

THE ART OF COOKING



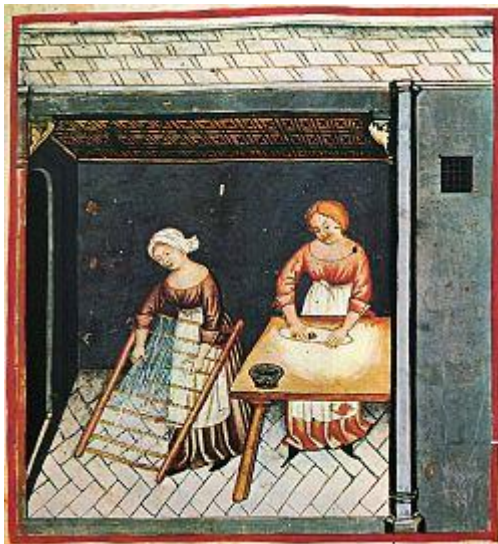
COOKING IN THE MIDDLE AGES



In the Middle Ages the Mediterranean trade in spices, silk and other luxuries from Africa and Asia shipped to Genoa, Venice and Florence, made these cities very rich.

The level of culinary refinement and diversity was especially great when compared to the rest of the continent. Italian cuisine was, and still is, better described as a multitude of highly varied regional cuisines, each with long traditions, and their own specialties. In the Middle Ages local Italian foodstuffs were exported to the New World rather than the other way around, though important foreign products such as vanilla, corn, kidney beans, and tomato were used.

Many Italian typical dishes were invented and refined during the Late Middle Ages and the early Renaissance. “Pasta” was used by everyone by the 13th century, though it was commonly made with rice flour rather than durum wheat; “pizza”, the medieval Italian term for “pie”, and “torte”(cakes) came in many varieties with a wide range of toppings; “polenta” made from French green lentils or barley, “risotto” and a myriad of local or regional variants of sausages and cheese were the main dishes. Grapes, eggs, olive oil and lemons were used as cooking ingredients.



Many recipes we enjoy today as an expression of best Tuscan cuisine often date back to old times and Medieval cuisine.

The Medieval cuisine was essentially based on very simple dishes, sometimes heavily spiced with pepper or ginger. It consisted of very tasty dishes and preservation such as salting, smoking or brine were used. Meals consisted of the first “ancestors” of today’s bread such as porridge oats and” polenta”, followed by vegetables and meat (especially pork and chicken). Sugar, honey and almonds – also used as a thickener in soups – were used along with wine.

ITALIAN CUISINE

Italian cuisine has developed through the centuries and it has roots dating back to the 4th century B.C. Significant changes occurred with the discovery of the New World in the 15th century.

Italian cooks rely chiefly on the quality of ingredients rather than on their elaborate preparation. Ingredients and dishes vary from region to region. Many regional dishes are now eaten throughout the country.

Cheese and wine are the main ingredients of Italian cuisine and “espresso” is very important ,too.

In Italy the traditional breakfast is usually coffee with milk or “cappuccino” and biscuits. Children usually have hot chocolate or hot milk and “croissants “ , toasted bread or “fette biscottate”(melba toast) with jam or “Nutella” .Some people have an espresso and “croissants “in a cafe’.

The main typical Italian food is” pasta “and “pizza”:

1. PASTA was first cooked in Sicily in the 12th century . “Pasta” is generally a simple dish. There are many types of “ pasta” such as “spaghetti”, “maccheroni”, “ penne”and” tagliolini “. It is usually served with tomato or meat sauce but there are lots of pasta recipes. Pasta dishes are served as a first course in Italy .



2. PIZZA is made with pizza dough topped with tomato sauce and cheese or with a selection of meats, vegetables and dressings . Pizza was invented in Naples ,in the south of Italy, and it is eaten everywhere in the world nowadays .



In Italy the main typical alcoholic drinks are red or white wine and “Limoncello”, which is an Italian lemon liqueur mainly produced in Southern Italy.

“Limoncello” is the second most popular liqueur in Italy and it has recently become popular in other parts of the world. Restaurants in the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, Australia, and New Zealand are now increasingly offering “Limoncello”.

