

Be Inspired

FOOD ~ WINE ~ TRAVEL

ISSUE 031 | MARCH 2024



Online cooking class

Emilia-Romagna

With **Roberta**



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How To Be inspired

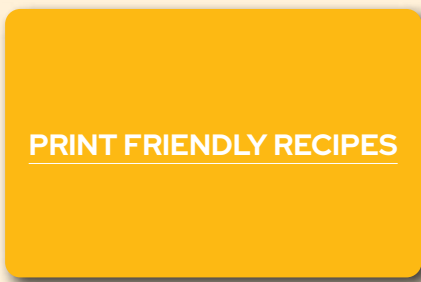


I want to inspire your culinary adventures every way I can.

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](#).



Shopping List

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

Menu 1	Menu 2	Menu 3	Menu 4	recipe	Quantity	Ingredient	Notes
✓				Risotto	150g	carneroli rice**	Acquerello (aged 1 year) from Lario
	✓			Chicken Salad	40g	mostarda di frutta**	
✓				Risotto	30g	porcini, dried **	
✓	✓	✓		Radicchio, Tomato, Chicken Salad	140ml	vinegar, Balsamic Vinegar of Modena IGP**	Ensure IGP or DOP
✓	✓	✓	✓	All Salads, Piadina, Risotto, Erbazzone, Borlotti	320ml or 420ml if No Pork	extra virgin olive oil (Delicate)	
✓				Seafood Salad	15ml	vinegar, red wine	ALTO Olives Merlot
✓	✓	✓		Passatelli, Radicchio Salad, Torta	400g	bread, fresh rustic (about 8-9 slices - half a loaf)	About 300g if already stale
	✓			Radicchio Salad	100g	pancetta, flat	
✓	✓	✓		Passatelli, Risotto, Erbazzone	170g	Parmigiano Reggiano	allow extra weight for rind
	✓			Gnocchi Fritti		Salumi, for serving (e.g. prosciutto, mortadella, salami)	
✓				Risotto	60ml	wine, dry white	
	✓			Chicken Salad	300g	chicken thigh fillets, skin off	
✓				Risotto	1	duck breast, skin on	
✓				Seafood Salad	400g	calamari, southern (or other squid)	
✓				Seafood Salad	4	prawns green (U12/15)	
	✓			Prawn Salad*	6	prawns green (U12/15)	
✓				Salmon Risotto*	300g	salmon fillet, skin on (Atlantic)	
				Gnocchi Fritti		Smoked salmon, for serving*	
	✓			Borlotti Beans	1	bay leaf, fresh	
✓				Seafood Salad	50g	beans, green - baby	
✓				Seafood Salad	0.5	beetroot, baby	with greens attached (to use in Erbazzone)
✓				Seafood Salad	0.5	carrot, small	
✓	✓	✓		Everything	10	eggs	3 yolks only

Menu 1	Menu 2	Menu 3	Menu 4	recipe	Quantity	Ingredient	Notes
	✓	✓		Erbazzone, Borlotti	2-3 cloves	garlic	
	✓			Erbazzone	6	green onions	
✓				Passatelli	1	lemon, small	
	✓			Chicken Salad	1	lettuce, green oak leaf	
✓	✓			Radicchio, Chicken Salad	1 head	radicchio	
✓				Risotto	1	shallot, golden	
	✓			Erbazzone	500g	spinach leaves, baby (or other greens)	
	✓			Tomato Salad	200g	tomatoes, ripe red (Roma, cherry/ grape or other)	
	✓			Chicken Salad	1	baguette	
✓				Piadina	1 tsp	baking powder	
	✓			Borlotti Beans	1 can	borlotti beans (400g)	Annalisa or Cortas brands
✓	✓	✓		Passatelli, Risotto, Gnocchi Fritti, Erbazzone	150g	butter	
	✓			Chocolate Bread Cake	15g	candied citrus peel (or other candied fruit)	
	✓			Chocolate Bread Cake	25g	cocoa powder (Dutch-processed)	
	✓			Semifreddo	200ml	cream, single (pure)	
✓	✓			Passatelli, Piadina, Gnocchi Fritti, Erbazzone	850g	flour, plain	includes garganelli
	✓			Chocolate Bread Cake	15g	icing sugar	
	✓			Chocolate Bread Cake	500ml	milk	
✓				Passatelli	1	nutmeg, whole	
	✓			Chicken Salad, Torta	25g	pine nuts	
	✓			Borlotti Beans	0.25 cup	polpa (canned crushed tomato)	Mutti
	✓			Chicken Salad	20g	salt, cooking natural	Olsson's
✓	✓			Desserts x 2	225g	sugar, castor	
✓	✓			Semifreddo, Gnocchi Fritti	510ml	vegetable oil	
	✓			Gnocchi Fritti	2.5g	yeast, dried	

Deli/Bottle Shop
Butcher/Fishmonger
Greengrocer
Grocer
Available from Be Inspired Market Place

* Dietary option ** In Be Inspired Care Pack

Visit the Market Place to Be Inspired



Email Roberta with any questions about sourcing or substituting ingredients at roberta@food-wine-travel.com

Tips on how to store produce for maximum freshness and quality

Here's a list of the ingredients you'll need for all four menus. Some are included in the optional Care Pack or available from the Market Place. I've shown suggested brands where appropriate and you can read more about the awesome producers I recommend on [page 60](#).

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 freezing 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).

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 – store in a tub of water as soon as possible to prevent them oxidizing (blackening). Stored like this they will keep in the fridge for 3 days. Freeze asap if you plan to cook them later. Once thawed, refrigerate in a tub of water immediately to prevent them oxidizing and use within 2 days.

Calamari (squid) – will keep in the fridge for 3 days. It's best to clean asap then wrap and refrigerate or freeze asap.

Salmon – will keep in the fridge for 4 days – store in the coldest part of the fridge on a plate, ideally with an ice

brick beneath and above it. For maximum quality, use or freeze within 24 hours.

Chicken – use within 24 hours of buying or freeze asap if you plan to use it later. Packaged poultry can have an odd 'confinement odour' due to the harmless gas used in the packing process and not related to the product's freshness.

Pancetta – once opened wrap tightly in baking paper and place inside a zip-lock bag in the fridge; use within 1 month. A harmless fine white powder of salt may appear on the surface.



Vegetables & Herbs

Lettuce and radicchio – are hardier than you may think. Store sealed in a bag in the crisper, revive by soaking in a sink of cold water if need be and discard any damaged leaves before using.

Tomatoes – store at room temperature, ideally in a sunny spot, until they're fully ripe, then store in a bag or punnet in the crisper of the fridge until needed.

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

Dairy

Parmesan – refrigerated wrapped tightly in baking paper it will keep for at least a month. 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.

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 oven for a few minutes to crisp up before serving.

Vegetable oil – used oil can be cooled, filtered (through muslin, a clean chux or coffee filter) and stored in the fridge or a cool dark place to be reused. Dispose of it (in the bin, never down the sink) after 3 weeks or 3 uses, whichever comes first.



Care Pack Emilia-Romagna

This Care Pack of ingredients for Emilia-Romagna recipes includes:

1 x bottle **Balsamic Vinegar of Modena IGP**

1 x tin **Acquerello carnaroli rice (500g)**

1 x jar **Mostarda di Frutta (mustard fruit)**

1 x bag **dried porcini mushrooms (100g)**

Available from the
Be Inspired Market Place

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Food - Wine - Travel

Market place



Emilia-Romagna

“The people of Emilia-Romagna eat more, care more and talk more about food than anyone else in Italy,” says food writer Claudia Roden. Which, in a country as food-obsessed as Italy, is saying something!

Emilia-Romagna stretches almost right across central-northern Italy, from the Adriatic coast just south of Venice in the east, stopping a mere 30km from the Mediterranean near Genoa, blocked only by the narrow crescent of Liguria.

Even Italians from other regions agree that Emilia-Romagna has a special place in Italian cuisine. Known as Italy’s ‘food valley’, this often-overlooked

region has more foods with PDO (Protected Designation of Origin) and PGI (Protected Geographical Indication) designations than any other Italian region.

Despite several impressive peaks in the Apennine Mountains which separate it from Tuscany, Emilia-Romagna is mainly wooded hills and plains with rich alluvial soil from the River Po. It is Italy’s largest food producing region with a long history

of both artisanal and commercial preservation of its abundant produce.

Rich milk is turned into giant wheels of Parmigiano-Reggiano, the whey used to feed pigs whose hind legs are preserved as Prosciutto di Parma. Other cured pork products – such as Mortadella di Bologna, Culatello di Zibello, Cotichino di Modena and Salame Felino – are just a few of the dozens of artisanal specialties rarely seen outside Italy or even the region.



Soft wheat is used to make egg-rich fresh pasta and carnaroli rice from the Po Delta is highly-prized for risotto. Grape must is aged into one of the world's most expensive condiments, Aceto Balsamico Tradizionale di Modena. And abundant fruits – including peaches, pears, melons, apples, quinces, cherries and tomatoes – are eaten fresh and preserved as mustard fruits, jams and other relishes. Parma is the headquarters of both Mutti tomatoes and Barilla pasta.

Cheese and salami are aged in the cool tufa caves in the mountains of Romagna. And the local fresh cream cheese, squacquerone (similar to crescenza or strachino), is spread on the typical flatbread of Romagna, Piadina Romagnola, which has its own PGI appellation.

And that's before we talk about the wines (see page 11)!

Emilia-Romagna may be one political region, but culturally it contains two very different territories only brought together in 1848 by Italian unification. Emilia (in the west) is home to the foodie cities of Parma, Modena and Bologna and has a long history of both industry and affluence. It is home to many of Italy's most exclusive car and bike brands including Ferrari, Maserati, Lamborghini, De Tomaso and Ducati. While in the east, relatively undiscovered Romagna has a more rural history, slower (almost southern Italian) pace, and its own regional specialties including fabulous Adriatic seafood.

Wherever you travel in Emilia-Romagna you'll find distinctive regional dishes closely tied to the surrounding land and its history. So get your apron on and dig in to Italy's delicious food valley.

Buon appetito!



WATCH



Highlights of the Be Inspired Emilia-Romagna Food Tour



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Music from Emilia-Romagna including Luciano Pavarotti



EXPLORE



The highlights of Emilia-Romagna



EXPERIENCE



The Italian Food & Wine Tour of a Lifetime



Food & Wine Tour Emilia- Romagna

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"The people of Emilia-Romagna eat more, care more and talk more about food than anyone else in Italy," says food writer Claudia Roden. And it's true.

Ready to be a traveller in Italy rather than a tourist?

