crumbed biscuits and breads modelled into a *ciambella* or ring could be stored more easily for long durations, making them a favoured staple of sailors and soldiers who often had to venture far away. These preparations were softened and consequently made more palatable by dunking them in water, wine or oil.

Many households in Lazio continue to rely on a simple formula – as opposed to a written recipe – for making these humble yet heartwarmingly good biscuits; for each glass of sugar, olive oil and wine, you’ll need 4 glasses of flour. I’ve adapted this ratio in the recipe below to metric measurements. Some people add a teaspoon of baking powder to the mix these days, but my preference is to do without. As for the wine, I’ve indicated the red tannins that were used to give those biscuits in the ancient Etruscan town of Sutri last summer that distinct purple tint. If a dry white is what you have on hand however, feel free to use that. I also happen to love the crowd-dividing, fennel (or anise) seeds often used to flavour *ciambelline*. If you don’t though, you can leave the teaspoon of that out as well.

Rosemarie Scavo



- **DIFFICULTY LEVEL** – LOW
- **COOKING TIME** – 10-15 MINUTES
- **COST** – LOW
- **SERVES** – MAKES ABOUT 30 BISCUITS.

INGREDIENTS

- OLIVE OIL – 125 ML
- RED WINE – 125 ML
- SUGAR – 125 G, PLUS EXTRA FOR COATING
- SIFTED FLOUR – 500 G, PLUS EXTRA FOR DUSTING
- FENNEL – 1 TSP FENNEL OR ANISE SEEDS, CRUSHED (OPTIONAL)
- SALT – A PINCH

PREPARATION

In a bowl, combine olive oil, wine and sugar. Add flour, salt and, if using, fennel (or anise) seeds, in a slow and steady stream. Bring the ingredients together and transfer to a clean and lightly-dusted work surface. Knead until you have a smooth dough that no longer sticks to the your work surface.

Take walnut-sized pieces of dough and roll into logs 8-10 cm long. Curl each log so their ends meet and overlap. Pinch gently to form rings. Dip the rings face down into a shallow bowl filled with sugar until well-coated. Arrange sugar-coated rings on a lined baking tray.

Bake in a pre-heated oven set at 180°C for 25 to 30 minutes or until dry to touch, golden and crisp. Remove from oven and allow to cool completely before storing in an airtight container in a cool, dry place.



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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CONTACT

- Email: eatandwalkitaly@gmail.com
- WhatsApp/iMessage: +39 3939085086
- Website: www.eatandwalkitaly.it





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