TUSCAN CUISINE



Tuscan cooking is still genuine, and it is easy to find good restaurants which serve typical local dishes. The basic elements of the dishes are the good olive oil, and the wines. The most famous red wines are the excellent **Chianti**, and **Brunello di Montalcino**. The most famous white wines are the well-known Vernaccia di San Gimignano and **Bianco dell'Elba**.

Most Tuscan **meals** begin with **Crostini**, slices of bread that lightly toasted and topped with anything from chicken liver to c paste. Traditional first courses are **pasta** dishes, various kind **soups**, such as **zuppa di fagioli** and **ribollita**, based vegetables and **bread** and **panzanella**, a soup made with br soaked in vinegar with vegetables.



On the coast, **fish** dishes are very popular, for example **cacciucco**, a highly seasoned stew, a speciality of the city of Livorno. As far as second courses are concerned, typical Tuscan dishes are: **trippa**, **lampredotto** and **pork liver**. **Sausages**, **salami**, **finocchiona**, **soppresata** and **ham** are excellent. **Bistecca alla fiorentina**, a two-inch cut of sirloin broiled rare, and roast **arista** or **loin pork** are excellent, too. **Pecorino cheese** is also famous.

Florence's sweet bread (**schacciata con l'uva**) has been baked since Etruscan times and **zuccotto**, an elegant dome shaped cake filled with ricotta cream, are traditional. Prato is famous for its almond biscuits called **cantuccini**. **Vin Santo** is one of the region's renowned sweet wines often served with **cantuccini** di Prato. Sieneese sweets are famous-almond and honey are at the basis of **panforte**, **ricciarelli** and **torta di Cecco**.



THE IMPORTANCE OF MEALS AS MEETING PLACES



Much of Italian life revolves around the family dinner table. Italian people love “gioie della tavola”. The first thing people think of when they think of Italy is the joy, warmth and magic created around the Italian table. The dinner table is one of the most important images and metaphors in Italian art, celebrated in our greatest paintings and films, from the Renaissance to the present day. The deepest ties of love and friendship are developed and strengthened around a dinner table.

Important meals occur on special occasions like Easter, Christmas, birthdays and religious celebrations; on such occasions meals usually begin around 1.00 p.m. and last for hours. Most families have starters, “pasta” as the first course and meat for the main course. “Pasta” is often seasoned with a simple tomato sauce or meat sauce or simply butter and parmesan: the second course consists of “cotolette” (breaded and fried beef, chicken or turkey cutlets), or stewed meat, or braised beef. Salad or vegetables are often served along with the meat course. Cakes and fruit are served as a dessert. At the end of the meal people have “espresso” and a “digestivo”, such as grappa or limoncello.

DINING ETIQUETTE

Formal Italian meals usually follow this order:

Starters

soup

pasta

main dish(meat or fish)

salad

cheese

dessert

fruit

espresso and after-dinner drinks



- If an invitation says the dress is informal, wear stylish clothes that are still rather formal, i.e., jacket and tie for men and an elegant dress for women.
- Punctuality is not mandatory. You may arrive 15 minutes late if invited to dinner.
- If you are invited to a meal, bring wine or chocolates or a cake.

TABLE MANNERS

- Remain standing until invited to sit down. You may be shown to a particular seat .
- Table manners are Continental - the fork is held in the left hand and the knife in the right while eating.
- Follow the lead of the hostess - she sits at the table first, starts eating first, and is the first to stand up at the end of the meal.
- The host gives the first toast.
- Do not keep your hands in your lap during the meal; however, do not rest your elbows on the table either.
- It is acceptable to leave a small amount of food on your plate.
- Pick up cheese with your knife rather than your fingers.
- You may be offered several different white or red wines; and in this case, the finest red or white wine is usually served first, so that you may appreciate it best. A sweeter wine may be served with dessert.
- The most common toast is "salute" (to your health), or, more informally, "cin-cin"
- Do not begin eating until the host says. "Buon appetito!"
- Bread is usually served without butter, you can place your bread on the side of your main plate or on the table throughout the meal.
- Pass all dishes to your left.
- If you are served pasta, use a fork, place the entire forkful into your mouth at once.
- The most honored position is in the middle at each side of the table, with the most important guest seated immediately to the right of the host (women to the right of the host, and men to the right of the hostess). If there is a hosting couple, one will be seated on each side of the table.
- The fork and spoon above your plate are for dessert. There are often many additional pieces of cutlery: there are separate glasses provided at your setting for water and white and red wine (after-dinner drink glasses come out after dinner). If you have a small plate for "antipasto", a large one for the main course, and a bowl for soup or past



CROSTINI

Crostini are a very common starter: every nice Tuscan restaurant will offer you a dish of crostini.



