

Be Inspired

FOOD ~ WINE ~ TRAVEL



Online Cooking Class

A Southern Italian Summer

Inspired by **Armando Percuoco**



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How To Be inspired



I want to inspire your culinary adventures every way I can.

If you're a skip-the-stories-and-just-get-on-with-it kind of cook, use the contents table to click directly to the recipes and video links.

If you like a printed copy, use the **PRINT-FRIENDLY** link below for a black and white pdf of just run sheets and recipes with video QR codes.

This magazine-style recipe booklet sets the scene, including a curated playlist of tunes to cook to. There are details on the food and wine we'll be exploring, plus some travel tips for a vicarious holiday or to help inspire the next real one!

JOIN THE BE INSPIRED COMMUNITY

Be Inspired has an active online community. Our cooks, chefs and producers love to share their inspiration, ask and answer questions, offer tips, and substitution and sourcing ideas.

Join us on Facebook.

If you're posting to Instagram, please tag #beinspiredfood and follow me [@robertamuir](#)

EVENTS

We get together in person too, for dinners, producer visits and other events. See what's coming up [here](#).

Some events can be arranged as private functions with friends and family or for [corporate entertaining](#).

TOURS

Each year I take a small group of food and wine lovers to Europe with me for the culinary adventure of a lifetime. I'd love you to join me – [details here](#).

**DOWNLOAD PRINT
FRIENDLY RECIPES**



Here's the ingredients you'll need for all four menus. I've included preferred brands where applicable and you can read more about some of the awesome producers I recommend on [page 60](#).

Butcher/Fishmonger Deli/Speciaty Greengrocer Grocer

Menu 1 Menu 2 Menu 3 Menu 4	recipe	Quantity	Ingredient	Notes
✓	Steak with Salmoriglio	300g	beef, rump	
✓	Lamb Chops	4	lamb loin chops	
✓	Ocean Trout	300g	ocean trout fillet, centre-cut, skin on	Dietary Variation
✓	Prawns	6	prawns, green large (U10)	Dietary Variation
✓	Quail	2	quails (about 300g ea)	
✓	Acqua Pazza	2	snapper fillets, skin on, pin-boned	
✓	Swordfish with Salmoriglio	300g	swordfish steak	Dietary Variation
✓	Lamb Chops	100g	'nduja	
✓	Orecchiette	3	anchovy fillets	
✓✓	Orecchiette, Bread Salad	120g	bread, rustic white	
✓	Insalata Caprese	180g	buffalo bocconcini	
✓	Lamb Chops	1 stick	crusty bread	
✓✓✓✓	Everything	1lt	extra virgin olive oil	
✓	Orange Salad	10	olives, small	
✓	Potatoes	2	peperoni cruschi	
✓✓	Quail, Escarole	25ml	vinegar, agrodolce red wine	
✓	Asparagus	1bunch	asparagus, green - thin if possible	
✓✓✓	Bread Salad, Acqua Pazza, Orange Salad, Insalata Caprese		basil	
✓	Quail	1	bay leaf, fresh	
✓	Orecchiette	300g	broccoli	
✓	Capsicum	1	capsicum, red	
✓	Capsicum	1	capsicum, yellow	
✓	Bread Salad	1	cucumber, Lebanese	
✓	Orange Cake	1	egg	
✓	Eggplant	1	eggplant, black	

✓	Escarole	1 head	endive, curly	
✓✓✓✓	Everything	1 head	garlic	
✓	Quail	150g	grapes, red seedless	
✓	Steak with Salmoriglio	1	lemon	
✓	Quail	1	lettuce, cos baby	
✓	Funghi Trifolati	150g	mushrooms, button	
✓✓	Bread Salad, Lamb Chops, Orange Salad	3	onions, red	
✓✓	Orange Cake, Orange Salad	2	oranges	
✓	Lamb, Orange Salad, Salmoriglio		oregano	
✓✓	Funghi Trifolati, Potatoes, Salmoriglio		parsley	
✓	Quail	1	pear, Corella (small)	
✓	Potatoes	300g	potatoes, Dutch cream	
✓	Quail		rocket, wild	
✓	Acqua Pazza, Bread Salad, Insalata Caprese	300g	tomatoes, grape	
✓	Orange Cake, Granita	170g	castor sugar	
✓	Chickpeas	400g	chickpeas, canned	
✓✓✓✓	Everything		chilli flakes, dried	
✓	Escarole		currants	
✓	Orange Cake	150g	flour, self-raising	
✓	Ocean Trout	210g	polpa (Mutti)	Dietary Variation
✓	Orecchiette	500g	orecchiette pasta	
✓	Escarole	14g	pine nuts	
✓	Quail	40g	walnuts	
✓	Granita	100ml	cream	optional

Purchase & Storage Tips

If you don't have a herb garden, I recommend buying potted herbs to keep on your kitchen bench. They last well if you look after them: discard the plastic sleeve, sit them in a sunny spot in a small dish kept half full of water (**except** for thyme and rosemary which seem happier watered regularly but in a dry dish).

I recommend investing in a small vacuum-packing machine so you can vac-pack and freeze all protein unless you're going to use it within a couple of days. It thaws quickly in a sink of **cold** water and is always best frozen as fresh as possible (don't leave it until just before the use-by-date to freeze). Here are some tips on how to store items for maximum freshness and quality.

Meat, Poultry & Seafood

Seafood and poultry should be stored in the coldest part of the fridge (usually bottom shelves), and generally used within 2 days or frozen asap.



Prawns (green and cooked) – store in a tub of water as soon as possible to prevent them oxidizing (blackening). Store like this in the fridge for 4 days or freeze asap in a tub of water if you plan to cook them later. Once thawed, refrigerate in the tub of water and use within 2 days.

Ocean Trout – store in the coldest part of the fridge in a plastic bag on a plate with an ice brick beneath and above it, like this it will keep for 4 days. For maximum quality, use or freeze within 24 hours.

Snapper, Swordfish – store in the coldest part of the fridge in a plastic bag on a plate with an ice brick beneath and above it, like this it will keep for 3 days. For maximum quality, use or freeze within 24 hours.

Quail – will keep vac-packed in the fridge for 1 week. Freeze asap if you aren't planning to cook it before the use-by date.

Lamb, Steak – will keep for 4 days in the fridge (2 weeks vac-packed), but I prefer to freeze it asap. Always check best-before date on packaged meat and freeze asap if you aren't planning to use it before then.

'Nduja – refrigerate in the pouch and use before UBD. Once opened, squeeze as much air as possible out of the pouch. The top of the spread may darken due to harmless oxidation, this can be discarded or mixed through the remainder.

Purchase & Storage Tips



Vegetables & Herbs

Cucumber – high in water, cucumbers can soften quickly; you'll generally find the freshest at Asian grocers. Store in a bag in the crisper and remember that they're still fine to use for grating/shredding even if the skin doesn't look perfect!

Cos lettuce is quite hardy. Store sealed in a bag in the crisper, revive by soaking in a sink of cold water if need be and shave off the cut side if it's oxidised and/or discard any damaged leaves before using.

Mushrooms keep best in a brown paper bag inside a zip-lock bag in the crisper. They'll still taste great cooked even if they've softened a little.

Potatoes – store in a cardboard box or paper bag in a cool dark place (never refrigerate potatoes to be used for frying).

Tomatoes – I prefer grape tomatoes for most recipe as they are the most consistently ripe and flavourful year-round. If tomatoes are unripe, store at room temperature, ideally in a sunny spot, until fully ripe, then in a bag or punnet in the crisper of the fridge until needed.

Other fresh fruit, vegetables and leaves (excluding onion, including citrus) – store in freezer bags, zip-lock bags or sealed plastic containers in the crisper section of the fridge.

Dairy

I recommend storing cheeses inside a sealed plastic container in the fridge to create a microclimate for them and prevent them drying out. To prevent cross-contamination, store hard cheeses separately to those with mould.

Other

Eggs – store in the fridge and bring to room temperature before using.

Nuts – refrigerate for maximum freshness.

Bread – if not using within a few days, freeze asap wrapped in aluminium foil inside a zip-lock bag. If using for breadcrumbs, leave out overnight (covered with something that allows ventilation) to dry out. Put baguettes into a 160°C (320°F) oven for a few minutes to crisp up before serving.

Anchovies – store refrigerated.

Peperoni cruschi – store in an air-tight container (small zip-lock bag) in the fridge until ready to use; otherwise they soften and can't be crumbled.

Basic ingredients can vary widely in weight, my recipes assume the below approximate weights:

Garlic: 1 clove = 5g whole | Red Shallot: 1 = 40g

Small Chilli: 1 = 3g | Long Chilli: 1 = 20g

Herbs, average bunch whole weight:

Flat-leaf Parsley = 75g (1 cup chopped)

Mint = 40g (½ cup chopped)

Coriander = 60g (⅔ cup chopped)



Armando Percuoco (OAM)

Neapolitan-born chef Armando Percuoco landed in Australia in the early '70s, when tomatoes were pale pink and rock hard, zucchini flowers were thrown out, and olive oil was only sold at pharmacies.

Over the past 50+ years Armando has been an integral part of the evolution of Australian hospitality.

By the late '70s, he and his father Mario had opened Pulcinella where they gave away mascarpone desserts because no one knew what this strange cream cheese was.

It was here that Armando introduced an Italian menu beyond tired antipasti of commercial giardiniera with a few slices of salami and cheese, badly

done spaghetti carbonara, and the ubiquitous veal limone and veal marsala.

"Italian restaurant menus were the same from Sydney to Cairns," Armando says. "They all had prosciutto with melone and chicken parmigiana – still today I don't know where that silly dish comes from," he adds.

In 1987 Armando opened his landmark restaurant Buon Ricordo in Paddington.

It quickly became a regular haunt of politicians, artists, actors, and food-lovers from every walk of life.

"We didn't do anything particularly special", Armando claims, "just introduced dishes like gamberetti and squid ink risotto", which many wouldn't touch at first.

It was a steep learning curve finding the fine line between satisfying customers and educating them.



In the mid-90s Armando and his wife, Gemma Cunningham, bought a 230-acre property in Wollombi in the Hunter Valley north of Sydney, where they planted an olive grove and an extensive kitchen garden. Over the years they've renovated the original hundred-year-old cottage and built a beautiful guest villa which is now available as a B&B.

Avid art and sculpture collectors, they've dotted the property with many outdoor sculptures that contrast wonderfully with the Mediterranean olive trees and Aussie kangaroos lying in the shade beneath them.

Since handing Buon Ricordo over to a new generation of passionate chefs in 2018, Armando and Gemma now call their Valleyfield property home.

Throughout his career Armando has stressed the importance of bringing loved ones together around a table laden with simple, delicious food – and that's what we hope you'll be doing with the Southern Italian menus we've designed for you in this class.

