

SICILIAN CAPONATA

(Serves approximately 4)

INGREDIENTS

1 large eggplants
6 oz cherry tomatoes
1 medium sweet yellow onion
4 celery stalks
4 Tbsp tomato puree
3 oz Sicilian olives, pitted
1 Tbsp capers
1 Tbsp sugar
1 Tbsp white wine vinegar
2 Tbsp pine nuts
10 basil leaves
Extra Virgin Olive Oil, as needed
Salt, as needed

METHOD

1. Cut the eggplant into 1/2" cubes.
2. Heat about 2" of extra virgin olive oil in a shallow pan and fry the eggplant in small batches until dark golden brown. Remove with a skimmer and set aside to drain on paper towels.
3. Thinly slice onion, halve cherry tomatoes and dice celery.
4. Pour about a 1/4 cup of Extra Virgin Olive oil in a large saucepan, add the onion and sauté over low heat till it becomes golden brown.
5. Add tomatoes and celery to the pan with the onions and, after 5 minutes, add tomato puree, olives, capers, pine nuts and the previously cooked eggplants and mix well.
6. Cook for about 5 minutes, then add sugar and a pinch of salt and stir well allowing sugar to dissolve. Add vinegar and raise the heat to let the vinegar evaporate (another 3 minutes or so)
7. Remove from heat and add hand torn basil leaves.
8. Caponata is traditionally served cold and tastes its best when prepared at least a day ahead

PECORINO CHEESE CRISP (AKA FRICO)

(MAKES ABOUT 16 PIECES)

INGREDIENTS

3/4 cup Pecorino Romano (grated)
1/4 cup Parmigiano Reggiano (grated)
Freshly cracked black pepper

METHOD

1. Preheat oven to 400 and line a baking sheet with a silicone mat or parchment paper.
2. Add cheese and fresh cracked black pepper to a bowl and stir to combine.
3. Spoon mixture (1 heaping tablespoon at the time) onto the baking sheet, leaving at least 2" of space between each mound.
4. Bake for 5 minutes. Timing is approximate and will largely depend on your oven. Crisps are done when bubbly and browned.
5. Remove from oven and allow to cool.

LAMB SOTT'OLIO

(Makes 4 -4 oz mason jars)

INGREDIENTS

4 lamb tenderloin
4 garlic cloves
4 sprigs fresh rosemary
4 sprigs fresh thyme
4 sprigs fresh oregano
Salt
Pepper
Extra Virgin Olive Oil

METHOD

1. Pat dry the lamb tenderloin and rub with salt, freshly cracked black pepper and a very small amount of olive oil. Make sure the whole tenderloin is evenly coated.
2. Heat a skillet (preferably cast iron) on high heat until a couple drops of water splashed onto the skillet will sizzle.
3. Place the tenderloins in the pan and let them cook for about 40 seconds per side. You want the lamb to be evenly browned but not overcooked. The whole process should not take longer than 3 minutes in total. Internal temperature should be between 135°F and 140°F
4. Remove from heat and let meat rest, loosely covered with aluminum foil.
5. Once completely cooled, wrap each piece in plastic food wrap and refrigerate for a few hours (this makes slicing easier).
6. Thinly slice the lamb. Also thinly slice garlic and remove the stalks from the herbs.
7. Into the mason jars, add a couple slices of lamb, a couple slices of garlic, a bit of every herb, and a splash of E.V. olive oil. Continue layering till you have used all the meat. Press down in the jars, if necessary and divide remaining garlic and herbs equally among the jars, top with enough olive oil to completely cover the meat. Cover the jars with their lids and store in the refrigerator overnight.
8. It can be kept in the fridge safely for about 4 days, as long as the meat is fully submerged in oil.