Ingredients: chicken livers, pickled capers, half a cup of stock, half a glass of Vin Santo, one red onion, 2 or 3 anchovies, olive oil.

Fry the onion finely chopped with some olive oil in a pan. As the onion browns, add the livers and let them blanch; add Vin Santo and let it cook for twenty minutes. Add some water. Mince the livers. Add the oil and their sauce. Add the minced capers and the anchovies. Serve the sauce on toasted Tuscan bread.

BRUSCHETTA

Ingredients: bread, garlic, salt, tomatoes, basil and olive oil

Bruschetta is one of the typical starters in Tuscany. Slice the Tuscan bread, toast it, rub some garlic on the slices, put a little olive oil and salt on them. Chop the tomatoes in small cubes and put them on the bread with olive oil, salt and basil.



PANZANELLA

Slice the bread and soak it in enough cold water to wet it thoroughly for 15 minutes. Squeeze out the excess moisture and crumble the bread into a bowl. Add some cut tomatoes, thinly sliced onions, and lots of fresh basil leaves. Season with a tiny bit of salt, olive oil and vinegar. Toss and refrigerate. Panzanella is delicious when served chilled, not icy cold. Add a few drops of olive oil and vinegar before serving.

There are countless variations of this dish: some people add cucumbers, olives and cheese (pecorino or feta), or lettuce, radishes, hearts of celery; or even sliced, hardboiled eggs or chunks of tuna fish in olive oil. If you cannot find fresh basil, dry or frozen is fine too, but you will definitely taste the difference. Panzanella is a real summer dish.



FARRO SOUP WITH BEANS

This is a recipe of a very common soup in **Tuscany**.

Ingredients:

2 garlic cloves
1 carrot
1 sprig of parsley
1 sprig of basil
1 sage leaf
half red onion
50 g bacon
200 g dried beans
2 tablespoons of tomato purée
salt
extra virgin olive oil
250 g "farro"
(spelt)



The day before preparing the soup, soak the beans in water and cook them the morning after with a garlic clove and a sage leaf. Add salt at the end.

Fry the minced bacon, olive oil and brushed garlic, carrot, parsley, basil, onion. Mix 2/3 of the beans and create a fine cream, which must be added as soon as the bacon fat melts. Then add the remaining whole beans with some tomato sauce. After a few minutes add the beans cooking water, salt and let it boil for 45 minutes over a low flame. Afterwards add the spelt, which has to be previously washed.

The cooking time of the spelt depends on the kind of grain. It usually takes from 30 to 40 minutes. When ready, sprinkle with some olive oil and some pepper to taste.

TRUFFLED PARMESAN RISOTTO



Ingredients

500 g rice
60 g butter
100 g grated parmesan
50 g white truffles (sliced or paté)

Cook the rice traditionally and add grated parmesan, butter and a half of the truffle. Mix and serve well warm garnishing the plates with slices of white truffles .

RIBOLLITA

Ribollita is a typical Tuscan "poor dish", once very common.

Now it is a kind of speciality you can find in the menu of restaurants. In the past it was common to prepare a big amount of this soup, in order to last a few days (this is the reason why it was called "ribollita" that means "boiled again"). Indeed once the soup was prepared - in the typical clay pot - was heated the day after in the oven covered with a layer of very thin slices of onion.



Ingredients: Tuscan bread (unsalted), fresh "cannellini" beans, chard fresh, a bunch of back cabbage, savoy cabbage, carrots, potatoes, stalks celery, a spoon of tomato sauce, red tomatoes, thymus, onion, garlic, salt and pepper

Cut the vegetables in small pieces; boil the "cannellini" beans and mash them with their cooking water. Leave some of them aside: fry them with the onion and the oil. When the onion is bleached, add the tomatoes and a spoon of tomato sauce. Cook them on medium heat and after a few minutes add the mashed beans and the whole ones. Mix and add all the other vegetables. Salt and pepper to taste, then add the thyme. Simmer for 2 hours after adding 6 ladles of water. The soup is served on a bed of at least 2 slices of toasted bread rubbed previously with garlic.