Learn more about Armando at valleyfieldescape.com



WATCH



Armando and Roberta discuss Southern Italian food



LISTEN



Be Inspired by Armando's favourite music on Spotify



EXPLORE



Armando's farm with a stay at Valleyfield Escape

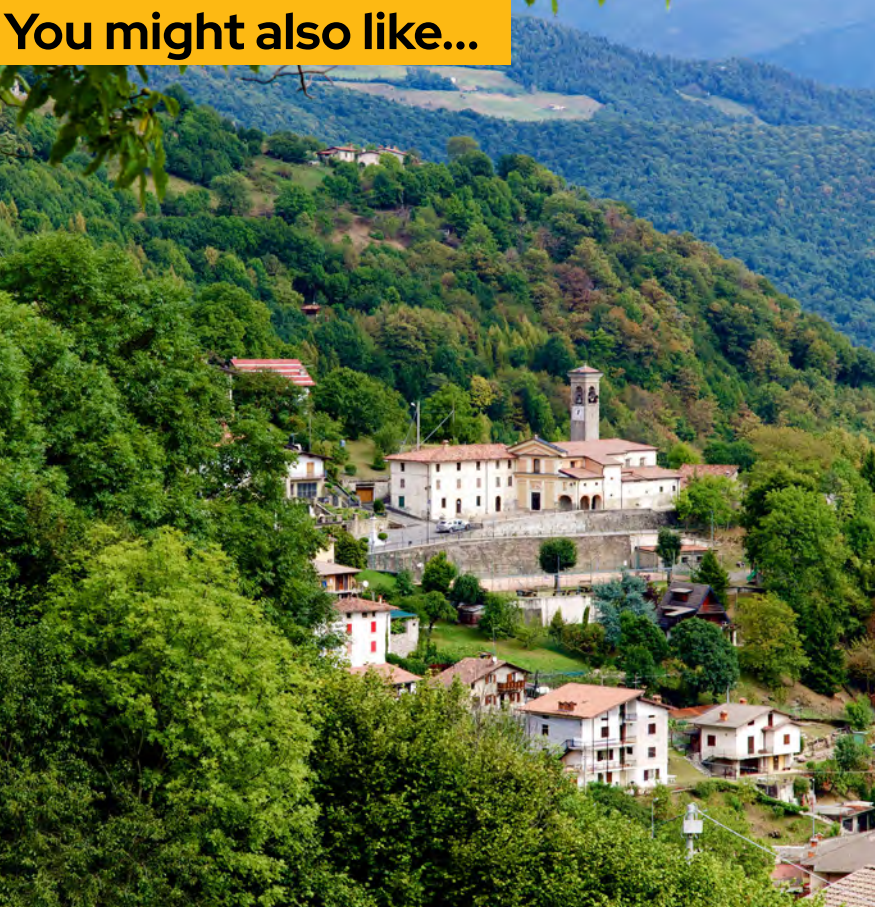


EXPERIENCE



Armando's legacy at Buon Ricordo

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Southern Italy

Just where southern Italy starts depends on who you ask. The wife of a Calabrian once corrected me when I suggested her husband was from the south. Of course he wasn't 'southern', there's all of Sicily further south than Calabria, right? But to a Florentine, Rome is in the south, and to a Milanese 'the south' may well start at the Lombardy-Emilia border!

Generally everything south of Rome is considered southern, but in this class we're talking about the ankle (Campania), toe (Calabria), instep (Basilicata), and heel (Puglia) of the Italian boot, plus Sicily. We'll save Adriatic Abruzzo and Molise and the Mediterranean island of Sardinia, generally also considered southern, for another time.

The south has traditionally been known as Mezzogiorno (midday) due to the ferocity of its midday sun; and it is mostly a hot, dry, rocky place. It's also still the poorest part of Italy, with a long history of peasant farming, organised crime (it was the unrelenting demands of the Neapolitan Camorra that forced Armando's father to move to Australia), an influential church and close-knit communities steeped in tradition.

For me it's always been a land of easy-going hospitality, where people are keen to share the little they have. And what they do have is some glorious natural produce grown in that hot mezzogiorno sun and centuries of devising how to turn those simple ingredients into almost unreasonably tasty dishes!

It is the land of olive oil, garlic, chilli and wild aromatic herbs – plus the citrus, nuts, honey and dried fruits brought by the Arabs. A diet which was, out of necessity, rich in legumes, grains and vegetables cooked in olive oil and enriched with a little dairy, has proven to be not only delicious but healthy. Inland, lamb and goat are popular, while on the coast people eat seafood, often small oily fish like sardines, and the clams and octopus harvested along the rocky coastline.

Naples, under Spanish rule in the 16th century, was the European entry point for New World tomato, capsicum and eggplant, which found a place in local cuisine while still being viewed with suspicion elsewhere.

I love the south for its pasta (often eaten twice a day), wealth of simple vegetable dishes, sun-ripened fruits and generous use of robust olive oil, chilli and garlic. Most of all I love it for its tradition of taking time to share the enjoyment of 'le piccole cose' (the little things) because, at the end of the day, that's what makes life worth living.

Buon appetito!



Antipasto and Italian Meals

Antipasto (or antipasti in the plural) literally means ‘before the meal’, from ‘anti’ (before) and ‘pasti’ (meal). So antipasto is the first course of a traditional 4-course Italian meal; though somewhat confusingly the next course, usually pasta or risotto, is called the primo which literally means ‘first’. It’s worth noting that traditionally pasta and risotto are never main courses (secondo).

We often think of antipasto as an array of shared dishes (like tapas or mezze).

This is ‘antipasti misti’ (mixed antipasti) and, while it’s popular in restaurants and for larger gatherings, for everyday family meals the antipasto course is often just one individual dish that may be cold (antipasto freddo) or hot (antipasto caldo).

Some antipasti make perfect finger food for parties, especially as toppings for crostini or bruschetta, and many can be served as side dishes.

So think of the antipasti recipes in Menu 3 (as well as ceci all’aglio, scarole di Natale, cialleda fredda, insalata di arance and patate con

peperoni cruschi) as versatile recipes that can be starters, sides or canapés.

If you put enough of them together with some crusty bread they also make a delicious grazing meal with no primo or secondo needed; maybe just a little dolce (sweet) to finish.



Pasta Shapes

Pasta is the perfect quick and easy comfort food ideal for fast, delicious meals that warm the tummy and the heart. Many have a variety of names based on different regions' dialects or uses. Here's a rundown on the basic pasta shapes and how to use them; see [page 21](#) for everything you need to know to cook pasta like a Nonna.



Pastina

Tiny pasta shapes, collectively called *pastina* ('little pasta'), are perfect for adding to soups. There's rice-shaped *risoni* (also called *orzo*, meaning barley), Sardinian *fregola* (the toasted one is best), *stelline* (little stars) and tubular *ditalini* (little thimbles). Add canned beans and tomato for *pasta e fagioli*, or whatever veggies are on hand for hearty *minestrone*.



Hollow Pasta

Orecchiette (little ears, traditional to Puglia) and Sardinian *malloreddus* (or *gnocchetti*) are short pasta shapes traditionally made by rolling or pressing with the thumb. *Strozzapreti* (literally 'strangle the priest'), sometimes called *cavatelli*, is in this category too, as are *conchiglie* (little shells). All are good with drier sauces that can nestle into their hollows.



Baked Pasta

Flat lasagne sheets and tubular *cannelloni* (literally 'large reeds') are designed for baking. These days they come conveniently par-cooked so you don't need to boil them first as they soften in the sauce. Large shells, called *conchiglione*, are also great for filling and baking, though they do need to be boiled first; then there's the ultimate pasta bake, *macaroni cheese*.



Short Pasta

There are probably more shapes in this category than in any other, and most have several names. *Penne* (smooth *lisce* and ridged *rigate*), curly *spiral* or *fusilli* is sometimes called *cellentani* or *cavatappi* (corkscrew), bow tie-shaped *farfalle* (butterfly), and *rigatoni* are all great with chunky sauces that can cling to them. They handle a bit of chilli well too.



Long Pasta

This large category includes wide and thin strands. *Pappardelle* and *tagliatelle*, made with egg, are typical of northern Italy, while those without egg (like *spaghetti* and hollow *bucatini*) are from further south. Thinner strands are best with lighter sauces, such as *cacio e pepe* or *aglio olio e peperoncino*, and thicker ones are good with heartier ragùs like Bolognese.



Filled Pasta

Ravioli tends to be a generic name for filled pasta, with a multitude of names, shapes and sizes. Typically made from fresh egg-based pasta folded around a filling or with the filling sandwiched between two sheets. Some of the most popular are hat-shaped *cappelletti*, rectangular or half-moon *agnolotti*, and *tortellini* said to be modelled on the belly button of Venus. Simple sauces like burnt butter and sage are all they need.



Stretched-Curd Cheeses and Vannella Caseificio

I love cheese, and while it's impossible to choose just one favourite style, stretched curd comes close. Especially buffalo mozzarella, with which I fell in love many years ago in southern Italy.

Back in Australia, I occasionally splurged on an imported ball of Mozzarella di Bufala but given the distance it had travelled it never quite lived up to the memory. I still remember my surprise the first time I tasted an Australian-made version as good as the ones I'd had in Italy; it was by an Italian family in Cairns, where dairy buffalo were being farmed.

That was my introduction to Puglian-born cheesemaker Vito Minoia and Vannella Cheese. Vito learnt to hand-make stretched curd cheeses in Italy before moving to Cairns in 2004 with his wife Pina Vannella and their children Giuseppe and Anna. Vito's traditional burrata, buffalo mozzarella and stracciatella quickly caught the attention of cheese lovers and chefs, and so the family moved to Sydney to be closer to their main market.

In 2022 Vito celebrated 50 years as a cheesemaker and today his son Giuseppe and granddaughter Martina work alongside him in their caseificio in Marrickville.

Stretched-curd cheeses, also called pasta filata, start like any other cheese with soured milk set into curds and whey. After the whey is drained,

the curds are mixed with water and heated to form a pliable mass that's pulled and stretched in the hot water, traditionally by hand, to expel extra whey and form stretchy, resilient strands. When the texture is stretchy enough, a piece is torn or cut off ('mozzare' in Italian) and shaped.

Stretched-curd cheeses have a mild flavour and melt into long stretchy strings when fresh or, when aged, a soft yielding mass that holds its shape and doesn't split. They're sometimes smoked (affumicata) which adds flavour and colour.

There are three main types of stretched-curd cheeses:

Fresh mozzarella consists of a thin skin encasing a moist, supple interior of soft layered fibres. Mozzarella can be made from cow or buffalo milk, though cow milk mozzarella is often called fior di latte. Mozzarella appears in many different shapes and sizes from bite-sized bocconcini to ciliegine (cherries), perline (pearls), treccine (braids), and nodini (knots). Burrata, a specialty of Puglia, is made by wrapping a sheet of mozzarella around a filling of fresh stretched curds mixed with fresh cream (stracciatella).

Aged cheeses are made by heating the curds for longer and kneading more vigorously to expel more moisture. The resulting smooth mass is formed into many different shapes including caciocavallo, literally 'cheese on horseback'; these are traditionally aged in pairs dangling either side of a rod as if astride a horse. Scamorza usually has a similar gourd-shape but softer body as it was traditionally sold younger while the caciocavallo was aging. Provolone, another variation, is most commonly shaped like a large sausage and popular in northern Italy.

Frying cheeses, like halloumi, are stretched-curd cheeses that are more common in Greece and the Middle East than in Italy. The curds are worked most vigorously to extract as much whey as possible, and then often aged in brine to prevent a rind forming. This creates hard, rubbery, salty cheeses that really come into their own when heated.

Learn more about
Vannella Cheese at
vannellacheese.com.au



Italian Varietals In Australia

While the exact varietals weren't documented, the grape vines that arrived in Australia with the First Fleet were most likely French, including the likes of pinot noir, chenin blanc and semillon. And for the two centuries that followed, French grapes dominated the Australian wine scene.

Since the late 1990s however, there's been a surge in plantings of Italian varietals. Given the Australian climate and global warming, this makes great sense – especially for those traditionally found in the hot, dry south. Here are some of the most popular southern Italian varietals in Australia.