Join me on a small group food & wine tour of this most food-obsessed of regions. Visit artisanal food and wine producers, eat regional specialties in local restaurants and enjoy hands-on cooking with like-minded food and wine lovers in a relaxed, comfortable environment.



Traditional Balsamic Vinegar of Modena DOP

One of the greatest revelations for guests on my tours of Emilia-Romagna is discovering what makes Aceto Balsamico Tradizionale di Modena DOP (Traditional Balsamic Vinegar of Modena) so special and how to tell it apart from all the other 'balsamic' products on the market.

Traditional Balsamic Vinegar is made from nothing but cooked grape juice (mosto cotto) and time – lots of time. It's aged in a solera system and fractionally blended (like Sherry), moving through a succession of different sized barrels made from various woods including juniper (which adds a peppery, spicy note), cherry (for a sweet fruitiness), chestnut and oak.

"The barrels are part of our family," says acetario (vinegar maker) Marcello Castelli who, upon marrying Giorgio Barbieri's daughter Carlotta, was gifted the solera Giorgio started for her in 1986 when she was born. In the vinegar-making families of Modena, traditionally a new solera was started for each girl child as part of her dowry. Carlotta's vinegar is aged in cherry, chestnut and oak and is delicious drizzled over ice cream.

Since 1972, when the DOP appellation for Traditional Balsamic Vinegar of Modena was granted, every producer must send their vinegar to the controlling consortium where it's tasted by a panel and then, if it makes the grade, bottled in the distinctive bulbous 100ml bottles, numbered, and sealed with the consortium's guarantee. Only then is it returned to the producer to add their branded label, ensuring that inferior products cannot be released under the DOP label.

There are only two age statements for Traditional Balsamic Vinegar of Modena (DOP): white-capped *tradizionale* with a minimum age of 12 years, and gold-capped *extravecchio*, aged for a minimum of 25 years. Due to the fractional blending the age statements only refer to a minimum age; some of the vinegar in each bottle is much older, a small amount often going back over a hundred years.

Once you know that it takes 10kg of grapes to create each 100ml bottle of extravecchio vinegar, and only 30% of the final barrel in each solera is bottled every year, you begin to understand why the starting price for 100ml of 12 year old is around \$100 and the rare 25+ year vinegars aged in single woods cost over \$300.

Bottles of Traditional Balsamic Vinegar of Modena will always bear the red and gold European Union PDO stamp (Protected Designation of Origin, DOP in Italian). Balsamic Vinegar of Modena IGP is also produced in Modena; bottles of it always show the blue and gold European Union PGI mark (Protected Geographical Indication, IGP in Italian). It is also an authentic product produced in Modena, but contains wine vinegar and usually caramel as well as grape must and can be aged for as little as 2 months.



Parmigiano-Reggiano DOP

“The first ingredient is passion,” says Roberta Delsante, as she welcomes guests to Parmigiano dairy Caseificio San Pier Damiani. Roberta, the fifth generation of her family to be involved in the production of the world’s most famous grating cheese, Parmigiano-Reggiano, goes on to list the other ingredients as milk, rennet, salt and time.

It sounds simple, but when you watch the cheesemakers at work simmering 1,100 litres of milk in shiny copper cauldrons to create just 2 x 50kg bundles of curd, you realise there’s a sixth ingredient: skill. They make it look easy, like a dance, but you can tell it isn’t.

On a tour of any Parmigiano caseificio you’ll see giant wheels of freshly made cheese bobbing in salt baths before being stacked on wooden shelves to begin aging. The wheels are stencilled with the words Parmigiano-Reggiano all the way around their sides, plus the dairy’s unique number, and the month and year of production.

After 12 months, an inspector from the Parmigiano-Reggiano

Consortium (the governing body) taps them with a small metal hammer. If the resulting sound alerts his trained ear to any imperfections, the cheese is declassified. The rind, with its Parmigiano-Reggiano stencilling, is removed and the cheese may be used in products that are labelled as containing ‘parmesan’ but not Parmigiano-Reggiano DOP.

The rind of wheels that pass the test are stamped with the consortium’s oval seal bearing the words ‘Parmigiano Reggiano Consorzio Tutela’. Most are then aged for at least a further 12 months, often more. At 12–18 months Parmigiano is generally eaten as a snack; 24 months is the sweet spot where it’s both grated and served in pieces; over 24

months it’s generally grated and used in cooking.

No wonder passion is where it all begins, there aren’t any quick wins here! Just 3,000 farms in the designated area produce the world’s supply of Parmigiano-Reggiano. Most are small family-run affairs making 4 to 14 wheels/day.

If possible, buy Parmigiano freshly cut from a wheel and look for the authenticating markings on the rind. If buying packaged pieces of Parmigiano-Reggiano, look for the European Union’s red and gold PDO (Protected Designation of Origin, DOP in Italian) stamp on the packaging. And please never buy pre-grated parmesan.



Wines of Emilia-Romagna

Emilia-Romagna is the third largest wine producer among Italy's 20 regions (after Veneto and Puglia) and about a quarter of its wines have DOC or DOCG appellations.

Lambrusco is undoubtedly Emilia-Romagna's most famous wine. The name applies to both the family of grapes and the wines made from them. Lambrusco's ties to the region go back to the Etruscans, who cultivated the wild vines they found in Emilia.

Lambrusco lays claim to being the only truly indigenous Italian grape variety, as all other grapes we think of as Italian were introduced from the Middle East millennia ago.

Outside Italy, Lambrusco is often perceived as inexpensive, sweet red bubbles, but in Emilia-Romagna you experience a very different wine. Or rather a range of very different wines, most of them quite dry, stretching from the palest rosé to a rich deep purple, all with a gentle fizz. In the provinces of Modena and Reggio-Emilia, there are six DOC Lambrusco appellations (several named for varieties of Lambrusco grapes).

Grasparossa and Reggiano are the darkest and most tannic of the Lambrusco styles, while Sorbara (my favourite) is the palest and most delicate. They are often relatively low in alcohol (around 8-10%) and

all served lightly chilled. I like the lighter di Sorbara with salumi or as an aperitivo and find the darker styles a perfect palate cleanser with Emilia's rich parmesan and pork-based dishes.

Here are the other most typical grape varieties you'll come across on your food and wine tour of Emilia-Romagna.

Trebbiano is the most widely-planted white grape in the region and especially popular around Ravenna. It's a hardy, versatile grape often used to make easy-drinking still or sparkling wines. In the right hands it also produces elegant, complex wines such as Noelia Ricci Bro'.

Albana is at home in Romagna where, in 1987, it was the first white Italian grape to receive a DOCG appellation. Unusually for a white wine, it's known for its tannin. Once mainly associated with sweet wines (usually passito-style and sometimes botrytised), it's now also used to make food-friendly dry wines.

Pignoletto (also known as grechetto gentile), grown on the hills around Bologna (Colli Bolognesi), is used to make a delicious sparkling dry white wine.

Malvasia di Candia is grown in the north-west of Emilia where it produces aromatic wines that pair beautifully with delicate dishes like pasta in brodo. It's also used to make some beautifully orange skin-contact wines, including my favourite, Vej from Podere Pradarolo.

Sangiovese, best-known as the main grape in Tuscan Chianti, is also very much at home in Romagna. Sangiovese di Romagna is an elegant full-bodied red wine with berry aromas and silky tannins. It pairs beautifully with the typical grilled meat dishes and braises. One of the finest I've tasted is the Pandolfo Federico.

Barbera is popular across Italy, from Aosta to Puglia, but only in Emilia-Romagna is it used to make a sparkling red wine. Colli Piacentini, in the north west, produces several lightly sparkling, soft red wines similar in body to Beaujolais.

Bonarda (also called Croatina) hails from Piemonte but is now also at home in Colli Piacentini. It's made into sweet and dry, still and sparkling, wines, and blended with barbera to produce Gutturino DOC.



Be Inspired Wine Pairing

In collaboration with importer **Christian Canala & Mercato Wines**

One of the highlights of my Emilia-Romagna food & wine tour is a visit to boutique winery Pandolfa. At this beautiful estate, in the foothills of the Apennine Mountains bordering Tuscany, we visit the vineyards by tractor-drawn cart. After seeing the gorgeous vista from the top of the property we walk through an ancient tunnel into the grand 18th century Villa Pandolfa for a private tasting of their Pandolfa and Noelia Ricci wines. I'm excited to be able to share three of these very special wines with you, plus a Bardolino from neighbouring Veneto.

Complete your vicarious tour of Emilia-Romagna with these wines chosen to complement the four Menus.

1 NOELIA RICCI 'BRO' TREBBIANO 2022

Trebbiano is the region's most popular white wine. At its best, as we find here, it has delicate notes of orange blossom, lemon zest and stone fruit. I love the way this complex wine with hints of apricot and salted pistachio plays against both the buttery passatelli and fresh seafood salad in this menu. There's a nice lick of salt on the finish too.

2 LENOTTI BARDOLINO CLASSICO 2021

This blend of corvina and rondinella, with a splash of molinara, is a delicious soft red (almost pinot noir like). It's perfect with both the duck and porcini in this menu and works beautifully with the salmon version too. Half way between a big rosé and a red wine, it bursts with cherry and spice and can even take a light chilling if you fancy.

3 PANDOLFA 'FEDERICO' SANGIOVESE 2022

Sangiovese is the classic red wine of Emilia-Romagna and, in traditional style, the Federico has notes of dark red fruit and sweet star anise on the nose. I love the play of its earthy tannins with the spinach and beetroot leaves of the pie, and the touch of acid to lift the sweetness of the tomato salad. It's great with the salumi and gnocchi fritti too.

4 PANDOLFA 'GINEVRA' ROSATO 2022

I love a full-bodied rosato, and Ginevra – made from sangiovese – delivers on all fronts. It's light enough to pair with the chicken (or prawn) salad in this menu, and bold enough to meet the mustard fruits and sweet balsamic vinegar head-on. Lovely notes of raspberries and plum, with a great balanced acidity.



**Complete your Emilia-Romagna menus with these wines chosen to pair with the dishes.
Order the Emilia-Romagna wine pack here for \$120 plus delivery (RRP \$135).**



Modena – Cars & Cucina

Cars and cucina – perhaps Ferrari and Francescana – are the two things that bring most visitors to Modena. The startlingly white Romanesque cathedral, with its 90-metre-high bell tower, is impressive, as are the museums dedicated to two of the city's most famous sons: Enzo Ferrari and Luciano Pavarotti. But it's the cucina that keeps me coming back.

FRANCESCHETTA 58

No Modena food tour is complete without experiencing the genius of Massimo Bottura. I love the 'Tradition in Evolution' menu at Franceschetta58, casual sister to his more imposing Osteria Francescana. It provides a different view of Modena's traditional cuisine and a chance to taste some very rare wines, including one aged in beehives especially for the restaurant.