INSALATA DI FARRO E CECI

(serves approximately 4)

INGREDIENTS

12 oz farro
1 lb cooked chickpeas
8 oz artichoke hearts, drained
8 oz roasted bell peppers
8 oz sun dried tomatoes, drained
½ red onion
2-3 lemons
1 Tablespoon tahini
Fresh basil
4-8 oz feta cheese
Salt
Extra Virgin Olive Oil

METHOD

1. Rinse farro under cold water cook according to specific package directions and to the desired tenderness. Make sure cooking water is properly salted.
2. Rough chop artichokes, roasted peppers and sun-dried tomatoes. Finely dice the onion. Add all prepared vegetables and drained chickpeas into a large mixing bowl.
3. prepare dressing by adding tahini, ¼ cup olive oil, a pinch of salt, juice and zest of 2 lemons into a blender and process till you have a smooth emulsion.
4. When farro is ready, rinse again under cold water to stop the cooking process, drain well and add to the bowl with the vegetable. add dressing and fresh basil and mix well to combine. If necessary, add more salt, lemon juice, and olive oil to taste.
5. Cover and refrigerate, possibly overnight, before serving.
6. At the time of serving, add crumbled feta cheese, more fresh basil, and a splash of olive oil.

CHERRY TOMATO SORBET

(Serves approximately 4)

INGREDIENTS

1 lb cherry tomatoes
1 Tablespoon tomato paste (or 1 tablespoon of sugar)
1 teaspoon salt
2 tablespoons unflavored vodka
Juice and zest of a small lemon
Fresh basil & cherry tomatoes to garnish

METHOD

1. Process all ingredients in a blender at the highest speed to obtain a fine puree.
2. Transfer mixture in a shallow container (a cake pan will work perfectly) cover and put in the freezer.
3. After an hour, open the container and stir. Continue to stir occasionally, while the mixture freezes until you have a fluffy consistency.

MOZZARELLA MOUSSE

(Serves approximately 4)

INGREDIENTS

1 lb fresh mozzarella in water
1/4 cup heavy whipping cream
1/4 Extra Virgin Olive Oil
Salt & Pepper

METHOD

1. Drain mozzarella, cut it into chunks then place it in a blender with a pinch of salt and start processing slowly adding oil. When the mixture is smooth, stir in the heavy cream to achieve the desired consistency. Add cracked pepper to taste before serving.

BASIL INFUSED OLIVE OIL

INGREDIENTS

1 cup Extra Virgin Olive Oil
2 oz fresh basil
Salt

METHOD

2. Add oil, basil and salt into a blender and process till basil is finely pureed.
3. Transfer mixture to a small saucepan and heat over low heat for about 5 minutes. Oil just needs to be heated, keep the flame at the lowest possible.
4. Line a sieve with a muslin cloth, place it over a glass jar and let the oil filter through the sieve naturally, without pressing or squeezing.
5. Store in the refrigerator, in a covered glass jar.

OCTOPUS CARPACCIO

INGREDIENTS

2.2 lbs octopus, thoroughly cleaned and washed
1 carrot
½ medium onion
4 garlic cloves
1 teaspoon whole peppercorns
1 teaspoon juniper berries (can be omitted)
1 bay leaf
½ lemon with peel on and seeds removed
1 teaspoon salt
optional: zest of two lemons and 1 garlic clove finely minced.

METHOD

1. Fill a pot large enough to accommodate the octopus, with water, add all ingredients EXCEPT for octopus and bring to a rolling boil over high heat.
2. At this point, holding the octopus by its head, dip the tentacles in the boiling water for a few seconds and lift them up. Repeat 3 or 4 times to allow tentacles to curl. Set the octopus aside and reduce the heat.
3. Add the octopus back into the pot when water is simmering and cook gently. cooking time will largely depend on the size of the octopus (calculate 30 minutes for an octopus weighing roughly 1.1 lbs.). At the end of this time, you should be able to stick a fork into the thickest part of the tentacles but still have a bit of resistance. Cover the pot and let the octopus cool off completely in its cooking water.
4. Meanwhile prepare the molds. As strange as it may seem, in Italy, when preparing it at home, clean, plastic water bottles are used. You can however use silicone molds, or any other mold lined with plastic wrap. To use plastic bottles, just carefully cut the bottle to remove the neck and be left with a cylindrical mold.
5. Once octopus is cool, separate the tentacles and cut down the larger pieces and place them in a bowl, add finely minced garlic, grated lemon zest and a bit more salt, if needed (this step can be omitted).
6. Start filling the bottle with whole tentacles alternating them with pieces of the other meat, pressing down after each addition. This is very important, or it will be very difficult to mold the carpaccio into a solid piece. Once you have filled the bottle, keep the octopus pressed inside by tightly wrapping the whole bottle with plastic wrap.
7. Store in the refrigerator for at least 8 hours.
8. To unmold simply cut the plastic bottle and extract what at this point will look much like a summer sausage.
9. Thinly slice and arrange on platter. Garnish with parsley, lemon wedges and drizzle with olive oil or with a garlic citronette.