Fiano

From Mediterranean Sicily and Campania, fiano is quite at home in hot, dry McLaren Vale, where Coriole introduced it to Australia in 2002. Think bold ripe fruit aromas, delicious citrus and melon notes, and often a pleasing touch of bitterness on the finish.

Pecorino

This Italian grape shares its name with Italian sheep's milk cheese, maybe because shepherds (or sheep) liked the grapes. Etymology aside, its ability to hold good flavour and acid in warmer areas led to some of the first Australian plantings being in the Hunter Valley.

Nero d'Avola

Sicily's most important grape, nero d'Avola, is often compared to shiraz in flavour and regarded as the perfect grape for Australia's hotter, drier regions like McLaren Vale. More recently it's also popping up in NSW around Hilltops and Gundagai.

Negroamaro

Negroamaro, meaning 'black bitter', is grown almost exclusively in Puglia, where it makes some of the region's most popular wines. It's often blended with malvasia nera for a perfumed red wine with a pleasant bitter finish and is quite at home in warm McLaren Vale.

[Learn more about BeInspired.au](#)

[Australian-Italian red wines](#)

[Australian-Italian white wines](#)



Be Inspired Wine Pairing Southern Italian

Archaeological evidence suggests that grapes from wild vines may have been harvested in Sicily as far back as the Bronze Age. When the Greeks arrived in southern Italy in the 8th century BC they dubbed the people there Oenotrians, from oinos meaning wine, due to their abundant vineyards. So the grapes found in southern Italy today have had millennia to harmonise with the local dishes.

1 FULL-BODIED WHITE

This full-flavoured menu, with rich acqua pazza sauce and tangy tomatoes in the salad, calls for a full-flavoured white wine, like fiano. Fiano generally has a bright nose, good acid to cut through richness and a juicy mouth-watering finish to complement the tomatoes. Coriole Rubato Reserve is considered by many to be the best fiano outside Italy with bold ripe fruit aromas and a pleasing touch of bitterness on the finish.

2 MEDIUM-BODIED RED

I want a wine with plenty of ripe red fruit to match the sweetness of the onions in the sauce accompanying Menu 2's lamb (or trout), but not too much tannin which may clash with the chilli. A soft, medium-bodied red like Montepulciano is ideal. It's widely planted in Abruzzo, Marche, Puglia and Lazio and in the Adelaide Hills Darryl Catlin makes two excellent, food-friendly versions.

3 SPARKLING ROSATO

Designed for sharing with loved ones, the dishes in Menu 3 are ideal for a celebration and bubbles! While northern Italy is better known for sparkling wines, the south makes some fine examples. I especially love spumante made from red aglianico grapes in Basilicata. In Heathcote (Victoria), Chalmers makes a delicious naturally fermented (col fondo) sparkling rosato that pairs beautifully with this menu.

4 ELEGANT FULL-BODIED RED

Sicily's most popular grape, nero d'Avola, is often compared to shiraz in flavour, a great match for the steak in this menu. The herbal notes of salmoriglio and the escarole pair well with an elegant food-friendly version like the smooth, structured, juicy Intrepidus nero d'Avola by Canberra winemaker Chrissie Smith made with Gundagai-grown fruit.



Amalfi Coast

Amalfi is the place I most look forward to visiting in southern Italy. Not just the pretty town itself but the villages around it, especially high up above the coast in places like Scala, Ravello and Tramonti. The scenery is spectacular and the food and wine delicious. But what really makes any visit to Amalfi special is the people. High up in the clouds – where the grapes and other fresh produce grow – the air is cool, the views magnificent and the welcome warm. Here are just a few reasons I love Amalfi.

STAY

HOTEL ZI'NTONIO

Stefano and his team at this family-run albergo in Scala treat guests like extended family. Papa Ciccio grows much of their produce on the terraced organic farm opposite, while Mama Marinella shares family recipes at hands-on cooking classes. The terrace – with views of Ravello and the coast – is the perfect spot for delicious breakfasts (try caponata Napoletana) and aperitivi. The comfortable rooms all have balconies with stunning views.

EAT

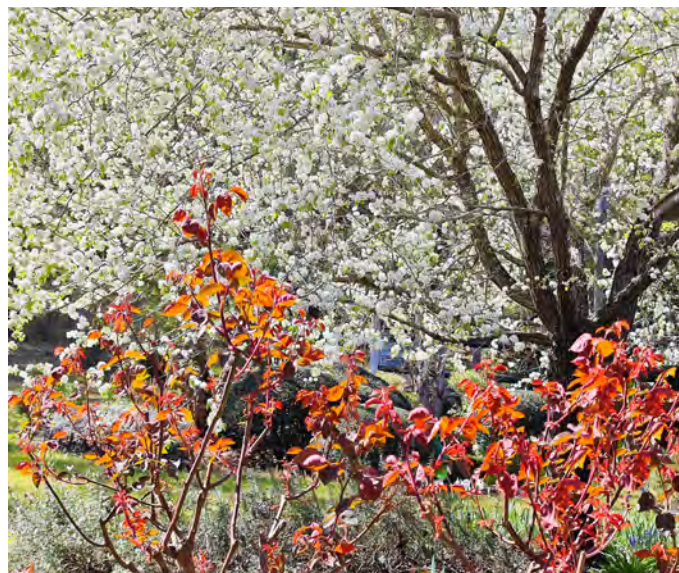
RISTORANTE DA CICCIO

One of my favourite restaurants in Italy is run by the same family that owns Hotel Zi'Ntonio: brothers Marco (chef), Giuseppe (sommelier) and Antonio (manager). Papa Ciccio's organic produce features on the menu alongside the local fishermen's daily catch. Service is refined yet friendly, there's a great wine list and theatrical gueridon. Plus the best spaghetti vongole al cartoccio ever (pictured above) and great gnocchi Sorrentina.

DO

PATH OF THE LEMONS

Amalfi lemons are famous and, whether or not you walk the full 'Path of the Lemons' from Minori to Maiori, it's worth the climb to Agricola Ruocco, a rustic refreshment stand at the top of the 'Sentiero dei Limoni'. Giovanni and Nadia serve lemonade, limoncello, lemon jam and marinated lemon salad, and may invite you to peek inside their beautiful garden of lemon and other fruit trees. As the path doesn't pass through actual lemon groves, this is a treat.



Valleyfield Escape

It's a good indication that your hosts are Italian when your B&B has three different coffee making options! In the very well-equipped kitchen in the guest villa on Armando Percuoco's Wollombi farm there's a traditional stove-top Bialetti, a plunger and a pod machine. A lifetime in hospitality also means he can't help but include half a dozen eggs, local bacon, Petuna smoked salmon and a full bottle of fresh milk as part of the breakfast supplies; no mean little single-serve UHT milk pods here.

A stay at Valleyfield is like relaxing in a friend's beautiful country home but with the privacy of your own separate dwelling. Set in 230 acres of bush with over 2 acres of landscaped gardens full of fruit trees and native plants, the property is also home to kangaroos, wombats, turtles, ducks and many other birds. The kangaroos especially love lolling around in the shade of the extensive olive grove.

It's only a short drive into the village of Wollombi for dinner or to collect

supplies to cook your own – a great option as it provides an excuse to raid the extensive kitchen garden and pick other edible plants and herbs that line the pathways.

Armando and his wife Gemma are keen art collectors, as is evident in little touches like the beautiful soap dishes by renowned ceramicist Mitsuo Shoji, as well as the original artwork in the bedroom and diverse collection of outdoor sculptures dotting the grounds.

Whether you want to settle in for a barbecue on the wrap-around verandah, relax in the bathtub overlooking the olive grove, or find a base for a few days exploring the Hunter Valley, there's nowhere more beautiful and comfortable to do it than Valleyfield Escape.

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I generally design my recipes into four 2-course menus, with a suggestion for a simple third course and a link to that recipe on my website.

Southern Italian meals are casual and versatile, with vegetable dishes suitable as both sides (contorni) and starters (antipasti). So be inspired to mix and match the below suggestions to create your own menus.

ESSENTIALS



How To Store Prawns
How To Make Breadcrumbs
How To Cook Pasta
How To Toast Nuts
Salmoriglio
How to Pin Bone a Fish

**PRINT
FRIENDLY
RECIPES**

MENU 1



Secondo Pesce all'Acqua Pazza
(Fish in 'Crazy Water')



Contorno Cialleda Fredda
(Tomato & Bread Salad)



Dolce Torta all'Arancia (Orange Cake)



Pasta alla
Puttanesca



From **BeInspired.au**

MENU 2



Primo Orecchiette con Cime di Rapa
(Orecchiette with Broccoli)



Secondo Costolette di Agnello con Salsa alla
'Nduja (Lamb Chops with Spicy Sauce)



Pesce Picante (Ocean Trout with Spicy Sauce)



Contorno Insalata di Arance (Orange Salad)



Mostaccioli
Calabrese



From **BeInspired.au**

MENU 3



Antipasti Misti Insalata Caprese, Funghi,
Melanzane, Asparagi, Peperoni



Secondo Quaglia alla Griglia con Insalata di
Pere (Quail with Pear & Walnut Salad)



Gamberi alla Griglia con Insalata di Pere
(Prawns)



Contorno Patate con Peperoni Cruschi
(Potatoes with Dried Chilli)



Armando's
Panettone with Berries



From **BeInspired.au**

MENU 4



Secondo Tagliata di Manzo con Salmoriglio
(Steak with Herb Sauce)



Pesce Spada con Salmoriglio (Swordfish)



Contorni Ceci all'Aglio (Chickpeas with Garlic);
Scarole di Natale (Sautéed Endive)



Dolce Granita al Caffè (Coffee Granita)



Spaghetti alle
Vongole al Cartoccio



From **BeInspired.au**

How To Store Prawns



WATCH THE VIDEO



Once taken out of the water, prawns oxidise quickly and blacken around the head and joints, just like some fruits turn brown soon after being cut.

This harmless but unsightly discolouration can be prevented by adding sulphur, freezing, cooking or peeling them.

Peeled prawns can be refrigerated for a couple of days on a plate covered tightly with plastic wrap or in a sealed container, but there's a better way.

Here's how to store prawns for maximum freshness:

1. Place unpeeled cooked or green (raw) prawns in a container of cold water so that they're completely covered.
2. Seal the container with a lid or plastic wrap.
3. Store them like this in the coldest part of the fridge (usually bottom shelf) for 2–3 days.
4. Or freeze them like this for up to 3 months and thaw overnight in the fridge or quickly in a sink of cold water. Cook within a few hours of thawing.



Pangrattato

In traditional peasant cultures food is never wasted, especially something as precious as bread which was revered as almost holy – perhaps because of its association with the Eucharist or perhaps because it was sometimes all that people had to eat.

Older Italians remember a time when a dropped piece of bread was always kissed before being discarded, if it was indeed discarded rather than simply being dusted off to be eaten.

With growing concern about global food waste, we can take a lead from

such traditions and find ways to use leftover bread. The simple bread salad on [page 28](#) is one way and making breadcrumbs is another.

Any stale bread – from sourdough to Lebanese flatbread – can be pulsed into crumbs in a food processor. Some cooks recommend discarding the crusts, but I don't see why.

Lebanese bread makes super fine crumbs while more rustic bread makes coarser crumbs. Shaking the bowl of freshly made crumbs will bring the larger pieces to the top which can

then be blitzed a bit finer if need be.