HOSTERIA GIUSTI

Plan well ahead to score one of only four tables at tiny Hosteria Giusti beneath a 400-year-old delicatessen in the heart of the old town. Open only for lunch, this tiny traditional osteria offers a short menu of Modenese classics like capon salad and finely sliced cotechino with salsa verde. Of course, with Nonna Laura in the kitchen, there's always fresh pasta too.

OSTERIA RUBBIARA

About 30 minutes' drive from the city centre, the family of Italo Pedroni make traditional and commercial balsamic vinegar (PDO & IGT) and nocino, local green walnut liqueur. A lunch of ricotta tortellini with butter and balsamic vinegar in their leafy courtyard, with a glass of pale pink Lambrusco di Sorbara, is one of my favourite meals.

Learn more about this delicious city at [Belnspired.au](https://www.belnspired.au)



Parma

City of Gastronomy

Parma is home to some of the world's best known foods, including Prosciutto di Parma and Parmigiano-Reggiano. Smaller than neighbouring Modena and Bologna, its city centre is easy to discover on foot or bicycle and full of fabulous food and fashion shops as well as impressive cultural landmarks.

TRATTORIA RIGOLETTO

I was drawn to this tiny trattoria down a cobbled alley by the quirky photos on the walls (a COVID project to keep the owners sane as it turns out). Fabrizio is the most welcoming host and his wife Antonella is a wonderful cook and photographer. Simple, classic, delicious food, prepared and served with warmth and passion. It's small, so book ahead.

TABARRO

This little gem of a wine bar was recommended to me by one of the staff at my favourite Parma hotel, Palazzo della Rosa Prati. And I'm so glad I listened! Sit on a stool around one of the barrels outside, tell host Alessandro Marzocchi what you like and let him choose for you from his impressive range of natural and boutique wines. This is my kind of bar!

PODERE PRADAROLO

Just 40km from Piazza Duomo are the beautiful hills of the Ceno Valley and this vineyard producing wine as naturally as possible, including Vej, an intriguing sparkling orange wine that I can't get enough of. Owners Alberto and Claudia love showing visitors their vineyard and cellar (by appointment) and also offer B&B in their charming 17th century villa.

Discover more of this beautiful city at [BelInspired.au](https://www.belinspired.au)



Romagna

The undiscovered half of Emilia-Romagna

Romagna, the south-eastern part of Emilia-Romagna, has a more rustic feel than affluent western Emilia. Seafood features in dishes along the Adriatic coast, while in the inland hill towns ingredients like wild boar and foraged mushrooms figure strongly. Here are a few of my favourite eats and drinks in this relatively undiscovered territory.

TRATTORIA DA LUCIO

At this modern trattoria in Rimini, bright young chefs Jacopo Ticchi and Giacomo Imbalzano have generated quite a following for their dry-aged fish, simple charcoal grills and unusual flavour combinations. The food is light and colourful, the wine list and service are excellent, and everything adds up to an evening out that is so much more than a meal.

OSTERIA BARTOLINI

This more traditional osteria on the Cesenatico canal is the original restaurant of Stefano Bartolini, one of Romagna's best-known chefs. Here they keep the menu simple with generous serves of excellent fritti misti, insalata di mare and seafood pasta. Desserts, especially frozen treats like caramel semifreddo, are a highlight.

OSTERIA LA CORTE

I love this rustic osteria in the beautiful Medieval hill town of San Leo. Request a table on the mezzanine to enjoy the view of the rest of the restaurant, and order the unique local pasta, passatelli, with cave-aged cheese as well as the gnocchi with wild boar ragù. It feels like eating in a friend's family home that just happens to also have great service and wonderful atmosphere.

PANDOLFA WINERY

A tour and tasting at this beautiful hilltop winery, between the Apennine mountains and the sea, is a highlight of any visit to Romagna. Their Pandolfa and Noelia Ricci labels show the elegant wines that can be produced from the region's most typical grapes, trebbiano and sangiovese.

Find more Romagna highlights at [Belnspired.au](https://www.belnspired.au)



What's Next?

Online Cooking Class

Indonesian

The Indonesia archipelago contains thousands of islands, each with its own regional specialties. Known as 'the spice islands' for its abundance of peppers, nutmeg, cloves, and cinnamon plus gingers, lemongrass and other aromatics, Indonesia shares some recipes with its neighbours but always adds its own spin. In this online Indonesian cooking class we'll explore the rich and delicious cuisine of these spice islands.

Visit **BeInspired.au** to order



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. I want you to be inspired to cook at your own pace, to mix and match recipes to suit yourself, so feel free to go off menu.

The recipes in this eMagazine are from Roberta Muir and inspired by dishes and recipes from Emilia-Romagna.

ESSENTIALS



- How To Make Garganelli
- How To Make Breadcrumbs
- How to Make Caramel
- How To Toast Nuts
- How to Clean Squid

**PRINT
FRIENDLY
RECIPES**

MENU 1



Primo
Passatelli with Brown Butter



Secondo
Insalata di Mare



Contorno
Piadina Romagnola



Dolce
Bensone Ripieno



From **Belnspired.au**

MENU 2



Secondo Duck Breast with Porcini Risotto



Variazione Salmon with Porcini Risotto



Contorno Insalata di Radicchio e Bruciatini



Variazione Insalata di Radicchio e Crostini



Dolce Semifreddo al Caramello



Primo
Stracciatella with
Polenta Chips & Fig Jam



From **Belnspired.au**

MENU 3



Primo
Gnocchi Fritti with Salumi



Variazione Gnocchi Fritti with Smoked Salmon



Secondo
Erbazzone all'Emiliana



Contorno
Insalata di Pomodori con Aceto Balsamico



Dolce
Ice Cream with
Balsamic Vinegar



From **Belnspired.au**

MENU 4



Secondo
Chicken Salad with Mostarda di Frutta



Variazione Prawn Salad with Mostarda di Frutta



Contorno
Borlotti Beans with Hard-Boiled Egg



Dolce
Torta Paesana (Chocolate Bread Cake)



Primo
Garganelli
with Tomato Sauce



How To Make Garganelli & Other Fresh Pasta Shapes



Emilia-Romagna is the home of rich egg pasta, with 1 egg used for every 100g of flour to create pasta sheets that are then cut into an endless variety of shapes.

Garganelli are similar to penne rigati but instead of an extruded flour and water dough, they're hand-rolled squares of fresh egg pasta.

They're rolled around a wooden rod, traditionally across a "comb", which is a set of strings in a wooden frame, though today a gnocchi board is more commonly used.

I had garganelli with a delicious duck ragu at Hosteria Giusti in Modena in Emilia and learnt to make this simple pasta at Casa Artusi cooking school in Romagna.

The ridged hollow shape holds sauce well and you can dress garganelli with whatever you like, from a classic ragù Bolognese to a simple tomato sauce.



WATCH THE RECIPE VIDEO

INGREDIENTS

- 200g plain flour, plus extra for dusting
- Pinch salt flakes, crushed
- 2 eggs
- Sauce of your choice, for serving

METHOD

Mound the flour onto a clean, dry work surface and make a deep well in the centre, leaving a little flour covering the base.

Add the salt and eggs to the well.

Use your hands to mix the egg, slowly working in the flour from the edges of the well to form a dough.

Knead for 5–10 minutes until smooth and elastic; this can be done by hand or using an electric mixer with a dough hook.

Shape into a ball, wrap in plastic and set aside for 30 minutes or so; you can refrigerate it overnight, just return it to room temperature before rolling.

On a lightly floured surface, roll the dough as thinly as possible.

Cut into a neat rectangle 30cm x 21cm. Cover the trimmings and set aside to make other pasta shapes.

Cut the rectangle into 3cm squares.

Put a square onto a gnocchi board in a diamond shape (with a point facing towards you) and place a 1cm wooden rod in the top centre of the triangle (the handle of a wooden spoon works well).

Roll the pasta forward around the rod along the gnocchi board, pressing firmly to ensure it seals where the points overlap.

Set aside and repeat with remaining squares.

HOW TO COOK

Bring a large saucepan of well-salted water to the boil (10g salt/litre water).

Add pasta and cook for about 4 minutes, until tender; cooking time will depend on how dry the pasta has become, so start taste testing after 2 minutes.

Meanwhile, reheat sauce over a low heat.

As soon as pasta is cooked, scoop it out of the water into the sauce and toss to coat well.

Add a tablespoon or 2 of the pasta cooking water to give a creamy consistency.

Serve immediately in flat bowls.

WHAT TO DO WITH OFFCUTS

Cut large pasta trimmings into irregular shapes to make maltagliati (literally 'badly cut') and chop small scraps of pasta dough finely to make pastina (literally 'little pasta') to use in soups.

ROBERTA'S TIP

A wooden bench is ideal for making pasta as it absorbs some of the moisture, reducing the need to add extra flour to prevent the dough sticking.

How To Make Breadcrumbs



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 dusted off to be eaten.

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

such traditions and find ways to use leftover bread, whether in salads, cakes, puddings or as breadcrumbs.

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, and they all have their uses.

Shake the bowl of freshly made crumbs to bring larger pieces to the top, then blitz them 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 for about 40 minutes, until brittle.

As a rough guide, 100g fresh rustic bread (about 2 slices) will weigh 75g when stale/dried and yield about 1 cup of coarse breadcrumbs.

Store breadcrumbs in a sealed plastic bag in the freezer 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.

How To Make Caramel



Making caramel is one of those skills that requires patience and a bit of practice to learn just the right moment to take the pan off the heat.

Professionals make it without water, just heating the sugar, which is quicker but more likely to end in a burnt mess.

For the home cook it's better (at least initially) to add some water to the sugar so that it cooks more

slowly giving you more time to manage it.

Depending on the pan, the heat level and the amount of water, I've had it take anywhere from 8 to 20 minutes for the sugar to caramelize.

Most of the time it can be left to its own devices, just keep glancing at it to see if it's changed colour.

Once it starts to turn golden, it changes quite quickly. That's when

you need to stand by swirling the pan regularly so it colours evenly.

At this stage the bubbles will subside to a tiny froth and it'll suddenly smell delicious.

That's when you whip it off the stove and pour it into the waiting dish – whether it's a ramekin for crème caramel or a cake tin for an upside-down pineapple cake.

INGREDIENTS

Makes $\frac{1}{4}$ cup

- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup castor sugar
- 1 tablespoon water

METHOD

Combine sugar and water in a small heavy-based saucepan over a medium heat.

Cook without stirring until it's dark golden, swirling the pan as it starts to caramelize so it colours evenly; the above quantity should take around 10 minutes to caramelize.