FLORENTINE STEAK



A good Florentine steak requires meat which has been well-aged. It should be about 2.5 cm thick, not having been beaten .

First prepare the charcoal fire. When one side of the steak is cooked, turn it over and season the grilled side with salt and pepper. Then turn it again to dissolve the salt so that it is evenly distributed and any excess runs off. Remove the steak from the grill. Arrange it on a hot dish, accompanied by fresh olive oil, if desired .



TAGLIATA

The secret of an excellent “tagliata” is the breed of cattle: the Chianina beef.

Ingredients: Thick steak with the bones, salt, hot coals, freshly cracked pepper.

Chianina beef is the huge white oxen raised in the Val di Chiana, near Arezzo. Their meat is tender. Once you have your steak and your coals, set your grill about 4 inches (10 cm) above them and let it heat for a few minutes. The cooking time should only take a few minutes, and the steak should still be rare inside. How much time? This depends upon your fire and your taste. The dressing is usually lemon and green salad with tomatoes or other vegetables. Other possibilities for side dishes include fried potatoes and freshly boiled white beans (“cannellini”) drained well and seasoned with olive oil, salt, and pepper.



WILD BOAR CASSEROLE WITH POLENTA OR CREAMY MASHED POTATOES

Ingredients:

- 2lb generous cubes diced shoulder
- 2-3 tbs oil (or butter)
- 1 tbs flour
- 1/2-pint red wine

Marinate:

- 2 cloves of garlic
- 2 tbs spiced oil
- 1 diced onion
- 2 tbs spiced vinegar/wine vinegar
- 3-4 sage leaves, sprig rosemary leaves, finely chopped
- 2 tbs Masala(optional)
- 2 tbs red wine
- 2-3 cloves
- 1 1/2 tsp salt
- 2-3 crushed juniper berries
- fresh milled pepper



Mix the meat with all the marinade ingredients and marinate in cool place for 24 hours. Drain from the marinade, pat dry. Heat the butter or oil in a heavy frying pan and brown the meat all over, sprinkling in the flour to brown a little too. Do not overfill the pan or the meat may stew, not brown, and you must keep the heat up. Remove to a casserole, preferably earthenware, Deglaze the pan with the marinade and wine and pour over the meat. Cover closely, cook in a very slow oven (250F/130C/gas 1) for about 2 1/2 - 3 hours until the meat is very tender, and the sauce reduced. Cook with the lid off if not well reduced for the sauce should be little more than a sticky substance that coats the meat. Degrease any excess fat and serve with polenta or creamy mashed potatoes.

CACCIUCCO (FISH SOUP)

Ingredients

1/2 kg cuttlefish
1/2 kg octopus
1/2 kg
mixed fish (gurnard,
sea-robin, Scorpio
fish)
1/2 kg
mixed shellfish (clam
s and mussels)
1/2 kg of prawns and
shrimp
5 sage leaves
1 chilli
1 tbs of tomato paste
2 dl of white wine
12 slices of Tuscan
bread
2 dl extra virgin olive oil
salt and pepper



Preparation

In a saucepan , heat olive oil and fry the garlic, sage and chilli. Add the roughly chopped octopus and cuttlefish. Pour in wine and add tomato paste. Let it simmer for 20 minutes and stir occasionally.

In another saucepan add the mixed fish and the chopped dogfish. The fish heads should be cooked in broth with herbs and then blended. This puree which is quite dense, should be added to the first saucepan giving the soup a greater density and flavour. Simmer over a medium flame.

When the octopus and cuttlefish are tender, add the crustaceans and the mixed seafood with shells. Continue to cook for 7-8 minutes until the mussels and clams open.

Place the bread, which should be toasted, rubbed with a garlic clove and seasoned with pepper in the bottom of the soup tureen. With a ladle, spoon the fish and sauce into the bowl.

FAGIOLI AL FIASCO

“Fagioli al fiasco” means "**Beans in a flask**". In the past Tuscan farmers used to cook beans in a flask. They would place a glass jar in a corner of the fireplace on hot ashy embers before going to bed and would have freshly cooked beans the next morning.