If you need breadcrumbs and don't have any stale bread, put some fresh bread into a 100°C oven (210°F) for about 40 minutes, until brittle. As a rough guide, 100g (3½oz) fresh rustic bread (about 2 slices) will weigh 75g (2¾oz) when stale/dried and yield about 1 cup of coarse breadcrumbs.

Freeze crumbs in a sealed plastic bag and use straight from frozen to coat food; add to stuffings, rissoles and fish cakes; or toast in a little olive oil to sprinkle over pasta ([see page 33](#)).



How To Cook Pasta



[WATCH THE VIDEO](#)

Pasta has sustained generations of southern Italians for centuries. It comes in two basic forms: dried and fresh. Both are good, but suitable for different sauces. Fresh pasta usually contains egg and is typical of the more affluent north where it's sauced with rich meat ragùs and creamy or buttery sauces. The poorer south makes dried pasta from just flour and water and typically dresses it with olive oil, tomato and bolder Mediterranean flavours.

We're talking about dried pasta here.

First, which pasta to buy. Italian is best. Dried pasta should be made from a very hard variety of wheat called durum wheat. Any other variety creates a pasta that's too soft when cooked. Under Italian law dried pasta can only be made from durum wheat.

The best dried pasta is extruded through bronze dies rather than the more commercial Teflon-coated ones, leaving a rougher, more porous surface for the sauce to cling to. It's also called bronze-extruded or

bronze-drawn pasta. Most major brands have bronze-extruded ranges.

Now the cooking. There are only a few simple rules:

- Use plenty of water, ideally 1 litre water per 100g pasta (2 pints/3½oz pasta).
- Salt the water well, 10g salt per litre of water (⅓oz salt/2 pints water).
- Get the water to a rolling boil before adding the pasta then return it to the boil as quickly as possible.
- Use the packet timing as a guide but check regularly during cooking by biting a piece.
- Be brave and take it out of the water just before you think it's ready, so it can finish cooking in the heat of the sauce.
- Act quickly, either draining the pasta and reserving some of the cooking water or lifting the pasta straight from the water into the sauce.

- Add pasta to the pan of sauce immediately and toss together over the heat (this doesn't apply to sauces like pesto that are served 'al crudo' and only heated by the warmth of the pasta).
- As you toss the pasta and sauce together add a little of the cooking water, it contains starch from the pasta which makes the sauce creamy and helps bind it and the pasta together.
- The sauce should dress and flavour the pasta, not drown it. By tossing the hot pasta and sauce together, the pasta absorbs the sauce so every bite has flavour and you need less sauce.

Serve pasta immediately into warm shallow bowls. The Italians say: "La pasta non aspetta nessuno" (pasta waits for no one).

Eat pasta with a fork, or fork and spoon, never a knife as you shouldn't cut the strands.

How To Toast Nuts



[WATCH THE VIDEO](#)



Recipes often call for nuts to be toasted (or roasted), which adds a lovely aroma and toasty flavour by cooking some of the oil in the nuts.

As nuts are high in oil they can burn quickly, so toasting them requires a bit of attention.

Small nuts like pine nuts, or pieces like slivered almonds, can be toasted successfully in a heavy-based frying pan over a medium heat for about 5 minutes. Stir them regularly so they

colour evenly and remove them from the pan as soon as they're coloured so they don't burn in the residual heat of the pan.

Larger nuts – like whole cashews, peanuts and almonds – are best toasted on an oven tray in a 180°C (360°F) oven for 5–10 minutes, depending how dark you want them. Check them after a few minutes and stir if necessary so they colour evenly.

Some nuts, such as hazelnuts, need

to be heavily toasted to remove the skins if they haven't already been blanched. This is best done in a frying pan over medium-high heat. Stir the nuts regularly until the skins are black, then wrap in a tea towel and rub vigorously to loosen the skins.

Due to their high oil content, nuts can go rancid quickly. So always buy them in small quantities from a Middle Eastern grocer or other store with high turnover and store them in a sealed bag in the fridge.



WATCH THE RECIPE VIDEO



Herb & Olive Oil Sauce

Makes about 100ml

Salmoriglio is a simple southern Italian sauce based on olive oil, lemon, garlic and herbs, traditionally oregano.

Parsley is often included and sometimes a little finely chopped rosemary or thyme; some recipes add a little anchovy too.

Most cooks simply whisk all the ingredients together but, in "The River Café Cookbook", Rose Gray and Ruth Rogers insist the herbs should be crushed with the salt first to release the essential oils that give them their flavour and aroma.

I'm not sure whether it's traditional, but it makes perfect sense so it's how I make salmoriglio.

This bright sauce is perfect with grilled meat, poultry, seafood or vegetables.

INGREDIENTS

- ½ cup oregano and parsley leaves (about half each)
- 1 clove garlic, peeled
- ½ teaspoon salt flakes
- 1 lemon
- ⅓ cup extra virgin olive oil (80ml)

METHOD

Use a mortar and pestle to crush oregano, parsley, garlic and salt together.

Transfer to a mixing bowl.

Zest the lemon over the bowl, then juice half of it and add 2 teaspoons (10ml) of the juice.

Add oil and whisk to combine well.

Taste and add more lemon juice or salt if you like.

How To Pin-Bone Fish Fillets



WATCH THE VIDEO



Fish fillets are versatile, tasty and easy to cook.

They're a lot more enjoyable to eat if you take a few minutes to remove any fine pin-bones before cooking them.

Pin-bones are the fine, flexible bones found down the centre of fillets, rather than the larger skeletal bones.

They aren't actually bone, rather they're calcified ligament and quite easy to remove with a pair of fish tweezers and a firm grip.

At a pinch, regular tweezers that have been sterilised can be used.

The pin-bones of some species, such as salmon and trout, come away more easily and cleanly than others.

Don't worry if the flesh tears a little and some comes away with the bone – you'll generally serve fish skin side up, or if the flesh side is on display it's usually covered with sauce or a garnish.

1. Place fillets on a clean work surface, skin side down.
2. Run your finger along the centre of the fillet to find the bones.
3. Place a finger either side of a bone to prevent the flesh tearing too much.

4. Grasp the bone firmly with fish tweezers and pull in whichever direction it comes away most easily (usually towards the head end).
5. Dip the tweezers in water to dislodge the bone, then repeat with remaining bones.
6. Alternatively, cut along either side of the bones and discard that section. Called a v-cut, this is especially suitable when fish have a dark central bloodline that you also want to discard.

Menu 1



Secondo Pesce all'Acqua
Pazza (Fish in 'Crazy Water')



Contorno Cialleda Fredda
(Tomato & Bread Salad)



Dolce Torta all'Arancia
(Orange Cake)



Pasta alla Puttanesca



From **BeInspired.au**



Pesce all'Acqua Pazza



The name of this Neapolitan fishermen's dish means 'fish in crazy water'.

Armando says the water is 'crazy' because of the vigour with which it bubbles due to the starch from the pasta cooking water.

Combined with the acid from the tomatoes that starch also gives the sauce a lovely creaminess.

So it's important to have some pasta cooking water on hand before you start this recipe. In Italy you'd almost always be serving pasta as a first course, but if you aren't you'll need to cook about 100g (3½oz) of any pasta in 800ml–1 litre (2 pints) of water with 10g salt (½oz) until it's tender.

Drain it, reserving the water and discard the pasta or use it for another dish (see Tip next page).

Some acqua pazza recipes don't include pasta cooking water, claiming that the original cooking water was 'crazy' because the fishermen used salty seawater heavily flavoured with garlic and chilli.

Having eaten Armando's delicious acqua pazza many times, and given that he's from Naples, I always use his version.

Fish in 'Crazy Water'

Pesce all'Acqua Pazza

Serves 2



WATCH THE RECIPE VIDEO

INGREDIENTS

- 300g snapper fillets, skin on, pin-boned (10½oz)
- 100g grape tomatoes, halved (3½oz)
- 2 tablespoon extra virgin olive oil (40ml)
- 3 cloves garlic, peeled and bruised
- ½ cup (125ml) pasta cooking water (reserved from suggested recipe)
- Pinch dried chilli flakes (optional)
- Salt flakes, to taste
- A few basil or parsley leaves, finely sliced (about 1 tablespoon)

METHOD

Remove fish and tomatoes from the fridge about 30 minutes before cooking to allow them to come to room temperature.

Place oil and garlic in a frying pan over medium heat and cook for about 3 minutes until it starts to colour.

Push garlic to the side of the pan and add fish, skin-side down; if it curls, use a spatula to flatten it for a few seconds until it relaxes.

Reduce heat to low, scatter tomato around the fish, cover, and cook for about 5 minutes, until opaque all over.

Remove fish and garlic from the pan, discarding garlic and setting fish aside to keep warm.

Add chilli (if using) and pasta cooking water, increase heat to high and boil for 2–3 minutes, until it's reduced to a saucy consistency, stirring occasionally and squashing the tomato a little to spread it through the sauce.

Reduce heat to low, taste and add salt if needed (unlikely as the pasta cooking water is salty).

Return fish to the pan with any juices, skin side down, spoon sauce over it and simmer for 30–60 seconds to just heat through.

Sprinkle with basil or parsley and transfer to a plate or serve in the pan.

ROBERTA'S TIP

If you do have to cook pasta to get the 'crazy water' for this recipe, it's a good chance to use up any broken pasta or open packets in the pantry (if you don't have any, use some of the orecchiette from Menu 2). I often make a warm pasta salad with the cooked pasta; it's usually slightly beyond al dente, but still delicious tossed with olive oil, a pinch of chilli, some chopped tomato and a little parsley or basil.

Cialleda Fredda



On my first visit to Basilicata, the staff at Hotel Sant'Angelo in Matera prepared this delicious salad for me one morning after they discovered I was interested in their regional cuisine.

It's similar to Tuscan panzanella and also popular in Puglia where it's called acquasala; the caponata salad of Naples is another variation on this theme.

Traditionally Italians never discard stale bread, always repurposing it into another dish.

The rustic bread of many Italian regions forms a great base for salads dressed with olive oil and the lightly acidic juice of tomatoes.

Apart from these ingredients and a good pinch or two of salt, the rest is down to personal taste.

I love cucumber in my cialleda as that's how it was first served to me, but it isn't essential, some cooks add olives and dried oregano too.

This dish is called cialleda 'fredda' (cold cialleda) to distinguish it from cialleda 'calda', a hot dish of stale bread with cime di rapa seasoned with dried chilli flakes.

Tomato & Bread Salad

Cialleda Fredda

Serves 2 as a side dish



WATCH THE RECIPE VIDEO

INGREDIENTS

- 1-2 thick slices stale rustic white bread (about 60g/2oz)
- 1 Lebanese cucumber
- 100g grape tomatoes, halved (3½oz)
- ½ red onion, thinly sliced (save the rest for [Orange Salad](#))
- 2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil, plus extra for drizzling (40ml)
- ½ teaspoon salt flakes, or more to taste
- Freshly ground black pepper, to taste
- A few basil leaves

METHOD

Break or cut the bread into large bite-sized pieces.

Place in a bowl, drizzle with about ¼ cup (60ml) of cold water, just enough to moisten it all lightly; set aside for 10–15 minutes.

Meanwhile, quarter cucumber and cut into 1cm (½") thick slices.

Place in a mixing bowl with tomato, onion, oil, salt and pepper and set aside.

After about 15 minutes, gently squeeze the bread if necessary to remove excess water, add it to the tomato mixture, toss to combine well and set aside for at least 15 minutes.

Transfer to a serving bowl, scatter basil leaves over it (tearing them if they're large), drizzle with a little extra oil and serve.