Once it's dark golden, remove from heat quickly and transfer to the necessary vessel.

Soak the pan immediately to make it easy to clean.



How To Toast Nuts



WATCH THE RECIPE 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 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.



1
Grasp the arms and tentacles. Pull firmly to separate the head from the tube (try not to break the ink sac).



5
Push your thumb between the tube and a side fin to break the skin.



2
Cut below the eyes. Discard the eyes and everything above them.



6
Holding the side fins, twist the tip of the tube to pull it away from the skin.

Grasp the side fins and pull down to peel off the skin around the tube.



3
Push the beak (mouth) out from between the arms.




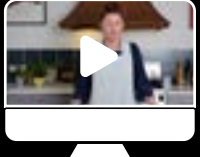
7
If you are cutting rings, wash the inside well; otherwise, place the knife inside the tube to cut it open along the obvious seam. Lay the tube out flat and working across the tube (not top to bottom), wipe both sides firmly to remove any membrane.



4
Remove the quill from inside the tube.



8
To honeycomb the squid, hold the knife at a 30-degree angle and score inside the tube on the diagonal. Turn tube 180 degrees and score again to create a cross hatch pattern.

SCAN  WATCH THE RECIPE VIDEO 

Menu 1



Primo

Passatelli with Brown Butter



Secondo

Insalata di Mare



Contorno

Piadina Romagnola



Dolce

Bensone Ripieno

From
Belnspired.au

RUNNING ORDER

Day Before:

- Make breadcrumbs
- Make passatelli dough
- Make piadina dough

A Few Hours Before:

- Roll piadina (stack with baking paper between them and cover with plastic wrap)

- Prep seafood
- Blanch vegetables
- Make salad dressing

Just Before Serving:

- Cook piadina
- Cook and serve passatelli
- Steam seafood
- Assemble and serve salad

Passatelli con Salsa al Burro Marrone



Passatelli pasta is a specialty of Romagna as well as the northern part of neighbouring Marche and Umbria. I was introduced to it at one of my favourite Romagnolo restaurants, Osteria La Corte in San Leo, a hill town on a rocky outcrop inland from Rimini (see [page 15](#)). It's classic cucina povera, a way to use leftover bread that also tastes great. Passatelli are traditionally made with a perforated concave metal disc with two handles

that's pressed into the dough; but extruding it through the largest disc of a potato ricer works just as well. If your dough is too firm to easily press through the ricer into the pot of water, knead it a little to soften it and/or press it out onto a plate then tip the passatelli into the boiling water. Passatelli are most often cooked and served in a clear broth, usually made from capon (castrated rooster). My recipe is inspired by the way Daniele

and Paolo serve theirs at Osteria La Corte, dressed with the local cave-aged cheese (formaggio di fossa); I use Parmigiano, but any firm cheese works well. The consistency of the passatelli can vary depending on the breadcrumbs, though it tastes great even if the dumplings are a little soft. Very fine, dry breadcrumbs are best, so leave the bread out overnight if need be before making them. You can watch Paolo making his [here](#).

Bread & Cheese Dumplings with Brown Butter

Passatelli con Salsa al Burro Marrone

Serves 4 as a starter (2 as a main course with salad)



WATCH THE RECIPE VIDEO

INGREDIENTS

- 120g very fine, fresh white breadcrumbs (see [page 20](#))
- 80g freshly-grated Parmigiano Reggiano, plus 15g extra for serving
- 1 teaspoon freshly grated lemon zest
- Freshly ground black pepper, to taste
- Freshly grated nutmeg, to taste
- 3 eggs
- ¼ cup plain flour
- 75g butter
- Squeeze lemon juice

METHOD

Place breadcrumbs in a food processor and blitz for a minute or so to ensure they're fine.

Add cheese, lemon zest, pepper and nutmeg and blitz to combine.

Add eggs and blitz to form a paste.

Dust a board with half the flour, turn paste onto it and scatter remaining flour over the top.

Knead well to completely incorporate the flour into the paste.

Shape into a log, roll in any remaining flour on the board, wrap in plastic and refrigerate for at least 2 hours, overnight is fine. Remove from fridge 30 minutes before cooking.

Place a large saucepan of well-salted water on to come to the boil (10g salt/litre water).

Meanwhile, place butter in a frying pan over medium heat and cook until it's nut brown. Remove from heat and set aside.

Once butter is brown and water is boiling, squeeze the dough through a potato ricer (fitted with the largest disc) into the boiling water, using a sharp knife dipped in the water to cut off strands about 3cm long.

They'll float almost immediately, let them boil for 2–3 minutes, until tender.

When passatelli are tender, return butter to a medium heat and, as soon as it starts to sizzle, add a squeeze of lemon juice then use a slotted spoon to scoop them out of the water into the frying pan. Toss to coat them well in the butter.

Transfer to a shallow bowl, layering with some of the cheese and a sprinkle of pepper as you go.

Scatter remaining cheese over the top and serve immediately.

ROBERTA'S TIP

Turn any leftovers into a simple pasta bake topped with a little more cheese.



Steaming is such an easy and delicious way to cook seafood as it preserves all its delicate natural flavour.

This easy seafood salad is a great way to combine fresh seafood with whatever colourful vegetables are in season.

It's inspired by a dish I had at Osteria Bartolini in Cesenatico, a lovely canal-

side restaurant specialising in Adriatic seafood.

They used squid, prawns and the rather odd-looking mantis shrimp; you could use octopus, mussels, marron or bugs with this delicious red wine dressing.

Vegetables are flexible too, slivers of asparagus are great instead of beans, as is zucchini.

Asian shredders, used for green mango salad, are handy for getting long thin shreds of carrot, otherwise just cut thin slices, stack them and cut into thin matchsticks.

If you buy a bunch of beetroot for this recipe, use some to make [Persian beetroot & yoghurt dip](#) and reserve the greens to add to the [erbazzone](#).

Seafood Salad

Insalata di Mare

Serves 2



WATCH THE RECIPE VIDEO

INGREDIENTS

- 400g southern calamari, cleaned (see [page 23](#))
- 4 medium-sized green prawns (U12/15)
- 50g baby green beans, topped, tailed and quartered lengthways
- ½ small carrot, peeled and coarsely shredded or cut into thin matchsticks
- ½ baby beetroot, peeled and cut into thin matchsticks
- [Piadina](#) or crusty bread, for serving

RED WINE DRESSING

- 3 teaspoons aged red wine vinegar
- Salt flakes and freshly ground black pepper, to taste
- 2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil

METHOD

Slice calamari hood into thin strips, halving if large; quarter tentacles and cut any long ones into pieces.

Peel the body shells off the prawns, leaving heads and tails intact. Use a toothpick inserted into the back to hook and extract the digestive tract.

Make Red Wine Dressing: Whisk vinegar, salt and pepper together in a large mixing bowl, whisk in oil and set aside.

Bring a saucepan of well-salted water to the boil (10g salt/litre water).

Meanwhile, arrange squid and prawns in a single layer in a steamer basket and bring a pan of water large enough to hold it to a simmer.

Place the steamer basket in the pan, cover and steam over medium heat for about 4 minutes, until squid is just tender.

Add squid to Dressing and set prawns aside to keep warm.

Meanwhile, blanch beans and carrot for 30 seconds, scooping them out of the saucepan and into iced water. Repeat with beetroot, keeping it separate.

Pat vegetables dry, add beans and carrot to the bowl with the calamari and toss to combine well.

Set beetroot aside.

Arrange prawns and salad on a serving platter, scattering the beetroot through the salad as you go and drizzling any dressing left in the bowl over it.

Serve at room temperature with piadina or crusty bread for soaking up all that delicious dressing.

ROBERTA'S TIP

In the video it may look like I take the pan off the heat once I add the steamer basket, in fact I just moved it to another burner. The saucepan needs to be on the heat while steaming.

Piadina Romagnola



Everywhere you go in Romagna, you're served this flatbread.

I was taught to make it by a local lady at Casa Artusi in Forlimpopoli, a cooking school and foundation dedicated to the work of Italy's most famous gastronome Pellegrino Artusi.

It's sold from small stands all over Romagna; in Rimini, Forlì Cesena, Ravenna and part of Bologna it has

IGP accreditation (PGI in English, Protected Geographical Indication).

Piadina is traditionally baked on a shallow terracotta griddle called a teggia and its origins are ancient, at least back to Etruscans times.

Despite its simplicity, every town (indeed every family) makes piadina a little differently, for example in Rimini it's thinner and in Cesena it's thicker.

It's served quartered with salumi and cheese (typically squacquerone and prosciutto) or as a wrap, often with a little rocket and tomato.

Stuffed with fillings like spinach or watercress and cheese and baked, like a calzone, it's called crescione.

Sweet versions are filled with jam, honey or Nutella.

Piadina Romagnola

Flatbread of Romagna

Makes 2



WATCH THE RECIPE VIDEO

INGREDIENTS

- 200g plain flour, plus extra for dusting
- 1 teaspoon baking powder
- 1 teaspoon salt flakes, crushed
- 1½ tablespoons extra virgin olive oil or melted pork lard, plus extra for wiping
- ⅓ cup water

METHOD

Mound the flour onto a clean, dry work surface and make a deep well in the centre, leaving a little flour covering the base.

Add baking powder, salt, oil or lard to the centre.

Pour in water and mix to form a dough by stirring flour from the sides into the wet ingredients in the centre; try to avoid the liquid spilling through the flour onto the board.

Knead for a good 5 minutes until dough is smooth.

Divide in half, shape into 2 balls, cover with plastic wrap and set aside for at least 30 minutes.

Preheat a griddle pan or heavy-based frying pan over medium heat.

Roll each ball of dough into a disc about 3mm thick (17cm diameter), lightly dusting the work surface with flour only if necessary.

Wipe the griddle or pan with oil or lard.

Add the dough, prick all over with a fork and cook for about 4 minutes, moving it around regularly, until well-coloured.

Turn over and repeat to cook the other side.

Serve cut into quarters or folded in half with a filling.

Menu 2



Primo
Stracciatella with
Polenta Chips &
Fig Jam

From
Belnspired.au

Secondo

Duck Breast with Porcini Risotto
Salmon with Porcini Risotto*

Contorno

Insalata di Radicchio e Bruciatini
Insalata di Radicchio e Crostini*

Dolce Semifreddo al Caramello

RUNNING ORDER

Day Before:

- Make semifreddo

A Few Hours Before:

- Soak and chop porcini (reserve soaking water)
- Score duck skin and place in pan (up to 1 hour before)
- Fry shallot
- Prep remaining risotto ingredients
- Prep salad ingredients

Just Before Serving:

- Cook pancetta, dress salad (it can sit for 20 mins while you make risotto)
- Cook and serve duck and risotto
- Remove semifreddo from fridge 10 mins before serving

* Dietary alternative

Petto d'Anatra con Risotto ai Porcini



The Po Delta in north-eastern Emilia-Romagna is the ideal place for growing rice, including the highly-prized carnaroli rice that most chefs prefer for risotto.