CHILLED POTATO PUREE

INGREDIENTS

2.2 lbs potatoes (golden Yukon or Red)
2 tablespoons lemon juice
¼ cup olive oil
¼ cup minced parsley
teaspoon of minced garlic
salt & pepper to taste

METHOD

1. Peel potatoes and cut them into chunks, put them in a pot and cover them with cold water. Add 1 tablespoon of salt and bring water to a boil. Cook till potatoes are fork tender and drain them.
2. Pass the potatoes through a potato ricer or mash them with a fork while still hot. Immediately add the oil mixing with a whisk, add the rest of the ingredients, salt and pepper to taste and transfer to a container to be chilled overnight.

SICILIAN PAN D'ARANCIA (Whole Orange Cake)

INGREDIENTS

1 ½ cup granulated sugar
3 medium eggs at room temperature
¾ cup light olive oil (or other vegetable oil with a mild flavor profile)
1 large organic orange (about 10 oz)
¼ cup fresh squeezed orange juice
1 ½ cup almond flour
1 ½ cup cake flour
3 ½ teaspoon baking powder
¼ teaspoon salt
Orange glaze
1 cup freshly squeezed orange juice
½ cup powdered sugar

METHOD

Preheat oven at 350°F
Butter and flour a 9" round cake pan or a loaf pan
Wash the orange thoroughly*, cut into pieces, remove all seeds but not the peel, and puree it along with the extra orange juice using a blender or food processor. Set it aside.
Combine cake flour, salt and baking powder and sift twice. Set it aside.
Add eggs and sugar to the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with a whisk and mix at medium speed until the mixture becomes light and fluffy (should appear tripled in size)
With mixer at medium speed, start adding oil in a slow stream.
Without turning the mixer off, add the orange puree.
Turn speed to low and add the dry ingredients one spoon at the time, alternating between cake flour mixture and almond flour. Make sure the mixture is well blended but avoid overworking it.
Pour mixture in the prepared cake pan and bake at 350°F for about 40 minutes.
Meanwhile prepare a simple glaze by mixing 1 cup of orange juice with powdered sugar
Remove from the oven and let it cool just enough to be able to unmold it. While cake is still warm, pour the glaze evenly on the top.

DARK CHOCOLATE MOUSSE

INGREDIENTS

1 ½ cup heavy whipping cream, very cold
6 oz good quality dark chocolate (60% cocoa min.)

METHOD

1. Finely chop chocolate and set aside.
2. Heat 1/2 cup of the cream in a microwave-safe bowl for 1 minute. Add the reserved chocolate and stir just enough to combine. Wait about 5 minutes to let the chocolate melt then whisk until smooth and glossy. Set aside.
3. Place the remaining 1 cup cold cream in a medium bowl. Beat with an electric hand mixer or with a whisk by hand until soft peaks form.
4. Set aside about ½ a cup of the whipped cream, cover it and refrigerate it until ready to garnish the mousse.
5. Gently fold half of the whipped cream into the chocolate mixture, using a silicone spatula. Fold in the rest of the cream
6. Divide the mousse into 4 -4oz ramekins or dessert glasses and refrigerate for at least one hour before serving.
7. Garnish with the reserved whipped cream

BLOOD ORANGE COULIS

INGREDIENTS

1 cup freshly squeezed blood orange juice.
½ cup granulated sugar
1 tablespoon cornstarch
zest of 1 blood orange, grated

METHOD

1. Combine ¼ cup of the blood orange juice with the cornstarch into a small bowl and mix well
2. Add remaining orange juice, sugar, and orange zest in a small saucepan, stir and bring mixture to a boil.
3. Add the diluted cornstarch to the boiling mixture and whisk constantly till the sauce thickens and coats the back of a spoon.
4. Set aside to cool before using.