ROBERTA'S TIP

Ideally make this salad in high summer when tomatoes are ripe and delicious. I find grape tomatoes are often ripe and tasty at times when other tomatoes are not – at a pinch, Mutti's canned cherry tomatoes are a great standby as they're almost as plump and firm as a fresh tomato, and always ripe. Ideally dry bread out overnight if it isn't already stale, otherwise put fresh bread into a 100°C (210°F) oven for about 40 minutes, until dry.

Torta all'Arancia



This slightly bitter orange cake is inspired by a recipe from Stefano Manfredi in the Basilicata chapter of his "Italian Food".

I haven't eaten it in the region, but the ingredients certainly are traditional, and cakes made with skin-on oranges are a great

idea popularised by Claudia Roden's much-copied orange and almond cake.

I'm sure this very easy, deliciously moist cake will become a firm favourite in your household as it has in mine.

Serve it unadorned with coffee or with cream or ice cream as a dessert.

Leftovers keep for at least a week covered in the fridge and are best warmed very briefly in the microwave before serving.

Orange Cake

Torta all'Arancia

Serves 4



WATCH THE RECIPE VIDEO

INGREDIENTS

- 1 small orange
(about 200g/7oz)
- Butter, for greasing
- 120g castor sugar, plus extra
for sprinkling (4¼oz)
- 1 egg
- 1 cup self-raising flour
(150g/5¼oz)
- ¼ cup extra virgin olive oil
(60ml)

METHOD

Preheat oven to 170°C (340°F).

Scrub the orange with a clean scourer to remove any dust or wax from the skin.

Cut into wedges; if it's a large orange weigh out 200g (7oz) and reserve the rest for another purpose.

Discard as many seeds as possible and purée (skin and all) in a small food processor.

Grease 2 x 10cm (4") cake tins with butter and sprinkle with castor sugar, then tap to remove excess.

Place sugar and egg in the bowl of an electric mixer and whisk for a couple of minutes, until very pale and fluffy.

Add flour, oil and orange purée and use a spatula to gently fold everything together until just combined.

Transfer to prepared tins, place on a baking tray and bake for about 30 minutes, until the top is well-coloured and a wooden skewer inserted into the centre comes out virtually clean.

Cool in the tins on a wire rack.

Serve in wedges.

Menu 2



Primo Orecchiette con Cime di Rapa (Orecchiette with Broccoli)



Secondo Costolette di Agnello con Salsa alla 'Nduja (Lamb Chops with Spicy Sauce)



Pesce Picante (Ocean Trout with Spicy Sauce)



Contorno Insalata di Arance (Orange Salad)



Mostaccioli Calabrese



From **BeInspired.au**



Orecchiette con Cime di Rapa



This classic dish from Puglia is also popular in neighbouring Basilicata.

It highlights one of the many reasons to love pasta – it's literally on the table in less time than it takes for a pizza delivery to arrive! It may look simple, even a little odd, but it's so delicious that everyone will be asking for seconds.

This is an exception to the 'don't overcook vegetables' rule, the broccoli

has to break up completely to form the sauce.

It's traditionally made with cime di rapa (also called turnip tops, rapini or broccoli rabe) which I use when it's in season, otherwise get broccoli with as many leaves attached as you can.

Many southern Italian pasta dishes are topped with toasted breadcrumbs rather than expensive Parmigiano

from northern Italy, they add a fabulous crunch. In Italy pasta is always considered a starter, never a main course, though I know Italians who happily sit down to just a bowl of pasta, especially for lunch.

So if you're serving this as a standalone meal, add a tomato salad for a bit of colour contrast (perhaps with some red onion and olives). Any leftovers make a fabulous frittata the next day.

Orecchiette with Broccoli

Orecchiette con Cime di Rapa

Serves 4 as a starter (or 2 as a main course)



WATCH THE RECIPE VIDEO

INGREDIENTS

- 300g broccoli (1 small head/10½oz)
- 250g orecchiette pasta (9oz)
- ¼ cup extra virgin olive oil (60ml)
- 3 anchovy fillets
- 2 cloves garlic, crushed
- ½ teaspoon dried chilli flakes

TOASTED BREADCRUMBS

- 1½ tablespoons extra virgin olive oil (30ml)
- ½ cup coarse fresh breadcrumbs

METHOD

Make Toasted Breadcrumbs: Heat oil in a small frying pan over medium heat, add breadcrumbs and stir for 3–5 minutes, until crisp and lightly coloured. Remove from pan and set aside.

Cut broccoli into small florets, discarding thick stalks (see Tip below).

Bring a large pot of well-salted water to the boil using 10g salt/litre of water (⅓oz salt/2 pints water). Add pasta and broccoli and cook until pasta is almost al dente.

Meanwhile, place oil, anchovies, garlic and chilli flakes in a large frying pan over a low heat. Cook for 3–4 minutes, stirring to break up the anchovies, until garlic starts to colour.

Remove pan from heat, stir for 30 seconds or so to cool it down a little then set aside.

When pasta is cooked, drain it, reserving the cooking water.

Return the frying pan to medium–high heat, tip the pasta and broccoli into it and stir well to combine with the oil mixture.

Add ½ cup (125ml) of the cooking water and continue stirring, crushing any large pieces of stem; add a little more cooking water if necessary to create a creamy sauce.

Spoon into shallow bowls, sprinkle with Toasted Breadcrumbs and serve immediately.

ROBERTA'S TIP

Reserve the broccoli stalks to use as a vegetable, thinly sliced, in mee goreng or any stir-fry; they're also good steamed and tossed with oil and garlic.

Costolette di Agnello con Salsa alla 'Nduja



I don't know about you, but lamb chops were a fixture on the menu when I was a kid – and it's worth remembering how good they are.

They're like tiny T-bone steaks and delicious dressed up with a simple sauce or marinade.

This spicy sauce is based on 'nduja, a spreadable salami that originated

in Calabria and is made from pork trimmings mixed with plenty of backfat and a lot of dried chilli.

Unless you're Calabrian or a total chilli head you'll likely find straight 'nduja way too spicy, but temper it with some sweet caramelised onion as we're doing here and it's a different story.

The word 'nduja derives from the French andouille meaning sausage and is pronounced en-doo-ya, with the stress on the 'doo'.

If you eat lamb but don't eat pork, serve the vegetarian [Spicy Onion Sauce](#) on the following page with these lamb chops.

Lamb Chops with Spicy Sauce

Costolette di Agnello con Salsa alla 'Nduja

Serves 2



WATCH THE RECIPE VIDEO

INGREDIENTS

- 2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil (40ml)
- 1 tablespoon oregano leaves, finely sliced
- 1 clove garlic, crushed
- 1 teaspoon salt flakes, crushed
- 4 lamb loin chops (about 450g/1lb)
- Orange Salad, for serving
- Crusty bread, for serving

'NDUJA SAUCE

- 2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil (40ml)
- 2 red onions, finely sliced
- Salt flakes, to taste
- 2 tablespoons dry white wine (40ml)
- 25g 'nduja, more or less to taste (1oz)
- 2 tablespoons water (40ml)

METHOD

Combine oil, oregano, garlic and salt in a shallow bowl.

Add chops, turn to coat well and set aside for 30–60 minutes at room temperature or cover and refrigerate for a few hours (then bring back to room temperature before cooking).

Meanwhile, make 'Nduja Sauce: Place oil, onion and a good pinch of salt in a frying pan over medium heat and stir to combine well. Cover and cook for about 20 minutes, stirring occasionally, until tender and starting to colour. Uncover and cook for a further 15–20 minutes, stirring often, until well-coloured. Add wine and stir well to remove any bits stuck to the base and sides of the pan. Boil for 30 seconds or so, until most of the wine has evaporated, then stir in 'nduja and water. Reduce heat to low and cook for about 4 minutes, stirring often, until well combined and slightly reduced. Taste and add more 'nduja if you wish. Remove from heat, cover and set aside.

Heat a barbecue or char-grill pan on medium–high.

Cook chops for a couple of minutes on their fatty edge with the fat stretched out in contact with the pan to crisp it up.

Roll the fat strip back around the chops, scrape any remaining marinade over the top and cook for 2–3 minutes each side for medium-rare, depending on thickness, or until cooked to your liking.

Remove from heat and set aside in a warm place for a few minutes.

Serve with 'Nduja Sauce, Orange Salad and crusty bread.

ROBERTA'S TIP

'Nduja is great tossed through pasta, with eggs, on pizza or bruschetta. Use leftover 'nduja to make this simple pasta or spread on croutons as an antipasto.



In this recipe the fish is cooked almost entirely on the skin to protect the delicate flesh, keeping it moist and succulent.

The skin usually ends up a bit charred and looking slightly the worse for wear, so I present the fish flesh side up.

The skin still tastes great and, if you like the look of it, by all means put it on display.

The spicy onion sauce has the contrasting sweetness of caramelised onion with a nice hit of chilli – Italian dried chilli flakes are quite spicy, so

add a little, taste and then decide whether you want more.

If you eat pork but don't eat lamb, try the ['Nduja Sauce](#) on the previous page with the trout.

Ocean Trout with Spicy Onion Sauce

Pesce Picante

Serves 2–4 as a side dish



PESCATARIAN VERSION

INGREDIENTS

- 2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil (40ml)
- 1 tablespoon oregano leaves, finely sliced
- 1 clove garlic, crushed
- 1 teaspoon salt flakes, crushed
- 1 x 300g piece ocean trout fillet, centre-cut, skin on, pin-boned (10½oz)
- Orange Salad, for serving
- Crusty bread, for serving

SPICY ONION SAUCE

- 2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil (40ml)
- 2 red onions, finely sliced
- Salt flakes, to taste
- 2 tablespoons dry white wine (40ml)
- 100g (3½oz) canned crushed tomato (polpa)
- Pinch dried chilli flakes, to taste
- 2 tablespoons water (40ml)

METHOD

Combine oil, oregano, garlic and salt in a shallow bowl.

Add fish, turn to coat well and set aside, flesh side down, for 30–60 minutes at room temperature or cover and refrigerate for a few hours (then bring back to room temperature before cooking).

Meanwhile, make Spicy Onion Sauce: Place oil, onion and a good pinch of salt in a frying pan over medium heat and stir to combine well. Cover and cook for about 20 minutes, stirring occasionally, until tender and starting to colour. Uncover and cook for a further 15–20 minutes, stirring often, until well-coloured. Add wine and stir well to remove any bits stuck to the base and sides of the pan. Boil for 30 seconds or so, until most of the wine has evaporated, then stir in tomato, chilli and water. Reduce heat to low and cook for about 4 minutes, stirring often, until well combined and slightly reduced. Taste and add more chilli flakes if you wish. Remove from heat, cover and set aside.

Heat a barbecue or char-grill pan on medium–high.

Place fish on the grill, skin side down, and cook for 4–5 minutes until it's opaque halfway up the sides.

Turn and cook the other side for 30 seconds.

Remove from pan to a warm plate and set aside for about 3 minutes.

Meanwhile, spread Spicy Onion Sauce on a serving plate.

Top with the fish, skin side down, and serve with Orange Salad and crusty bread.

ROBERTA'S TIP

Store any leftover tomato polpa covered in the fridge for up to a week. Toss any leftover sauce and remaining polpa through freshly cooked pasta for an easy meal.

Insalata di Arance



Oranges are a popular salad ingredient in southern Italy, especially in Sicily, sometimes with fennel and sometimes with the iconic red onions from Tropea which we're channelling here.