Ingredients:

cannellini beans
extra virgin olive oil
garlic
sage leaves
salt and pepper



Soak the beans the night before. Place the beans, oil, garlic, and sage into a bottle and cover with water until the bottle is 3/4 full. The bottle should be closed with a wadded cotton ball in order to allow some of the steam to filter out. Cook. When the beans are ready, discard the garlic and sage leaves. Add some fresh olive oil, salt and some freshly ground pepper.

ASPARAGUS FLORENTINE STYLE



Wash and scrape the asparagus. Tie them into a bunch and put them in the pot in a standing- upright position. Add cold water until it covers just the white part of the stems, turn on the heat and cook.

Tie Check after 15 minutes: Let cool to lukewarm in the water and then drain. Cut off the white part of the stems. Melt the butter in a skillet and add the asparagus and cook over a low flame for 5 minutes. Remove. Fry some eggs in the same skillet, salt and pepper to taste. Arrange the asparagus on a platter , put the eggs on top and sprinkle with a generous amount of grated parmesan cheese. First of all, the skillet should not be too big, and the butter should be melted, but not smoking. Crack the egg and drop only the white into the pan; keep the yolk in half of the shell. When the white has set and is almost done, drop the yolk into the middle and sprinkle with salt and pepper. The yolk should remain soft and creamy.

RICE FRITTERS



Put 3 cups of rice with 3 cups of cold water, 2 cups of cold milk, and some lemon and orange rinds cut into pieces in a pot. Cook over a low flame for 15 minutes, stirring with a wooden spoon. Add 300 g/10 oz sugar and continue cooking and stirring, over the low flame, for 15 minutes more. Before removing the saucepan from the heat, add about ¼ cup of Marsala wine and a cup of raisins (previously soaked in water and squeezed out). Allow to cool, then remove the citrus rinds. Stir in one cup of flour, 5 whole eggs, 5 yolks, and a pinch of baking powder. Stir. Drop spoonfuls of the mixture into deep hot olive oil and fry the fritters until they are golden. Drain on paper towels and roll in sugar to coat. Serve hot.

CASTAGNACCIO

Castagnaccio is an ancient recipe, which has a very delicious and tasty flavour with a few genuine ingredients and even without sugar.



Ingredients:

- 300 g chestnut flour
- half a litre of water
- a handful of raisins
- a handful of pine nuts
- a handful of walnut kernels
- a sprig of rosemary
- olive oil
- a pinch of salt

Put the raisins in a bowl of hot water. Sift the flour in a mixing bowl, add a pinch of salt and cold water very slowly, mixing with a whisk, in order to create a mixture without lumps. Let it rest for 30 minutes. Fry a sprig of rosemary in 3 spoons of olive oil, and then pour it on the bottom of a baking pan with the rosemary. Add all the ingredients and spread them over the baking pan in a homogeneous way, then pour the flour mix, add 3 more spoons of olive oil, sprinkled on top. Bake it for 30-40 minutes at 220°C.

RICE CAKE

Ingredients:

230 grams of rice
one litre of milk
140 grams of sugar
pinch of salt
60 grams of raisins
3 eggs
Fresh fruit
berry syrup
one tablespoon of brown sugar

Boil the rice in the milk. Meanwhile beat the eggs with the sugar, the pinch of salt and the raisins. Mix it with the rice. Grease an oven pan with butter and then sprinkle a spoon of flour on the butter. Heat the oven to 180/200 C and after pouring the mixture into the pan ,put it in the oven for about 30 minutes. After the cake has cooled down, you can top it with the syrup, and sliced fresh fruit such as peaches, figs, grapes and strawberries and sprinkle with brown sugar.