Ducks also love the waterways of the Po Delta, and further inland, in the foothills and mountains of the Apennine range, you'll find Europe's most famous porcini mushrooms growing around Borgo Val di Taro.

So it seems natural to combine all three in this delicious dish.

It's quite easy to make, even though there are three pans on the stove at once and you'll need a couple of timers.

If you're worried about cooking the duck and risotto at the same time, you could cook the duck first (undercooking it slightly) then keep it warm in a low oven while you cook the risotto.

I've learnt a thing or two about making risotto from my friend Alessandro Pavoni, and one of the most surprising lessons is that you don't have to stir it constantly, so follow my steps below and you'll be fine cooking duck and risotto all at once!

Duck Breast with Porcini Risotto

Petto d'Anatra con Risotto ai Porcini

Serves 2



WATCH THE RECIPE VIDEO

INGREDIENTS

- 30g dried porcini
- 750ml hot tap water
- 1 duck breast, skin on
- Salt flakes and freshly ground white pepper, to taste
- 1½ tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
- 1 golden shallot, finely chopped
- 150g carnaroli rice
- ¼ cup dry white wine
- 2 tablespoon freshly grated Parmigiano Reggiano
- 25g cold butter, diced

METHOD

Place porcini in water and set aside for 30 minutes.

Meanwhile, pat duck skin dry then use a very sharp knife to cut fine diagonal score marks through the skin in a criss-cross pattern, without cutting into the meat. Salt generously.

Place skin side-down in a frying pan and set aside for 30 minutes (up to 1 hour is fine).

Heat oil in a high-sided frying pan over medium heat, add shallot and a good pinch of salt, cover and cook for 3–5 minutes, stirring occasionally, until tender but not coloured. Remove from heat, cover and set aside.

Remove mushrooms from the water and squeeze over the bowl to extract as much liquid as possible.

Pour soaking water into a small saucepan, leaving any sediment in the bowl.

Place over medium heat; as soon as it starts to simmer reduce heat to low.

Meanwhile, slice mushrooms and set aside.

Return frying pan with the shallot to a medium heat, add rice, increase heat to high and stir for a minute or 2, until the grains are hot and well coated in oil.

Add wine and cook for 30–60 seconds without stirring, just shaking the pan to combine, until most of the liquid has been absorbed.

Reduce heat to medium, add enough of the mushroom soaking water to cover the rice well.

Cook for 8 minutes, without stirring, adding more soaking water as it starts to be absorbed and gently shaking the pan to combine.

Meanwhile place duck over medium–high heat and cook for about 5 minutes, until skin is golden, pouring off the fat as it melts (you can use this to make [duck fat potatoes](#)).

Turn duck over, reduce temperature to medium, and cook for a further 7–10 minutes depending on thickness (until internal temperature registers 55°C on a probe thermometer for medium rare or 60°C for medium).

Remove duck to a plate, skin side up, and set aside in a warm place.

Continued next page



Duck Breast with Porcini Risotto

Petto d'Anatra con Risotto ai Porcini

(Continued)



METHOD (CONTINUED)

Meanwhile, after rice has been cooking for 8 minutes, increase heat to medium-high, add mushroom and start gently stirring, adding more liquid a ladleful at a time as each lot is absorbed.

Stirring constantly, cook for a further 8–10 minutes, until rice is tender but still has some bite.

Stir in salt and add another ladle of stock (or boiling water if all the stock has been used).

Remove from heat, add pepper, Parmigiano and butter, and beat vigorously with a wooden spoon until all the butter and cheese is incorporated, adding a little more liquid if necessary to keep it moist and soupy.

Taste, add more salt if needed, then cover and set aside for a minute or 2.

Meanwhile, slice duck breast.

Spoon risotto onto warmed flat plates, tapping them on a tea towel-covered bench to spread the risotto out.

Top with duck breast and serve.

Salmon con Risotto ai Porcini



While salmon isn't indigenous to Italian waters, preferring the colder oceans further north, it is very popular in Italy.

It's delicious served with this earthy porcini risotto and the pink flesh contrasts beautifully too.

Cook the salmon with the skin on, even if you prefer not to eat it that way.

The skin forms a barrier between the heat of the pan and the delicate flesh, so cooking it skin-down for most of the time gives a succulent result.

Use the cooked skin as a garnish, or discard it, as you prefer.

Salmon with Porcini Risotto

Salmone con Risotto ai Porcini

Serves 2



PESCETARIAN OPTION

INGREDIENTS

- 1 x 300g piece salmon fillet, skin on
- 30g dried porcini
- 750ml hot tap water
- 1½ tablespoons extra virgin olive oil, plus extra for pan-frying
- 1 golden shallot, finely chopped
- Salt flakes and freshly ground white pepper, to taste
- 150g carnaroli rice
- ¼ cup dry white wine
- 2 tablespoon freshly grated Parmigiano Reggiano
- 25g cold butter, diced

METHOD

Remove salmon from the fridge 30–60 minutes before cooking so it comes to room temperature.

Place porcini in water and set aside for 30 minutes.

Heat oil in a high-sided frying pan over medium heat, add shallot and a good pinch of salt, cover and cook for 3–5 minutes, stirring occasionally, until tender but not coloured. Remove from heat, cover and set aside.

Remove mushrooms from the water and squeeze over the bowl to extract as much liquid as possible.

Pour soaking water into a small saucepan, leaving any sediment in the bowl.

Place over medium heat; as soon as it starts to simmer reduce heat to low.

Meanwhile, slice mushrooms and set aside.

Return frying pan with the shallot to a medium heat, add rice, increase heat to high and stir for a minute or 2, until the grains are hot and well coated in oil.

Add wine and cook for 30–60 seconds without stirring, just shaking the pan to combine, until most of the liquid has been absorbed.

Reduce heat to medium, add enough of the mushroom soaking water to cover the rice well.

Cook for 8 minutes, without stirring, adding more soaking water as it starts to be absorbed and gently shaking the pan to combine.

Meanwhile, place another small frying pan over medium heat.

Sprinkle salmon generously with salt and pepper all over, salting the skin especially well.

Drizzle a little oil into the pan, then add fish, skin side down, and cook for 8–10 minutes until skin is well-coloured and flesh has turned opaque part way up the sides of the fish.



Salmon with Porcini Risotto

Salmone con Risotto ai Porcini



METHOD (CONTINUED)

Turn fish over, increase heat to medium and cook for a further 3 minutes or so, depending on thickness and whether or not you like it rare in the centre. If the fish is very thick, sear each side for a few seconds too. Transfer to a rack over a plate, skin side up, and set aside in a warm place.

Meanwhile, after rice has been cooking for 8 minutes, increase heat to medium-high, add mushroom and start gently stirring, adding more liquid a ladleful at a time as each lot is absorbed.

Stirring constantly, cook for a further 8–10 minutes, until rice is tender but still has some bite.

Stir in salt and add another ladle of stock (or boiling water if all the stock has been used).

Remove from heat, add pepper, Parmigiano and butter, and beat vigorously with a wooden spoon until all the butter and cheese is incorporated, adding a little more liquid if necessary to keep it moist and soupy.

Taste, add more salt if needed, then cover and set aside for a minute or 2.

Meanwhile, remove salmon skin, use kitchen scissors to cut it into strips and set aside.

Spoon risotto onto warmed flat plates, tapping them on a tea towel-covered bench to spread the risotto out.

Place salmon on top of rice, skin side down, and break it up a little.

Garnish with all or some of the salmon skin if you like. Serve.

Insalata di Radicchio e Bruciatini



I love the bitterness of radicchio and the way it contrasts with the crunch and richness of little cubes of fried pancetta and the bite of vinegar in this traditional Romagnolo salad.

Whenever I visit the beautiful mosaics of Ravenna I lunch at Ca' de Vèn, a restaurant-enoteca in a restored villa on the main square, largely because

they serve this salad which you don't see on many menus.

I'm a big fan of Traditional Balsamic Vinegar of Modena DOP, aged for a minimum of 12 years, but this recipe calls for a more acidic vinegar such as Modena's IGP balsamic vinegar, which is aged for a much shorter time (just don't try drizzling it on your ice cream;

that's reserved for the 25 year old Traditional).

The name 'bruciatini' means burned, referring to the colour of the fried pancetta.

This is a great side dish, but many Romagnolos also happily sit down to a bowl of it with some piadina as a light meal.

Radicchio Salad with Crisp Pancetta

Insalata di Radicchio e Bruciatini

Serves 2 as a side dish



WATCH THE RECIPE VIDEO

INGREDIENTS

- ½ head radicchio
- 100g flat pancetta, diced
- 3 teaspoons Balsamic Vinegar of Modena IGP, or more to taste
- Salt flakes, to taste
- Extra virgin olive oil, for drizzling

METHOD

Cut the radicchio into about 1cm thick slices and place in a heatproof mixing bowl.

Place pancetta in a frying pan over medium–high heat and cook for 3–4 minutes, stirring often until crisp.

Add vinegar to the pan and swirl to combine everything well (careful, it will spit).

Immediately pour over the radicchio and toss to combine.

Taste and add a splash more vinegar if you like.

Transfer to a serving bowl, sprinkle with salt, drizzle with a little oil, and serve.

Insalata di Radicchio e Crostini



Insalata di radicchio e bruciatini is a classic salad from Romagna, the eastern half of Emilia-Romagna.

The name 'bruciatini' means burned and refers to the colour of the cubes of fried pancetta that traditionally garnish this dish.

If you don't like pancetta however, your bruciatini can be cubes of fried bread, called crostini in Italian.

Balsamic vinegar is the other key ingredient in radicchio e bruciatini. It's typically added to the hot pancetta to mix with the rendered

fat then poured over the radicchio, wilting it slightly.

Reducing the vinegar then adding it to the salad while still hot has a similar effect.

Radicchio Salad with Croutons

Insalata di Radicchio e Crostini

Serves 2 as a side dish



VEGETARIAN OPTION

INGREDIENTS

- ½ head radicchio (reserve a couple of leaves for the chicken salad (see [page 52](#)))
- 1½ tablespoons [Balsamic Vinegar of Modena IGP](#)
- Extra virgin olive oil, for drizzling
- Salt flakes, to taste

GARLIC CROSTINI

- 1 slice firm white bread, crusts removed
- Extra virgin olive oil, for shallow-frying
- 1 clove garlic, crushed

METHOD

Cut the radicchio into about 1cm thick slices and place in a heatproof mixing bowl.