Olives add a salty savoury kick and a few herb leaves add colour, then all you need is a generous drizzle of good robust extra virgin olive oil.

You could segment the oranges but in Italy they're often just peeled and sliced.

Use blood oranges, when they're in season, to add another colour dimension to this salad.

Orange Salad

Insalata di Arance

Serves 2 as a side dish



WATCH THE RECIPE VIDEO

INGREDIENTS

- 1 orange
- About ⅓ red onion, cut into very fine slivers (reserved from [Bread Salad](#))
- 10 small olives
- 1 tablespoon extra virgin olive oil (20ml)
- Salt flakes and freshly ground black pepper, to taste
- A few small basil or oregano leaves

METHOD

Peel orange, removing the white pith.

Cut into 5mm-thick slices (⅛"), discarding as many pips as you can.

Place in a mixing bowl with any of the juice that's run out of it.

Add onion, olives, oil and salt.

Toss to combine well and set aside for at least 15 minutes (longer is fine).

Arrange orange slices on a serving plate.

Scatter onion and olives over and around.

Drizzle the juices in the bowl over the top.

Add a grind of pepper, scatter with herb leaves and serve.

ROBERTA'S TIP

Be waste wise and use the orange peel to make [Provneçal Orangette](#).



Menu 3



Antipasti Misti

Insalata Caprese,
Funghi Trifolati,
Melanzane Grigliate,
Asparagi al Vapore,
Peperoni in Padella



Secondo Quaglia alla Griglia
con Insalata di Pere (Grilled
Quail with Pear & Walnut
Salad)



Gamberi alla Griglia con
Insalata di Pere (Grilled
Prawns with Pear & Walnut
Salad)



Contorno Patate
con Peperoni Cruschi
(Potatoes with Dried Chilli)



Armando's
Panettone with Berries



From **BeInspired.au**

Insalata Caprese



This classic Italian salad comes from the Isle of Capri in the Bay of Naples.

Indian water buffalo were introduced as draft animals to the swampy plains near Naples in the 6th or 7th century and today this area is famous for one of Italy's most delicious cheeses, Mozzarella di Bufala.

When insalata Caprese was first seen in Australia it was made with rubbery, tasteless little cow's milk bocconcini (and occasionally still is), which is a complete waste of time.

It relies on soft, slightly oozy buffalo milk mozzarella with its sweet lactic tang, super ripe red tomatoes, and aromatic basil leaves – otherwise it simply isn't worth making.

I use the buffalo bocconcini from Vannella Cheese more often than full-sized buffalo mozzarella as I prefer their ratio of creaminess to skin, but you could certainly use large balls of mozzarella instead, as long as they're made from buffalo milk.

See [page 12](#) for more on mozzarella, other stretched curd cheeses and the Vannella family.

Mozzarella & Tomato Salad

Insalata Caprese

Serves 4 or more as part of an antipasti misti



WATCH THE RECIPE VIDEO

INGREDIENTS

- 180g buffalo bocconcini, quartered (6½oz)
- 100g grape tomatoes, halved (3½oz)
- 12 or more small basil leaves
- Extra virgin olive oil, for drizzling
- Salt flakes and freshly ground black pepper, to taste

METHOD

Remove bocconcini and tomato from the fridge about 30 minutes before serving.

Scatter bocconcini over the base of a platter.

Top with tomato then basil.

Drizzle generously with oil, sprinkle with salt and a little black pepper.

Serve.



Trifolati is an Italian term for dishes cooked in olive oil with garlic and parsley; mushrooms, zucchini and kidneys are often prepared this way.

This was one of my favourite starters in Sydney's 1980s suburban Italian restaurants, where exotic oyster

mushrooms seemed to be the funghi of choice.

So use any mushrooms you like, or a mixture of them. Trifola means truffle, a synonym for the more commonly used 'tartufo', and I guess

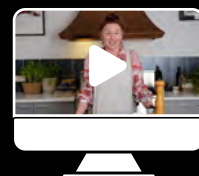
the sautéed mushrooms look a little like truffles, maybe.

This dish, served hot or cold, is a great addition to an antipasto spread, it's also lovely tossed through pasta. The chilli isn't traditional, but I like it and it is very southern Italian.

Garlic Mushrooms

Funghi Trifolati

Serves 4 or more as part of an antipasti misti



WATCH THE RECIPE VIDEO

INGREDIENTS

- 1½ tablespoons extra virgin olive oil (30ml)
- 1 clove garlic, crushed
- Pinch dried chilli flakes (optional)
- 150g button mushrooms, quartered (5¼oz)
- Salt flakes, to taste
- 1½ tablespoons finely sliced flat-leaf parsley leaves

METHOD

Place oil and garlic in a small frying pan over medium heat and cook for a minute or 2, until it just starts to sizzle.

Reduce heat to low, stir in chilli (if using), mushroom and a good pinch of salt.

Cover and cook for 10 minutes or so, stirring occasionally, until mushroom gives off its juices and is tender.

Stir in parsley.

Serve in a shallow bowl.

Melanzane Grigliate



Eggplant is like a sponge and soaks up a lot of oil, so I prefer to brush it with oil and bake or grill it rather than fry it. If you have the barbecue on, you can grill it, otherwise it's easiest to bake it in the oven as I do here.

It's worth making a large tray of these delicious snacks as they have many uses beyond the antipasto platter.

They're great on a panino or bruschetta, especially with any leftover capsicum, and can also be tossed through pasta or served as a side dish with roast meat or poultry.

Grilled Eggplant

Melanzane Grigliate

Serves 4 or more as part of an antipasti misti



WATCH THE RECIPE VIDEO

INGREDIENTS

- 1 large eggplant
(see Tip below)
- Extra virgin olive oil,
for brushing
- Salt flakes, to taste

METHOD

Preheat oven to 180°C (355°F).

Cut eggplant into 3–5mm thick slices (about 1½").

Brush both sides with oil and lay them out in a single layer on a baking tray.

Sprinkle generously with salt.

Place in oven and cook for about 20 minutes, until well coloured.

Turn them over and cook for a further 20 minutes or so. Depending on the evenness of the slices, you may need to remove them in stages as each one browns, so check them frequently after about 10–15 minutes.

Remove to a wire rack to cool.

Cover and refrigerate until needed.

Return to room temperature before serving.

ROBERTA'S TIP

To make this with smaller slipper eggplants, cut them in half lengthways, score the flesh in a cross-hatch pattern, place on an oiled tray skin side down, oil and salt flesh side and bake for about 30–40 minutes without turning.



When I'm barbecuing I'll sometimes grill asparagus spears on the spot. But when I'm entertaining and want to get as much done ahead of time as possible, I find it easier to steam them.

I like really thin spears for this dish, but they aren't always available, so be flexible and use what you can get.

If I'm serving this as a single dish I shave some pecorino or parmesan over the asparagus before the final

drizzle of oil (a sprinkle of the toasted breadcrumbs on [page 34](#) is good too).

As pecorino and parmesan are quite salty I don't add any extra salt if I'm using them; but if the asparagus is part of a mixed antipasto, I skip the cheese and add a light sprinkle of salt flakes.

Steamed Asparagus

Asparagi al Vapore

Serves 4 or more as part of an antipasti misti



WATCH THE RECIPE VIDEO

INGREDIENTS

- 1 bunch green asparagus spears
- Extra virgin olive oil, for drizzling
- Salt flakes, to taste

METHOD

Trim the woody ends off the asparagus spears.

Lay the spears in a steamer basket over simmering water, cover and cook for about 5 minutes, just until tender.

Refresh well in iced water.

Drain well, pat dry and roll in oil.

Cover and refrigerate until needed.

Arrange on a platter and sprinkle lightly with salt (if not using cheese).

Drizzle with a little more oil and serve.

Peperoni in Padella



I was taught to make this dish many years ago by a boyfriend's Neapolitan mother, and it's still one of my favourites.

Peperoni in padella simply means 'peppers in the pan' and the result is quite different to roasting

capsicum in the oven as the juices blend with the oil and garlic during the slow cooking to make a delicious sauce.

Unlike roasting, the skin remains on the strips of capsicum; when you plate the dish discard any that have

slipped off, the remainder can be eaten or discarded by each diner.

Use red or yellow capsicums, or a mixture, but not green ones as they're unripe and have astringent herbal notes rather than sweet ripe capsicum flavour.

Braised Capsicum

Peperoni in Padella

Serves 4 or more as part of an antipasti misti



WATCH THE RECIPE VIDEO

INGREDIENTS

- 1 red capsicum
- 1 yellow capsicum
- ¼ cup extra virgin olive oil (60ml)
- 1 clove garlic, crushed
- Salt flakes, to taste

METHOD

Slice capsicums into strips about 1cm-thick (½"), discarding seeds and membrane.

Place oil and garlic in a frying pan over medium heat and cook for a minute or 2, until it starts to sizzle.

Stir in capsicum and a good pinch of salt.

Cover, reduce heat to low and cook for about 35–45 minutes, stirring occasionally, until tender. Set aside to cool in the cooking juices, then discard any loose pieces of skin.

Cover and refrigerate for at least a few hours, ideally overnight.

Transfer capsicum and juices to a serving bowl and set aside for 30 minutes or so to return to room temperature before serving.

Quaglia alla Griglia con Insalata di Pere e Noci



This is the perfect dish for entertaining as most of the preparation can be done ahead of time and the juicy butterflied quail are cooked in less than half an hour on the barbecue or in the oven.

I love the large (300g/10½oz) meaty Jurassic quail and,

depending on what else I'm serving with them, find that one or even a half per person is plenty.

If you're using smaller quail you may want to serve one or two per person.

Once the quail are in the marinade they can be covered and popped in

the fridge for several hours, even overnight, just remove them from the fridge an hour or so before you're ready to cook them.

This recipe is very versatile, so prepare it with spatchcock (poussin) or chicken pieces if you prefer.

Grilled Quail with Pear & Walnut Salad

Quaglia alla Griglia con Insalata di Pere e Noci

Serves 2



WATCH THE RECIPE VIDEO

INGREDIENTS

- 2 large quails (about 300g/10½oz each)
- Salt flakes, to taste
- Pear & Walnut Salad, for serving
- Crusty bread or Patate con Peperoni Cruschi, for serving

MARINADE

- ⅔ cup dry white wine (160ml)
- 1 fresh bay leaf, torn
- 1 clove garlic, crushed
- 1 tablespoon extra virgin olive oil (20ml)

METHOD

Make Marinade: Combine all ingredients in a flat dish large enough to hold the butterflied quail in a single layer.

Pat quail dry with paper towel. Use poultry shears to cut down the breastbone; wipe out the cavity with paper towel to remove any remaining offal or blood.

Turn birds over and press along the backbone with the heel of your hand to flatten them out; this is called spatchcocking or butterflying.

Place in the marinade, turn to coat well; set aside for 60 minutes to come to room temperature or cover and refrigerate for longer (even overnight) and remove from fridge 1 hour before cooking.

Preheat oven to 180°C (355°F).

Remove quails from marinade and pat dry.

Place on a rack in a baking dish, cut side down, sprinkle well with salt and place in the oven for 25–30 minutes, until juices run clear when the thickest part of the breast is pierced with a thin skewer.

If need be, turn the overhead grill on for a minute or 2 to colour the skin before removing them from the oven.

Set quail aside in a warm place for 5 minutes.

Arrange Pear & Walnut Salad on a serving platter, leaving any excess dressing in the mixing bowl.

Cut quails into quarters and arrange on top of the salad.

