Vitello Tonnato

This elegant Italian version of surf and turf hails from the north-western region of Piedmont. It really is delicious, though when prepared correctly not particularly attractive, and its English description of 'poached veal in tuna mayonnaise' doesn't do it justice at all! The tuna sauce is so delicious, you'll want to spread it on everything, especially vegetables; it's also great tossed through pasta or used on sandwiches instead of mayo. This is a dish that can handle both white and red wine. Arneis (a Piedmont grape variety) works well and I really enjoyed Garry Crittenden's 'Endangered' with it. The Alfredo sangiovese from Nugan in King Valley was a fine match too.

Serves 6

- Extra virgin olive oil, for pan-frying
- 1kg veal nut (see below)
- 2 cups dry white wine
- 1 cup verjuice or sweet white wine vinegar
- 1 brown onion, chopped
- 2 fresh bay leaves, torn
- 1½ tablespoons salt flakes
- 1 teaspoon black peppercorns
- A few stalks parsley
- 2 tablespoons large salted capers, rinsed and dried
- 1 tablespoon chopped chives
- A few small young celery leaves
- Rocket and parmesan salad, for serving
- Crusty bread, for serving

Tuna Mayonnaise

- 370g canned tuna, drained
- 4 eggs, hard-boiled
- 2 tablespoons lemon juice
- 2 tablespoons salted capers, rinsed and drained
- 6 anchovy fillets
- Pinch cayenne
- ½ cup extra virgin olive oil

The typical Italian cut used is girello (eye round), which is part of the silverside. In Australia you may find it easier to get veal nut (also called knuckle or round). It's easier to slice the veal thinly if you have time to refrigerate it first.

1. Heat a generous drizzle of oil in a large saucepan over high heat.
2. Add veal and cook for a minute or so each side until well coloured. Remove to a plate.
3. Add wine and verjuice to the pan and bring to the boil, stirring with a wooden spoon to dissolve any bits stuck to the bottom of the pan.
4. Add onion, bay leaves, salt, peppercorns and parsley stalks and return veal to the pan with any juices. Add enough cold water to just cover (about 2 litres). Cover with a lid and bring to the boil.
5. Reduce heat and simmer for 1½ hours, turning it over after 45 minutes. Remove from heat, uncover and set aside to cool in the poaching liquid for an hour or so.
6. Meanwhile, make Tuna Mayonnaise: process tuna, eggs, lemon juice, capers, anchovies and cayenne in a food processor until smooth. With the motor running, drizzle in oil to form a thick emulsion. Cover and refrigerate until needed.
7. Drain veal, strain and reserve the cooking liquid.
8. Slice veal thinly (about 1mm-thick).
9. Add a little veal cooking liquid (about ¼ cup) to the Tuna Mayonnaise to give it a thick pouring consistency.
10. Spread Tuna Mayonnaise onto a platter, arrange veal slices on top overlapping slightly, with a little more Tuna Mayonnaise in between slices, spread remaining Tuna Mayonnaise over the top. Cover and refrigerate for at least a few hours, preferably overnight.
11. Heat some oil in a small saucepan, add capers and fry for a minute or 2 until crisp. Drain on paper towel.
12. Scatter capers, chives and celery leaves over the veal and serve with rocket and parmesan salad and crusty bread.

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