Make Garlic Crostini: Cut bread into cubes. Place oil and garlic in a small saucepan over medium–high heat and cook for 30 seconds. Add bread and cook, shaking the pan frequently, for a few minutes until garlic is dark golden and bread has started to crisp and colour. Drain on paper towel.

Place vinegar in a small saucepan, bring to the boil, reduce heat to medium–high and boil gently for 3–5 minutes, until reduced and slightly syrupy; if using a young vinegar it may need to be reduced by half, if it's an older vinegar it may be less (see Roberta's Tip below).

Immediately tip over the radicchio, add a good drizzle of oil and generous sprinkling of salt and toss to combine.

Toss half the croutons through the radicchio, transfer to a serving bowl, sprinkle with remaining croutons and serve.

ROBERTA'S TIP

Depending on the age and quality of the vinegar you use, you may not need to reduce it at all, or may only need to reduce it briefly. Taste it first, then decide; it should be quite thick and taste sweet with a pleasantly sour undertone. Learn more about the different types of balsamic vinegar [here](#).

Semifreddo al Caramello



Semifreddo is so easy to make without any special equipment, just combine the ingredients and freeze.

I've read that this frozen treat originated in Emilia-Romagna but haven't been able to substantiate that.

I certainly see it on many menus there and especially enjoyed the crème caramel version I had at Osteria Bartolini in Cesenatico on the Adriatic coast.

Semifreddo contains the same basic ingredients as classic ice cream – cream, egg and sugar – but rather than being lightened by churning, it's aerated by whipping the cream.

The French call the same preparation parfait, meaning perfect, and Italians sometimes use the same term, perfetti, though semifreddo (meaning half-cold) is more common.

Most recipes start with zabaglione, whisking egg yolks and sugar over simmering water until thick. Chef Janni Kyritsis taught me this easier method of whisking warm sugar syrup into the egg yolks with an electric mixer.

Sometimes the caramel comes out of the mould easily with the semifreddo, other times I've had to microwave it for a few seconds to soften it or simply chip it out as shards of toffee to garnish the top of the semifreddo.

Caramel Semifreddo

Semifreddo al Caramello

Serves 4



WATCH THE RECIPE VIDEO

INGREDIENTS

- Vegetable oil, for greasing
- $\frac{2}{3}$ cup castor sugar
- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup water
- 3 egg yolks
- 200ml single cream

METHOD

Lightly oil 4 x 125ml ramekins or moulds, wiping out any excess oil.

Put sugar and water in a small heavy-based saucepan and place over medium heat.

Cook without stirring, until it's golden (this can take from 10–20 or so minutes); once it starts to caramelize swirl the pan gently so it colours evenly. Once it's golden quickly remove from heat.

Meanwhile, place egg yolks in the bowl of an electric mixer and whisk for 5–10 minutes, until thick enough to momentarily hold a pattern. Set aside until caramel is ready.

Also whisk cream until it forms firm peaks then set aside.

Once caramel is ready, working quickly, carefully pour $\frac{1}{3}$ cup into a heatproof measuring cup and, with the electric mixer running, slowly drizzle it into the egg. Continue whisking until it's completely cooled.

Meanwhile, return remaining caramel to a medium-high heat for a further minute or so until dark golden then quickly pour it into the base of the moulds. Carefully twirl them to coat the lower sides a little; set aside.

Gently fold cream into the egg mixture using a whisk with a folding motion.

Transfer mixture to the moulds.

Cover with plastic wrap, pressing it gently onto the surface.

Place in the freezer for at least 4 hours, until firm, ideally overnight.

Remove from the freezer 10 minutes before serving.

Dip moulds into very hot water for a few seconds, unmould and serve, scraping any set caramel over the top.

ROBERTA'S TIP

Because I wanted a caramel semifreddo I cooked the sugar syrup until it was golden. To use this method for a different flavoured semifreddo, use only $\frac{1}{3}$ cup castor sugar for this quantity and cook it just to 'soft ball' stage, that is simmer it until a drop forms a soft ball when added to cold water (about 115°C).

Menu 3



Primo

Gnocchi Fritti with Salumi



Gnocchi Fritti with Smoked Salmon*



Secondo

Erbazzone all'Emiliana



Contorno

Insalata di Pomodori con Aceto Balsamico



Dolce

Ice Cream with Balsamic Vinegar

From

Belnspired.au

RUNNING ORDER

Day Before:

- Make gnocchi fritti dough
- Make pie dough

A Few Hours Before:

- Make pie filling
- Reduce balsamic vinegar for salad
- Assemble salumi on a platter, cover and refrigerate
- Assemble tomato salad (up to 1 hour before serving)

- Assemble pie (up to 30 mins before baking)

Just Before Serving:

- Fry gnocchi fritti (can be done ahead and reheated in oven)
- Serve gnocchi fritti while pie is baking

* Dietary alternative



Gnocchi fritti are crisp pillows of deep-fried dough served with salumi all over Emilia, they're also popular in neighbouring Lombardy where they're called chisolini.

They're best eaten while still warm but can be refrigerated in an airtight container for several days and reheated in the oven for a few minutes.

The dough can be made a day ahead and refrigerated; just bring it back to room temperature before cooking.

I find they puff up best if you add them to the oil so that the softer side (the one that's been in contact with the plate) goes in first.

Serve gnocchi fritti with any cured meats; prosciutto, mortadella,



culatello and salami are all typical in Emilia and there's often some Parmigiano too.

For a pescatarian version, they also make a delicious accompaniment to smoked salmon.

Crisp Dough Pillows

Gnocchi Fritti

Makes 20–30 pieces (Serves 4)



WATCH THE RECIPE VIDEO

INGREDIENTS

- ½ teaspoon dried yeast
- ⅓ cup lukewarm water
- 1 cup plain flour, plus extra for dusting
- 25g cold butter, diced
- ½ teaspoon salt flakes, crushed
- Vegetable oil, for deep-frying
- Salumi or smoked salmon, for serving

METHOD

Sprinkle yeast over water, cover and set aside for 10 minutes or so, until starting to froth.

Place flour into a bowl and make a well in the centre.

Add butter, salt and yeast mixture and mix well to form a dough, using a firm spatula or pastry scraper to start with then bringing it together with your hands.

Tip onto a lightly floured work surface and knead for a few minutes until smooth and no longer sticky.

Form into a ball, dust lightly with flour, place in a clean bowl, cover and set aside in a warm place for about an hour, until doubled in size.

Place on a lightly floured work surface and roll into a rectangle about 2–3mm thick.

Cut into 5cm squares, cover with a clean cloth and set aside for about 10 minutes, until slightly risen.

Meanwhile, heat oil for deep-frying.

Cooking a few at a time, and keeping the rest covered, deep-fry the squares for a minute or so each side, until golden.

Drain on paper towel on a rack and serve warm with salumi or smoked salmon.

Erbazzone all'Emiliana



Erba means greens and the '-one' suffix makes it big (like minestrone which is a big minestra or soup).

This rustic pie hails from the province of Reggio in Emilia-Romagna, though I've also enjoyed a slice of it for breakfast walking around the historic Albinelli Market in Modena.

Erbazzone was traditionally made with an assortment of whatever

greens (often wild) were abundant in any season, especially beets, chard and spinach.

It's not unlike a Ligurian scarpazza or Greek hortopita, except for the pastry. It's the crisp, crunchy, almost cracker-like pastry that makes erbazzone distinctive.

This pastry was traditionally made with lard, though many people use

butter or olive oil today.

Lard, typically in the form of cured lardo or pancetta, is sometimes also included in the filling.

Every recipe I've seen for this classic dish is slightly different, so use whatever greens you like, use lard in the pastry and add some pancetta to the filling if you prefer.

Emilian Greens Pie

Erbazzone all'Emiliana

Serves 2



WATCH THE RECIPE VIDEO

INGREDIENTS

- 500g baby spinach leaves or other greens
- 2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil, plus extra for brushing
- 1 clove garlic, crushed
- 6 green onions, finely chopped
- Salt flakes and freshly ground black pepper, to taste
- 60g freshly grated Parmigiano Reggiano

DOUGH

- 150g plain flour, plus extra for dusting
- ½ teaspoon salt flakes, crushed
- 25g cold butter, diced
- ¼ cup water

METHOD

Make Dough: Combine flour and salt in the bowl of an electric mixer. Using your fingers, rub in the butter. Add water and mix to form a dry dough. Using a dough hook, knead for about 5 minutes, until smooth and elastic. Shape into a ball, wrap in plastic wrap and set aside for an hour or so.

Preheat oven to 220°C.

Wash spinach and any other greens and spin dry. If using large leaves, discard any thick stems and chop leaves.

Place oil and garlic in a large frying pan.

Place over medium heat for a minute or 2 until it starts to sizzle, stir in green onion then spinach or other greens and a good pinch of salt; depending on the size of your pan, you may need to add greens in batches as each lot wilts.

Cover and cook for about 10 minutes, stirring regularly until completely wilted.

Tip into a strainer. When cool enough to handle, squeeze to extract excess liquid then chop roughly.

Transfer to a mixing bowl and set aside to cool.

Mix in Parmigiano. Taste and add salt and pepper; set aside.

Divide dough into 2 portions, 1 slightly larger than the other (about 130g and 110g).

On a lightly floured work surface, roll the larger portion into a rectangle 2–3mm thick.

Transfer to a baking paper-lined baking tray.

Roll remaining dough into a rectangle 2–3mm thick, check it's a similar shape to the larger piece and will sit inside it with a border all around.

Spread spinach filling evenly over the larger piece of dough, leaving a 2cm border all around.

Brush the border of the dough lightly with water.

Drape the smaller piece of dough over the spinach mixture.

Fold the edges of the bottom piece of dough over the edge of the top piece, pleating, pinching and stretching to seal.

Prick the top dough all over with a fork, brush lightly with oil and sprinkle with salt.

Bake for about 30–35 minutes, until well coloured.

Transfer to a wire rack to cool for at least 15 minutes.

Using a serrated knife, cut lengthways down the middle then crossways twice to give 6 pieces.

Serve warm or at room temperature.

ROBERTA'S TIP

If you have beetroot greens leftover from the insalata di mare, use them in the filling.

Insalata di Pomodori con Aceto Balsamico



The province of Reggio Emilia (home of erbazzone) also produces a DOP balsamic vinegar similar to that of Modena; these are the only two regions that produce balsamic vinegar in this traditional way.

So whenever I'm serving a traditional erbazzone in summer, I love to

accompany it with a salad of ripe red tomatoes drizzled with a little balsamic vinegar.