Drizzle with remaining dressing and serve with finger bowls and big serviettes as they're best eaten with your hands.

ARMANDO'S TIP

Instead of baking the quails, barbecue them on medium heat for 10–15 minutes each side, until cooked through, turning them only once.

Gamberi alla Griglia con Insalata di Pere e Noci



This is the perfect dish for entertaining as most of the preparation can be done ahead of time and cooking the prawns only on the shell side ensures they'll be the juiciest you've ever tasted.

Prawns oxidise quickly once they're caught or harvested so are best

stored either frozen or in a tub of cold water in the fridge for a day or 2 (see page 19).

You can leave the heads on the prawns for presentation if you like. Once they're in the marinade they can be covered and refrigerated for

a couple of hours, just remove them from the fridge 20–30 minutes before you're ready to cook them.

After they're cooked they can sit at room temperature as they're delicious hot or warm.

Grilled Prawns with Pear & Walnut Salad

Gamberi alla Griglia con Insalata di Pere e Noci

Serves 2



PESCATARIAN VERSION

INGREDIENTS

- 6 large green prawns
- Pear & Walnut Salad, for serving
- Crusty bread or Patate con Peperoni Cruschi, for serving

MARINADE

- ⅓ cup dry white wine (80ml)
- 1 fresh bay leaf, torn
- 1 clove garlic, crushed
- 1 tablespoon extra virgin olive oil (20ml)

METHOD

Make Marinade: Combine all ingredients in a flat dish large enough to hold the butterflied prawns in a single layer.

Cut off and discard the prawn heads, place prawns on a chopping board on their backs and split down the underside almost all the way through without cutting through the shell. Remove the digestive tracts.

Turn them over and press firmly along the shell to flatten them out.

Place prawns in the marinade, flesh side down, cover and set aside for about 30 minutes.

Preheat a char-grill pan or heavy-based frying pan over medium-high heat.

Turn prawns in the marinade then arrange in the pan, shell side down, in a single layer and cook for 3–5 minutes, depending on size, until flesh is just opaque.

Set aside in a warm place.

Arrange Pear & Walnut Salad on a serving platter, leaving any excess dressing in the mixing bowl.

Arrange prawns on top of the salad.

Drizzle with remaining dressing and serve with finger bowls and big serviettes as they're best eaten with your hands.

ROBERTA'S TIP

Pop the prawn heads and shells in a zip-lock bag in the freezer until you have enough to make prawn bisque.

Insalata di Pere e Noci



Mix up the ingredients in this salad to suit the season and your taste; radicchio and witlof are lovely in winter, use mandarin or orange segments instead of the grapes, and apple instead of pear if you prefer.

If small pears aren't available, use half a large one; you can leave the skin on Corella or Packham pears, but if using brown skinned Bosc pears peel them first.

Armando suggested using pears for this salad as he's concerned about

the pear orchards that are being dug up around the country.

Pears are a wonderfully versatile fruit, so grab a few on each trip to the greengrocer and start experimenting.

Pear & Walnut Salad

Insalata di Pere e Noci

Serves 2



WATCH VIDEO 6:15-14:40

INGREDIENTS

- 30g wild rocket (1oz)
- 1 baby cos lettuce (romaine)
- 1 tablespoon agrodolce red wine vinegar (20ml)
- Salt flakes and freshly ground black pepper, to taste
- ¼ cup extra virgin olive oil (60ml)
- 1 small Corella pear
- 40g walnuts, roughly broken (1½oz)
- 12 seedless red grapes, halved

METHOD

Remove any coarse outer leaves from the lettuce (reserve these for another dish) and cut the rest into 2cm-thick slices (1"). Rinse it and rocket in cold water and dry well.

Place vinegar in a screw top jar with a good pinch of salt and grind of pepper and shake to dissolve salt. Add oil and shake to emulsify. Set aside.

Just before serving, quarter pear, discard core and cut into slices.

Put it into a mixing bowl with cos, rocket, walnut and grapes.

Pour most of the dressing over it and toss to combine well, reserving a little dressing to drizzle over the quail or prawns.

ROBERTA'S TIP

If rocket is looking a little tired, soak it in a sink of cold water for 30 minutes or so to refresh it.

Patate con Peperoni Cruschi



Throughout Basilicata you see huge wreaths of large dark red chillies drying in the sun.

Called peperoni cruschi locally, these mild dried chillies are fried in olive oil and seasoned with salt. They're then crumbled over pasta, potatoes, beans, greens and fried eggs; served whole as part of an

antipasto with salumi and cheese; or just snacked on with a glass of wine.

They're grown near the town of Senise and their official name is Peperone di Senise, under which they have an IGP appellation (Indicazione Geografica Protetta).

They're available from specialty stores, such as Formaggi Ocello in Sydney. If you can't find them, use a small pinch of dried chilli flakes instead – but be aware it's a lot hotter than the mild cruschi.

Patate con peperoni cruschi is also a delicious side dish with the steak in [Menu 4](#).

Potatoes with Dried Chilli

Patate con Peperoni Cruschi

Serves 2 as a side dish



WATCH THE RECIPE VIDEO

INGREDIENTS

- 300g Dutch cream potatoes or similar (10½oz)
- Salt flakes, to taste
- 1 tablespoon extra virgin olive oil (20ml)
- 1 clove garlic, crushed
- 2 teaspoons finely sliced parsley leaves
- 1 or 2 pieces peperoni cruschi

METHOD

Peel potatoes, cut into bite-sized chunks and boil in very well-salted water using 15g salt/litre water (½oz salt/2 pints water)) for about 15 minutes, until just tender.

Strain in a colander and set aside for a few minutes to steam dry.

Place oil and garlic in a small saucepan over low-medium heat and cook for about 2 minutes, until garlic really starts to sizzle. Remove from heat and set aside.

Place potatoes in a mixing bowl.

Toss gently with the oil, garlic and parsley.

Transfer to a serving bowl, crumble peperoni cruschi over the top and serve.

ROBERTA'S TIP

Store peperoni cruschi in an air-tight container (I use a small zip-lock bag) in the fridge until ready to use; otherwise they soften and can't be crumbled. If they do soften, crisp them up by frying in a little olive oil for 30 seconds or so.



Menu 4



Secondo Tagliata di Manzo
con Salmoriglio (Steak with
Herb Sauce)



Pesce Spada con Salmoriglio
(Swordfish with Herb Sauce)



Contorno Ceci all'Aglio
(Chickpeas with Garlic)



Contorno Scarole di Natale
(Endive with Pine Nuts &
Currants)



Dolce Granita al Caffè
(Coffee Granita)



Spaghetti alle
Vongole al Cartoccio



From **BeInspired.au**

Tagliata di Manzo con Salmoriglio



In Italy, steak is usually sliced into strips before serving. Called bistecca tagliata (tagliata meaning 'cut'), it looks much more appealing than a big slab of meat on the plate and is also easier to share.

Sometimes the meat is marinated, sometimes not, and any cut of steak

can be used; it's quick and versatile.

Whether you're barbecuing or pan-frying steak, the secrets to success are allowing the meat to come to room temperature, getting your grill or pan good and hot before cooking, then setting the cooked meat aside to rest long enough for the fibres to

relax and the juices to spread evenly through it so it's tender and juicy.

The rest is up to you.

I love a simple salmoriglio sauce, bright with fresh herbs and olive oil, but salsa verde or a flavoured butter work just as well.

Steak with Herb & Olive Oil Sauce

Tagliata di Manzo con Salmoriglio

Serves 2



WATCH THE RECIPE VIDEO

INGREDIENTS

- 300g rump steak (10½oz)
- Extra virgin olive oil, for drizzling
- Salt flakes, to taste
- Salmoriglio, for serving (see [page 23](#))

METHOD

Remove meat from the fridge about 60 minutes before cooking to allow it to come to room temperature.

Heat a barbecue or char-grill pan over medium-high heat.

Drizzle meat well with oil, rubbing it all over both sides.

Sprinkle generously with salt, place on the grill, salted side down, and sprinkle the top generously with salt.

Cook for about 3 minutes each side for medium-rare, or until cooked to your liking. To be certain, use a probe thermometer: the internal temperature for medium-rare will be 60–65°C (140–150°F); just under 60°C (140°F) will be rare, and over 65°C (150°F) you're heading to medium then medium-well done.

Place on a warm plate and set aside for 5 minutes.

Cut on the diagonal into slices about 1cm (½") thick.

Arrange on a platter, drizzle with a little of the Salmoriglio and serve the rest on the side.

Pesce Spada con Salmoriglio



Swordfish is one of the most popular fish in the Mediterranean, and in southern Italy it's often served with the classic olive oil and herb sauce salmoriglio.

It has a wonderful meaty texture but tends to dry out and soften if overcooked, so resist the temptation to cook it longer than 1½–2 minutes each side as it will continue to cook in the

residual heat while it's resting and even at the table.

Always slice fish or meat against the grain to ensure it's as tender and juicy as possible.

Swordfish with Herb & Olive Oil Sauce

Pesce Spada con Salmoriglio

Serves 2



PESCATARIAN VERSION

INGREDIENTS

- 1 x 300g swordfish steak (10½oz)
- Extra virgin olive oil, for drizzling
- Salt flakes, to taste
- Salmoriglio, for serving (see page 23)

METHOD

Remove fish from the fridge 30–60 minutes before cooking to allow it to come to room temperature.

Heat a barbecue or char-grill pan over high heat.

Drizzle fish well with oil, rubbing it all over both sides.

Sprinkle generously with salt, place on the grill, salted side down, and sprinkle the top generously with salt.

Cook for about 1½–2 minutes each side so that it remains just a little pink in the centre.

Place on a warm plate and set aside for 5 minutes.

Slice on the diagonal, against the grain, into strips about 1cm (½") thick.

Arrange on a platter, drizzle with a little of the Salmoriglio and serve the rest on the side.



Dried legumes, especially chickpeas and broad beans (fava), formed an important part of the traditional southern Italian diet.

Combined with grains and a little dairy they supplied the essential protein that would otherwise have been missing in a diet low in meat

They also provided sustenance and flavour on the church's many meat-free days.

Dishes like ceci all'aglio are still popular throughout the south and make a delicious side dish or part of an antipasto, served hot or at room temperature.

Some cooks add a little finely chopped rosemary with (or instead of) the chilli.

To use dried chickpeas, soak about 80g (3oz) overnight then boil (without salt) for an hour or so, until tender; the cooking time of dried legumes varies greatly depending on how old they are.

Chickpeas with Garlic

Ceci all'Aglio

Serves 2 as a side dish



WATCH THE RECIPE VIDEO

INGREDIENTS

- 400g canned chickpeas (14oz)
- Salt flakes, to taste
- 1 tablespoon extra virgin olive oil, plus extra for drizzling (20ml)
- 1 clove garlic, crushed
- Pinch dried chilli flakes

METHOD

Drain chickpeas and rinse them well, discarding any loose skins.

Place in a saucepan of well-salted water using 10g salt/litre water ($\frac{1}{3}$ oz salt/2 pints water) and bring to the boil.

Stir well, reduce heat to a gentle boil and cook for 5 minutes.

Tip into a strainer and set aside to steam dry.

Place oil and garlic in a small frying pan over medium heat and cook for a minute or 2 until it starts to sizzle.

Add chilli and chickpeas, discarding any loose skins, and stir to combine well.

Increase heat to medium-high and cook, stirring or shaking the pan constantly for 3–4 minutes, until they just start to colour; take care as they can 'pop' like popcorn.