PANFORTE

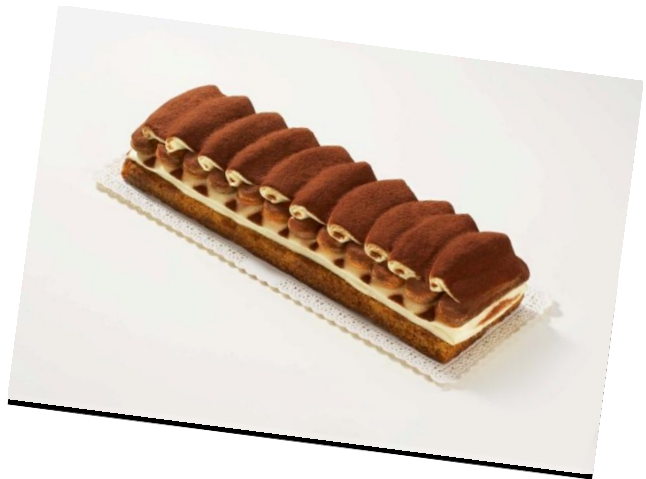
This is the king of Sienese sweets. Like **ricciarelli**, **cavallucci**, **copate** and **pampepati**, it is made according to a really old recipe. The ingredients include small amounts of the oriental spices that were already being imported during the Middle Ages, from cinnamon to cloves, from nutmeg to pepper. The mixture is based on honey that is slowly heated on the stove with sweet and bitter almonds. Then flour , candied citron and other citrus fruits , spices and confectioners' sugar are blended into the honey, the mixture is then spread over a sheet of wafer that lines a pan and baked in the oven, then the finished cake is sprinkled with sugar.



TIRAMISU'

Ingredients:

4 whipped egg whites
500 g mascarpone
5 egg yolks
cocoa powder
sugar (about 5 tablespoons)
coffee
sponge finger biscuits (e.g. lady fingers)
chocolate chips



Whip the sugar and egg yolks until you get a soft mousse. Add the mascarpone slowly, and then the whipped egg whites, very gently. Lay out the biscuits in a large dish and sprinkle them with coffee. They should be neither soaked nor still dry. Spread the cream over the biscuits, sprinkle with cocoa powder and chocolate chips. Repeat the procedure once again in order to have a two-layer dessert. Keep refrigerated. Serve cool.

PANNA COTTA

Ingredients:

800 ml cream
200 ml milk
100 g sugar
15 g gelatine
Vanilla Bean



Melt sugar with vanilla and cream in a pot on a low flame. Meanwhile, soak gelatine in cold water for a few minutes. Add milk and drained gelatine to the cream. Pour the mix into a wet mould or into some little moulds. Keep refrigerated for at least 12 hours. Serve with fruit, chocolate, caramel sauce.

BOMBOLONI

Ingredients:

25 g dried yeast
200 g milk
100 g sugar
Salt
500 g plain white flour
One lemon
2 teaspoons vanilla flavouring
80 g butter
Extra virgin olive oil



Put the dried yeast, the hot milk, half of the sugar and a pinch of salt into a bowl and mix together carefully with a wooden spoon. Pour into a baking bowl and add the sifted flour; the grated rind of the lemon, some vanilla and the melted butter. Work the dough well until it is smooth and elastic. Cover and leave to rise in a warm place for two hours.

Roll the dough out to a thickness of about one centimetre; use a glass to cut out rounds about five centimetres in diameter. Gather up the remaining pieces, roll out and cut many rounds until you have used up all the dough. Cover with a cloth and leave to rise for an hour. Fry in hot oil, turning them until they are golden on both sides. Remove the doughnuts one by one, drain on kitchen paper and sprinkle with sugar. If you like, you can fill them with jam, confectioner's custard or chocolate cream.

SCHIACCIATA ALLA FIORENTINA

Ingredients: 1 orange
4 Eggs
a pinch salt
500 g/ 1 lb flour
150 g/ 6 oz lard
20 g/ 1 oz Brewer's yeast
Vanilla flavoured confectioner's sugar



Dissolve the yeast in water. Put the flour into a large mixer until the dough separates from the side of the bowl. Cover and let it rise in a dry place for 1 hour. When the dough has doubled knead and add the yolks, the sugar, 100g/4 oz lard, a pinch of salt and the finely grated orange peel and mix until thoroughly blended. Use the rest of the lard to grease a rectangular baking pan with high edges. Spread the dough evenly so that it is 2-3 cm/1 in thick. Now, here is the secret: let it rise for 2 hours. Bake at 200° C/400 F for 30 minutes. Remove and dust very generously with vanilla flavoured confectioner's sugar.





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5 A Relazioni Internazionali per il Marketing

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