Use a traditionally aged DOP balsamic if you have one, otherwise reduce a younger IGP balsamic to a syrupy consistency.

Depending on the age and quality of the vinegar, you may not need to reduce it at all, or may only need to reduce it briefly, so taste it first, then decide; it should be quite thick and taste sweet with a pleasantly sour undertone.

Tomato Salad with Balsamic Dressing

Insalata di Pomodori con Aceto Balsamico

Serves 2 as a side dish



WATCH THE RECIPE VIDEO

INGREDIENTS

- 200g ripe tomatoes
- Balsamic Vinegar of Modena or Reggio Emilia
- Extra virgin olive oil, for drizzling
- Salt flakes and freshly ground black pepper, to taste

METHOD

Remove tomatoes from the fridge 30–60 minutes before serving so they come to room temperature.

If using a young balsamic vinegar (IGP rather than DOP), place about 2 tablespoons in a small saucepan, bring to the boil, reduce heat to medium–high and boil gently for about 5 minutes, until reduced by about a third to a half. The younger the vinegar, the more you'll need to reduce it; keep tasting, it should have a pleasant sweetness with an underlying acidity. Set aside to cool.

Slice tomatoes, or quarter them if they're cherry tomatoes.

Arrange on a plate, drizzle with oil and sprinkle with salt and pepper.

Drizzle or dot balsamic vinegar over them and around the plate.

Serve.

ROBERTA'S TIP

If tomatoes aren't fully ripe when you get them, leave them in a sunny spot for a few days to ripen. Only make this salad in summer when ripe tomatoes are available as it's pointless with tasteless, underripe tomatoes. If ripe tomatoes are unavailable, serve a radicchio salad instead (see page 40).

Menu 4



Primo
Garganell with
Tomato Sauce
From
Belnspired.au



Secondo
Chicken Salad with
Mostarda di Frutta



Prawn Salad with
Mostarda di Frutta*



Contorno
Borlotti Beans with
Hard-Boiled Egg



Dolce
Torta Paesana
(Chocolate Bread Cake)

RUNNING ORDER

Day Before:

- Make cake (can be done several days before)
- Boil eggs
- Cook bean dish

A Few Hours Before:

- Prep salad ingredients
- Reduce vinegar for salad
- Poach and shred chicken (up to 2 hours before serving)

- Plate bean dish (return to room temp. before serving)
- Assemble salad up to 30 mins before serving

Just Before Serving:

- Heat bread in oven if needed

Insalata di Pollo con Mostarda di Frutta



This is my version of a simple, delicious salad I had in Modena at tiny Hosteria Giusti, a 20-seat restaurant tucked under an ancient deli in the city's historic centre.

We'd been on tour for several days, tasting lots of delicious cheese and salumi and several people in the group requested a simple salad for lunch. We ordered several, and this was the most popular one.

It reminds me of a famous dish from nearby Mantua in Lombardy called insalata di capone alla Stefani.

Both combine mustard fruit and pine nuts with poultry, traditionally a capon (castrated rooster).

The Modenese version uses balsamic vinegar of course – everything in Modena does!

This is a good opportunity to use the younger (and less expensive) IGP Balsamic Vinegar of Modena.

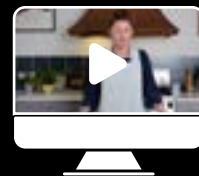
Even a relatively humble IGP vinegar tastes syrupy and delicious when reduced for a few minutes.

Capons are sometimes available from specialty poultry shops, but I find chicken thigh fillets work well too.

Chicken Salad with Mustard Fruits

Insalata di Pollo con Mostarda di Frutta

Serves 2–4



WATCH THE RECIPE VIDEO

INGREDIENTS

- 300g chicken thigh fillets, skin off
- About ¼ cup Balsamic Vinegar of Modena IGP
- 1 green oak leaf lettuce, rinsed and dried
- 3 leaves radicchio, coarsely shredded (optional)
- Extra virgin olive oil, for drizzling
- Salt flakes, to taste
- 2 tablespoons chopped mostarda di frutta (about 40g)
- 1 tablespoon pine nuts, toasted (see page 22)
- Crusty bread, for serving

METHOD

Put chicken in a saucepan of well-salted water (10g salt/litre of water) and place over a high heat.

As soon as it just starts to boil, skim off any froth that's floated to the top, then remove from heat and set aside for about 40 minutes, until chicken is cooked through.

Meanwhile place vinegar in a small saucepan, bring to the boil, reduce heat to medium-high and boil for about 5 minutes, until reduced and slightly syrupy. If using a young vinegar it may need to be reduced by two-thirds, if it's an older vinegar it may be less (see Tip below).

Drain chicken well, then use your fingers to shred the flesh (freeze poaching liquid to use as a light chicken stock if you like).

Tear oak leaf lettuce leaves into bite-sized pieces and place in a large mixing bowl with radicchio (if using).

Add a good drizzle of oil and sprinkle of salt and toss to coat the leaves well.

Arrange lettuce on a platter then arrange chicken on top.

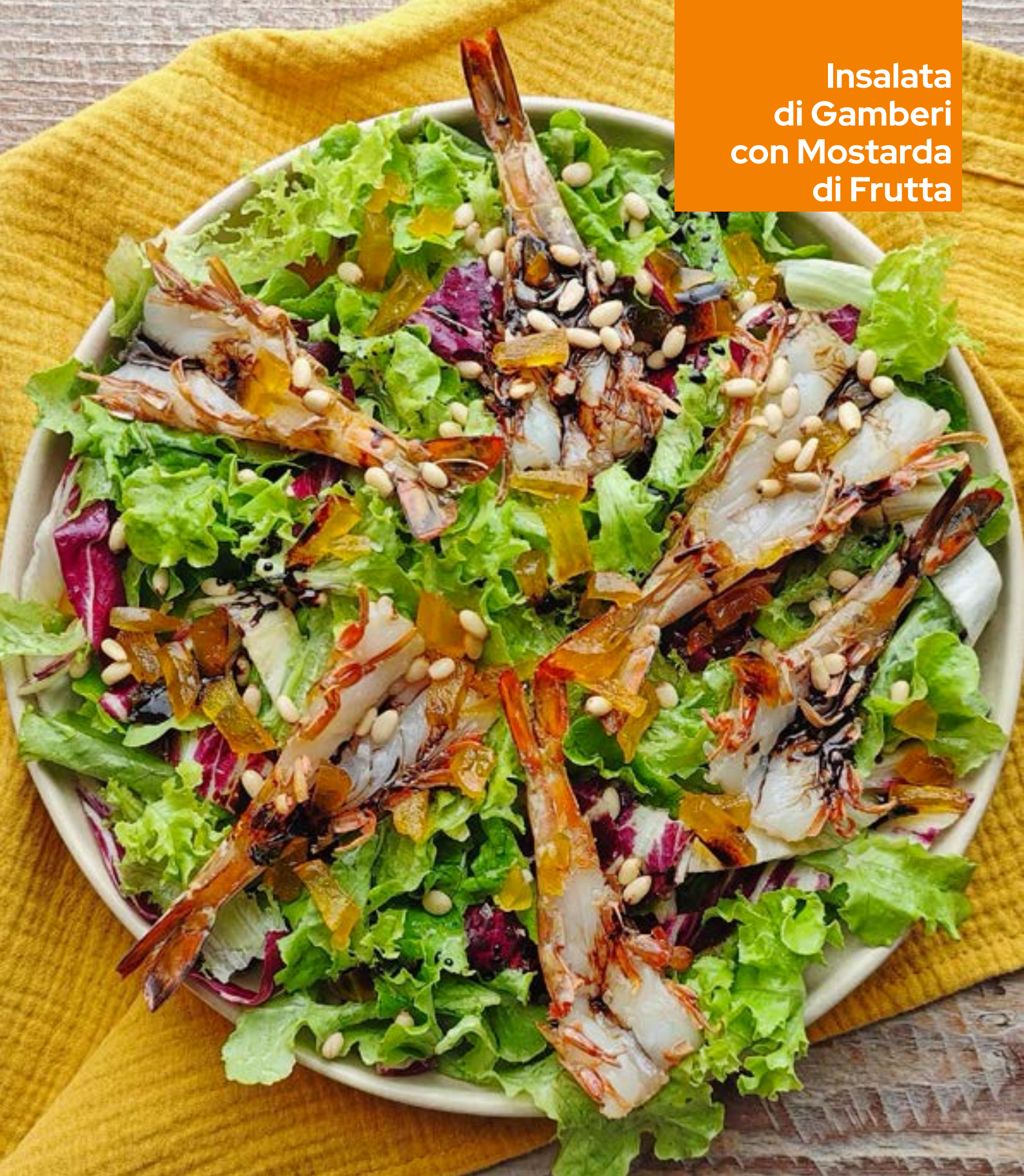
Scatter with mostarda di frutta and pine nuts, drizzle with reduced balsamic vinegar then oil and a sprinkle of salt.

Serve with crusty bread.

ROBERTA'S TIP

Depending on the age and quality of the vinegar you use, you may not need to reduce it at all, or may only need to reduce it briefly. Taste it first, then decide; it should be slightly thick and taste sweet with a pleasantly sour undertone.

Insalata di Gamberi con Mostarda di Frutta



This is the pescatarian version of a simple, delicious chicken salad I had in Modena.

It's the mustard fruit, pine nuts and balsamic vinegar that make it special.

Of course you could use a 12 year old or 25 year old Aceto Balsamico Tradizionale di Modena (DOP) if you

have one handy; in that case there's no need to reduce it, just drip some onto the salad.

However, this recipe is also a good opportunity to use the younger (and less expensive) Balsamic Vinegar of Modena (IGP), as even a relatively humble vinegar tastes syrupy and

delicious when reduced for a few minutes.

Depending on the age of the vinegar you may not need to reduce it for long, or at all.

So taste it first, then decide; it should be quite thick and taste sweet with a pleasantly sour undertone.

Prawn Salad with Mustard Fruits

Insalata di Gamberi con Mostarda di Frutta

Serves 2



PESCETARIAN OPTION

INGREDIENTS

- 6 medium-sized green prawns (U12/15)
- About $\frac{1}{4}$ cup Balsamic Vinegar of Modena IGP
- Salt flakes, to taste
- 1 green oak leaf lettuce, rinsed and dried
- 3 leaves radicchio, coarsely shredded (optional)
- Extra virgin olive oil, for drizzling
- 2 tablespoons chopped mostarda di frutta (about 40g)
- 1 tablespoon pine nuts, toasted (see page 22)
- Crusty bread, for serving

METHOD

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. Set aside for about 30 minutes to come to room temperature.