Transfer to a bowl, drizzle with oil and serve.



I was introduced to this dish many years ago by the Nonna of a family I stayed with in Campania. They were from the north, but Nonna Filomena had learned to cook this local dish and was keen to share it with me.

'Natale' means Christmas, and it's traditionally served as part of the Christmas Eve antipasto in Naples.

It's probably considered festive as the nuts and dried fruit used in it – introduced to the south by the Arabs – were too expensive for average people to use every day.

Armando adds some pitted black olives to his scarole di Natale, so do the same if you like.

Endive is often sold in double bunches and you'll only need half a large head or one small one to make this dish for 2 people.

Leftovers keep for days in the fridge, so make a double batch or use the small tender leaves of the extra head for a salade Lyonnaise and the larger leaves for a frittata.

Curly Endive with Pine Nuts & Currants

Scarole di Natale

Serves 2 as a side dish



WATCH THE RECIPE VIDEO

INGREDIENTS

- 1 tablespoon currants (12g)
- ½ large head curly endive (or 1 small head)
- 1½ tablespoons extra virgin olive oil, plus extra for drizzling (30ml)
- 1 clove garlic, crushed
- 1½ tablespoons water (30ml)
- Salt flakes, to taste
- 1 tablespoon pine nuts, toasted (15g) (see [page 22](#))
- 2 teaspoons agrodolce red wine vinegar (10ml)

METHOD

Place currants in a bowl of warm water to soak for an hour or so (even overnight).

Cut endive leaves from the base, discarding any discoloured sections.

Soak well in a sink of cold water to remove any grit and refresh any limp leaves. Dry well.

Place oil and garlic in a frying pan over medium heat and cook for a minute or 2, until it starts to sizzle.

Add endive, water and a good pinch of salt, reduce heat to low-medium, cover and cook for 10 minutes or so, stirring occasionally, until wilted.

Drain currants and add to the pan with most of the pine nuts, reserving a few for garnish.

Reduce heat to low, cover and cook for a further 15 minutes or so, until endive stems are tender.

Place on a plate, drizzle with vinegar and extra oil and scatter remaining pine nuts over the top.

Serve hot or at room temperature.



Italy – especially the south – is famous for its gelato and other frozen treats, including granita.

Coffee granita is one of the most popular, served as a light refreshment in cafés everywhere.

It was a Greek chef rather than an Italian one who taught me to make granita.

When Janni Kyritsis and I wrote “Wild Weed Pie”, we did a section on granitas saying: “‘squeeze, freeze, scratch and serve’ is almost the only recipe you need for granitas.”

And they really are that easy. So take this recipe as a starting point and, instead of coffee, use any fruit juice you like, adjusting the amount of sugar depending on its natural

sweetness; orange, lemon and melon granitas are all very popular in Italy.

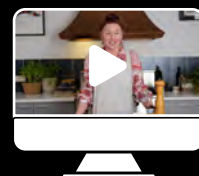
You’ll need about 5 short black shots to get 250ml (1 cup) of coffee, or use strong plunger coffee instead.

Coffee granita is sometimes topped with a little pouring cream, which freezes on contact with it.

Coffee Granita

Granita al Caffè

Serves 2–4



WATCH THE RECIPE VIDEO

INGREDIENTS

- 250ml black coffee (1 cup)
- 2 tablespoons castor sugar (35g/1¼oz)
- Pouring cream, for serving (optional)

METHOD

Dissolve sugar in the coffee.

Pour into a shallow tray (ideally made of metal) and place in the fridge until cool, then in the freezer.

After an hour, when it's started to freeze, crush it with a fork to create flakes of ice.

Keep crushing it every 30–60 minutes until completely frozen then cover it, pressing plastic against its surface, and leave in the freezer until needed.

Just before serving, scratch the granita with a fork to fluff it up.

Spoon into glasses and serve, drizzled with cream if you like.

Running Order – Menus 1 & 2

Menu 1

RUNNING ORDER

Day Before:

- Leave bread out to go stale
- Make puttanesca sauce (optional)

A Few Hours Before:

- Make orange cake
- If not serving pasta starter, cook pasta to get 'crazy water'
- Remove fish and tomatoes from fridge 30-60 minutes before cooking
- Prep ingredients for salad and acqua pazza
- Assemble salad (except for basil) up to an hour before serving

Just Before Serving:

- Cook pasta and reheat sauce – serve immediately (optional)
- Cook acqua pazza
- Plate salad



SUGGESTED RECIPE

Pasta alla Puttanesca

From **BeInspired.au**

Menu 2

RUNNING ORDER

Day Before:

- Leave bread out to go stale for breadcrumbs 2 days before
- Make breadcrumbs
- Make 'nduja (or onion) sauce
- Make Mostaccioli Calabrese (optional)

A Few Hours Before:

- Toast breadcrumbs for pasta
- Prep broccoli for pasta
- Heat anchovies, garlic and chilli in oil for pasta and set aside
- Marinate lamb
- Make and plate orange salad except for herb leaves

Just Before Serving:

- Cook and finish pasta – serve immediately
- Cook and plate lamb or fish
- Put herb leaves on salad



SUGGESTED RECIPE

Mostaccioli Calabrese

From **BeInspired.au**

PRINT FRIENDLY RECIPES

Running Order – Menus 3 & 4

Menu 3

RUNNING ORDER

Day Before:

- Make funghi trifolati
- Grill/bake eggplant
- Steam asparagus
- Cook capsicum
- Make raspberry coulis (optional)

A Few Hours Before:

- Marinate quail (can be overnight)
- Assemble insalata Caprese and other antipasti on platter up to an hour before serving (at least remove from fridge 1 hour or so before serving)
- Prep salad ingredients (except pear) – combine without dressing
- Prepare garlic oil for potatoes
- Marinate berries, cut and reassemble panettone, whip cream (optional)

Just Before Serving:

- Bake quail or grill prawns
- Cook and plate potatoes
- Slice pear and dress salad
- Assemble panettone with berries (optional)



SUGGESTED RECIPE

Armando's
Panettone with Berries
From **BeInspired.au**

Menu 4

RUNNING ORDER

Day Before:

- Make coffee granita

A Few Hours Before:

- Make salmoriglio
- Remove meat from fridge an hour before cooking
- Make ceci all'aglio (serve at room temperature)
- Make scarole di Natale (serve at room temperature)
- Prep for pasta (optional)

Just Before Serving:

- Cook and finish pasta – serve immediately (optional)
- Cook and slice steak or swordfish
- Plate and serve granita



SUGGESTED RECIPE

Spaghetti alle
Vongole al Cartoccio
From **BeInspired.au**

Thank You To These Awesome Producers

Thanks to Armando Percuoco from Valleyfield Escape (@valleyfieldescape) for the inspiration.

Good food is as much about great producers and provedores as it is about kitchen skills. Here are some of the producers and brands I use and recommend for these recipes.



ALTO Olives

Robert Armstrong's commitment to his land and olive groves, in the foothills of the Great Dividing Range near Crookwell, has led to ALTO becoming Australia's most awarded extra virgin olive oil. See Robert's guided extra virgin olive oil tasting [here](#). His agrodolce (bitter-sweet) merlot and chardonnay vinegars are the best Australian vinegars I've found too. Available at Carriageworks Market every Saturday.

[@altoolives](#)

Amatos Liquor Mart

This liquor store in Leichhardt is my go-to for specialty Italian drinks – along with some hard-to-find food.

[@amatosliquormart](#)

Brisbane Valley Quail

Their Jurassic quail are larger and meatier than any other quails.

[@brisbanevalleyfarmdirect](#)

Forestway Fresh

This fruit barn in Terrey Hills, owned by Domenic Polistina and sons Pasquale and Tony, is my local shop for fresh produce as well as many deli and grocery lines. If you're on Sydney's northside, pay them a visit!

[@forestway_fresh](#)

Formaggi Ocello

Carmelo & Sonja Ocello distribute specialty products like the peperoni cruschi we're using in this class. They also have the best range of specialty cheese I've seen this side of Europe.

[@formaggiocello](#)

Game Farm

The Jalaty family produces game birds using small-scale methods on their farm in Arcadia; they also distribute Brisbane Valley's Jurassic quail.

[@gamefarm](#)

GetFish

I source my seafood from Frank Theodore whose family has been in the seafood business for many years. You can order all your favourite seafood online.

[@getfishau](#)

Harkola

This impressive warehouse – with a huge array of bulk nuts, spices, legumes and more – is also the importer of Cortas and other leading Middle Eastern brands. It's the best place for the freshest nuts and well worth a visit.

[@harkola.au](#)

Hummerstons Gourmet Meats

If you're on Sydney's northside, it's well worth stopping by this fabulous butchery in Lane Cove where Steve Hack and his team will remind you what great independent butchers are all about!

[@hummerstonsmeats](#)

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Lario

Gianmarco Balestrini imports the best carnaroli rice, polenta, dried porcini and other excellent specialty Italian products.

@lariofinefoodpurveyor

Mutti

When it comes to canned tomatoes, they have to be Italian, and the best Italian canned tomatoes are Mutti. That goes for their tomato paste too!

@muttipomodoraau

New Leaf Nursery

It's great to grow your favourite herbs in planter boxes or the garden. Dan and his team at this Ingleside nursery stock the best range of edible plants I've seen anywhere. It's worth a visit if you live in Sydney.

@newleafnursery

Nomad/La Boqueria

I love the chorizo and other small goods from this Sydney-based producer. They also import the best olives from boutique Spanish producer Losada, cured in natural brine for great flavour and texture.

@losadaolives

@laboqueriaau

Olsson's Salt

Alex Olsson's family has been making solar sea salt since 1948. They're Australia's oldest family-owned and operated sea salt producer and I love their pure Australian salt flakes and gorgeous flavoured salt rubs. Find them at Carriageworks Market every Saturday.

@olssonssalt

Parisi

Father and son team, Chris and Julian Parisi, are at Flemington Produce Markets every day as well as working with an extensive network of growers. Order online the same fruit and veg used by chefs like Peter Gilmore, Josh Niland and the Merivale Group.

@parisiaustralia

Salumi Australia

Sardinian-born Massimo Scalas makes salumi, including 'nduja, that transports me to Italy. Produced in Byron Bay, from locally and ethically raised pork, using age-old techniques, it's available online and from Harris Farm Markets.

@salumiaustralia

The Gourmet Potato

Annette and Wentworth Hill work with small producers to source the best potatoes I've ever tasted. Praised by chefs like Neil Perry, they're available at Carriageworks Market every Saturday.

@thegourmetpotato

Vannella Cheese

Master Cheesemaker Giuseppe Minoia and his team are as passionate about cheese as I am, especially all things stretched curd! They're at Carriageworks Market every Saturday.

@vannellacheese

Vic's Meat

I source my meat from father and son, Vic and Anthony Puharich, who have been supplying Sydney's finest restaurants for over 25 years. You can order all your meat and poultry online, including a good range of smallgoods.

@vics.meat

Measurements

All cup and spoon measurements used are Australian standard:

1 cup = 250ml

1 tablespoon (**tbsp**) = 20ml

1 teaspoon (**tsp**) = 5ml

To measure in grams, refer to the weight:volume tables for dry goods/meat or for fruit and vegetables.



Be Inspired

Be Inspired makes it easy to explore new cuisines, ingredients, wines and places through small-group food & wine tours, fun food events and online cooking classes.

Online cooking classes include detailed written recipes, step-by-step videos and a full-colour eMagazine with extra recipes and food, wine and travel information.



www.BeInspired.au