Meanwhile place vinegar in a small saucepan, bring to the boil, reduce heat to medium-high and boil for about 5 minutes, until reduced and slightly syrupy. If using a young vinegar it may need to be reduced by two-thirds, if it's an older vinegar it may be less (see Tip below).

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

Arrange prawns in the pan, shell side down, in a single layer. Sprinkle with salt and cook for 3–5 minutes, depending on size, until flesh is just opaque.

Meanwhile, tear oak leaf lettuce leaves into bite-sized pieces and place in a large mixing bowl with radicchio (if using).

Add a good drizzle of oil and sprinkle of salt and toss to coat the leaves well.

Arrange lettuce on a platter.

Arrange prawns on top.

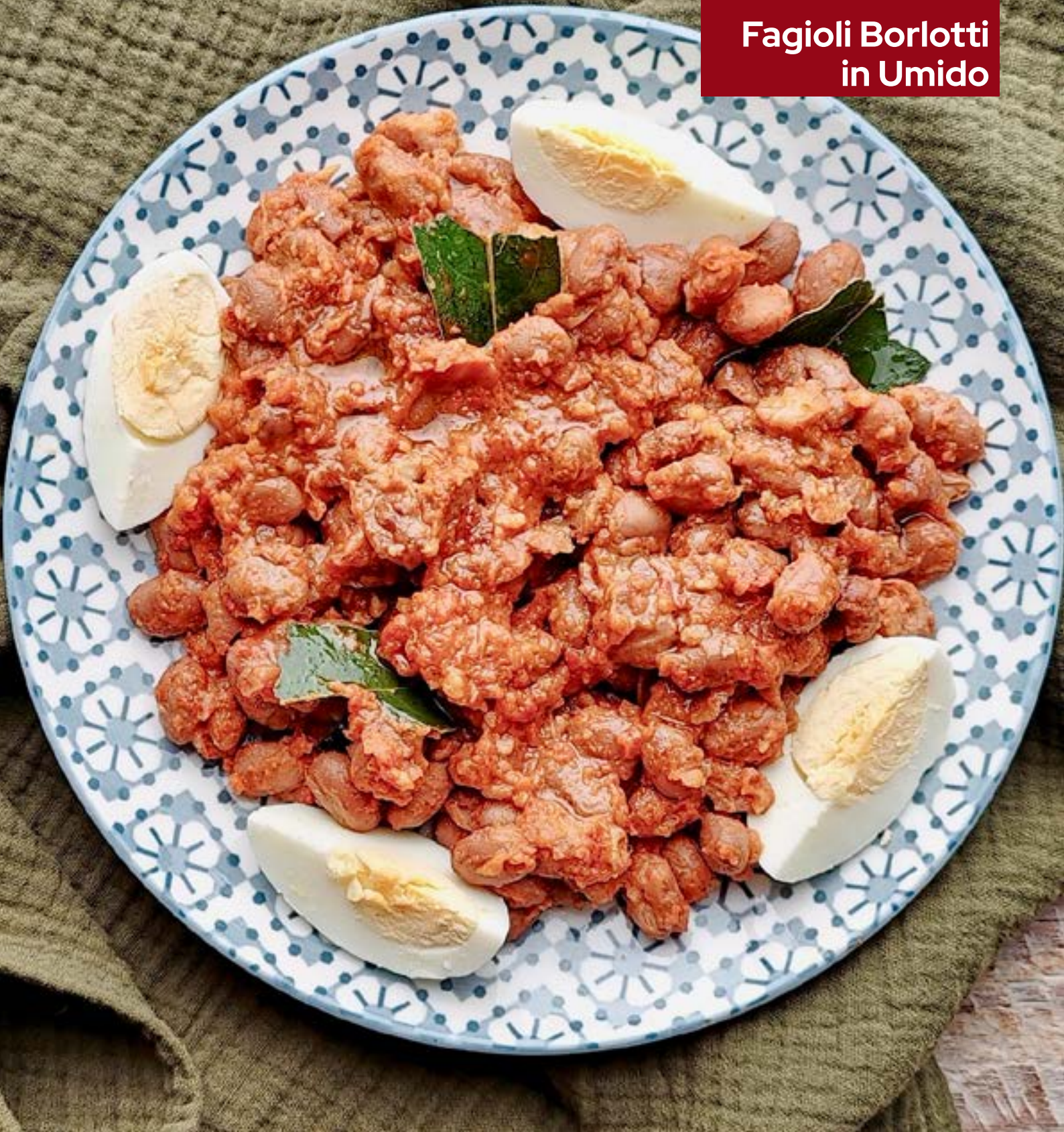
Scatter with mostarda di frutta and pine nuts, drizzle with reduced balsamic vinegar then oil and a sprinkle of salt.

Serve with crusty bread.

ROBERTA'S TIP

Depending on the age and quality of the vinegar you use, you may not need to reduce it at all, or may only need to reduce it briefly. Taste it first, then decide; it should be slightly thick and taste sweet with a pleasantly sour undertone.

Fagioli Borlotti in Umido



Italians love food too much to deprive themselves of flavour even on the Catholic Church's many fast days. Beans have always been the base of tasty non-meat dishes, especially on Fridays.

Traditionally a large pot of fresh borlotti beans would be cooked on Friday morning, some of them were mashed and combined with tomato

and fresh pasta – usually the irregular off-cuts called maltagliati – to make pasta e fagioli soup for lunch.

The remainder were simply dressed with oil and vinegar and served with hard-boiled eggs for dinner.

I love borlotti beans and, after having this dish in a restaurant in Modena, decided to recreate it at home.

Canned legumes are one of my favourite pantry staples and I almost always use them for convenience.

Of course you could double-shell and boil fresh borlotti beans for this recipe if you prefer, just remember to cook them without salt, as it will toughen them, then salt them well before serving.

Borlotti Beans with Boiled Egg

Fagioli Borlotti in Umido

Serves 2 as a side dish



WATCH THE RECIPE VIDEO

INGREDIENTS

- 2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil, plus extra for drizzling
- 1 fresh bay leaf, torn
- 1 clove garlic, crushed
- 1 x 400g can borlotti beans, drained and rinsed
- ¼ cup canned crushed tomato (polpa)
- Salt flakes and freshly ground black pepper, to taste
- 1 egg, hard-boiled

METHOD

Place oil, bay leaf and garlic in a frying pan.

Place over medium heat for a minute or 2 until it starts to sizzle.

Add beans, tomato, salt and pepper and stir to combine well.

Reduce heat to low, cover and simmer for 10 minutes, stirring occasionally and crushing some of the beans just a little with a wooden spoon.

Meanwhile, peel and quarter the egg.

Taste beans and add more salt if needed.

Arrange beans and egg on a serving plate, drizzle with oil and serve.

ROBERTA'S TIP

It's the aroma of the bay leaf that really makes this dish, so use a large fresh leaf, definitely not a dried one!

Torta Paesana



I've had this cake a number of times in Emilia-Romagna, everywhere from Parma to Rimini.

Every time it's been a little different; some versions were more pudding-like, others more cake-like, but each was delicious.

Paesan means villager or peasant, and this is classic cucina povera, upcycling

stale bread into a tasty sweet treat so that nothing is wasted.

Some torte paesane include nuts and dried or candied fruit, some are plain, so use what you have on hand and what you like, such as pine nuts, hazelnuts, almonds, walnuts, raisins, sultanas, candied citrus peel or chopped whole candied fruit.

In neighbouring Lombardy they often add crushed amaretti di Saronno biscuits to the mix.

Soaking time will depend on how stale the bread is and how much crust is on it.

This moist cake keeps for at least a week covered in the fridge.

Chocolate Bread Cake

Torta Paesana

Serves 6–8



WATCH THE RECIPE VIDEO

INGREDIENTS

- 150g stale bread, chopped (see Tip below)
- 500ml milk
- Butter, for greasing
- Plain flour, for dusting
- 1 egg
- ⅓ cup castor sugar
- ¼ cup cocoa powder (see Tip below)
- 1 tablespoon chopped candied citrus peel
- 2 teaspoons pine nuts
- Pinch salt flakes, crushed
- Icing sugar, for dusting

METHOD

Place bread in a mixing bowl.

Heat milk until barely simmering then pour it over the bread, cover and set aside for 30–40 minutes, stirring occasionally, until milk has all been absorbed.

Meanwhile, preheat the oven to 180°C; butter and flour 2 x 10cm springform cake tins or 1 x 20cm tin.

When bread is soft, use an electric mixer to whisk the egg and sugar together until very pale, thick and glossy.

Meanwhile, use a wooden spoon to beat the bread mixture until it's creamy, rubbing any large pieces of crust between your fingers to break them up as you go.

Beat in the cocoa, peel, nuts and salt.

Fold egg mixture into the bread mixture.

Pour into prepared tins.

Bake for 35–40 minutes, until a wooden skewer inserted into the centre comes out virtually clean.

Remove from oven, set aside to cool then remove from tin, cover and refrigerate until needed.

Serve dusted with icing sugar.

ROBERTA'S TIPS

Use whatever stale bread you have on hand, white or wholemeal (I wouldn't use seeded or sliced supermarket bread though); each type will give a slightly different texture or flavour to the cake.

Dutch processed cocoa powder is best as it has a great dark colour and rich flavour.

Thank You To Our Awesome Producers

Good food is as much about awesome 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. At Carriageworks Market every Saturday.

[@altoolives](#)

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 the northside, pay them a visit!

[@forestway_fresh](#)

Game Farm

The Jalaty family produces game birds, including the poussin (spatchcock) we're using this month, using small-scale methods on their farm in Arcadia; they also distribute the Jurassic quail and duck I often use.

[@gamefarm](#)

Get Fish

I source all 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 the 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](#)

AWESOME PRODUCERS (CONTIUNED)



Lario

Gianmarco Balestrini imports the best carnaroli rice (Acquerello), polenta taragna, 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!
[@muttipomodoroau](#)

New Leaf Nursery

If you love cooking, 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 wherever you live.
[@newleafnursery](#)

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. 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](#)

Pepe Saya

Artisanal butter maker Pepe Saya batch churns single origin cream to produce the best quality butter, buttermilk, ghee and crème fraîche. At Carriageworks Market every Saturday.
[@pepesaya](#)

Salumi Australia

Sardinian-born Massimo Scalas makes salumi 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](#)

Simon Johnson

SJ stores in Northbridge, Woollahra, Alexandria and David Jones Bondi and City (as well as Perth and Melbourne) are great for specialty cheeses and other local and imported gourmet foods. You can order online too!
[@simonjohnsonprovidore](#)

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 for home cooks to confidently explore new cuisines and ingredients in their own kitchens.

Each **Online Cooking Class** includes detailed written recipes, step-by-step videos and a full-colour eMagazine with extra recipes and food, wine and travel information.

