



*Learn the Secrets to  
Nonna's Home Cooking*

SAN DIEGO, CALIFORNIA

**LITTLE ITALY**

*authentic food tours*

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An Italian meal is a symphony of tastes and textures. 5 distinct courses make up Italian dinner. Unlike American cooking, Italian dishes are served separately -- not on one shared plate.

First, you'll savor a light **antipasto**– bruschetta or a plate of salumi. Next up is the **primo**, which can include pasta, risotto or soup. Meat or fish are the stars of the **secondo**, served after the first course. Alongside the entrées, Italians enjoy **contorni** – sides like sautéed spinach or grilled radicchio.

Dinner is incomplete without a decadent **dolce**. Whether it's tiramisu or crisp cannoli, Italians finish out dinner with a sweet paired with a nip of espresso.

### *Antipasto/Appetizer*

## FIORI DI ZUCCA - FRIED ZUCCHINI BLOSSOMS

### *Ingredients*

- \* 10-15 zucchini flowers
- \* 2-3 eggs
- \* 1 cup flour
- \* 4 tablespoons of beer
- \* Vegetable oil sufficient for frying
- \* 1 fresh mozzarella ball sliced into thin strips

# Preparation

First, remove the tough and spiny base of the flower. Then, place a thin sliver of mozzarella in each flower.

Do not to over-stuff the blossoms -- just one tiny strip of cheese is enough. The mozzarella melts during frying and we don't want it oozing out. Set aside the filled blossoms.

In a frying pan, pour 3-4 inches of oil and heat to 375 degrees. While it heats, beat the eggs together with a fork. Bit by bit, sift the flour in to the eggs -- stirring to avoid lumps. Once your *pastella* is the consistency of thick pancake batter, whisk in the beer.

Dip the flowers in batter, letting any extra *pastella* drip off. Fry then in batches (4-5 at a time) for 2-3 minutes. They're done when crisp and golden on all side. Serve immediately, sprinkled with sea salt.

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## Primo / First-Course CARBONARA

The key to delicious carbonara is good ingredients -- sun-yellow yolks, real pecorino cheese and salt-cured pork. Avoid pre-grated "parmesan" sold in the store. Instead, buy a hunk of pecorino romano and grate the cheese just before you prep the dish.

### Ingredients

- \* 8 oz of spaghetti or tonnarelli
- \* 4 or 5 oz of pancetta, cubed
- \* 3/4 to 1 cup of freshly grated parmigiano
- \* 4 egg yolks
- \* Black pepper, fresh ground

# Preparation

Lightly beat the yolks together with a fork. Add the grated cheese to the egg mixture, stirring until you have a thick slurry. Grind a healthy heaping of black pepper into the eggy/cheesy mix -- 5-7 twists on the peppermill. Cook the spaghetti meanwhile in 3 quarts of salted water.

While the pasta is cooking, render the cubed pancetta on medium heat. You may need to pour 1 teaspoon of olive oil in the pan before cooking the pork to avoid sticking. Once the pancetta begins to crisp and turn translucent, turn off the heat. Keep any rendered fat in the pan, along with the pancetta.

Remove the piping hot pasta from the hot water with a slotted spoon. DO NOT RUN THE PASTA UNDER COLD WATER. It needs to be steaming hot. Toss the hot spaghetti in the frying pan that holds the crisped pancetta -- the hot pasta should melt the rendered pork fat.

When the cubes are evenly mixed throughout the pasta, pour the cheesy egg mix over the pasta and vigorously toss. The hot pasta will cook the yolks and form a creamy sauce. Serve hot, dusted with grated pecorino romano.

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## *Secondo/Entrée*

### IL PEPOSO – BEEF & RED WINE STEW

## *Ingredients*

\* 2 lbs of beef stew meat or, alternately, pot-roast / brisket cut into stew-sized cubes.

(Note: don't bother with pricy meat; the slow cook time & acid in the wine break down the fibrous beef)

\* 1 bottle of red wine (750ml); table wine is fine

\* 8 - 10 whole cloves of garlic

\* 1.5 tablespoons of whole black peppercorns (about 15 peppercorns); you could also add 1 tbs. of whole juniper berries or whole allspice



## Preparation

Preheat your oven to 300 degrees Fahrenheit. Combine the beef, peeled garlic cloves and peppercorns together in a Dutch oven.

The wine should cover all the meat. Bring to a boil over a high flame / heat, skimming off any fat that accumulates on the surface. Add a 1/2 teaspoon of salt and stir.

Remove from the heat and cook covered in the oven for 3-4 hours. Stir every hour to make sure the beef does not stick to the pan bottom. When done, almost all of the wine will be gone. The beef should fall apart if touched by a spoon.

Serve over warm polenta or on a toasted slice Tuscan-style garlic bread.

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## *Contorno/Side* FETTUNTA - TUSCAN-STYLE 'GARLIC BREAD'



## Ingredients

- \* 1 loaf crusty bread
- \* Olive oil for drizzling (1/2 cup)
- \* 6 or so peeled garlic cloves
- \* Salt & pepper

## *Preparation*

Slice the crusty Italian loaf into thick "bruschetta-sized" slices. Each slice should be about 1 to 1.5 inches wide.

Once sliced, grill the bread until browned and grill lines appear. This will give the final dish with a rich, smoky aftertaste.

When toasty, rub whole cloves of garlic on the toasted slices. The garlic will rub off. Garlic each grilled slice.

Sprinkle with salt and pepper. As a final step, pour a big glug of extra-virgin olive oil over each garlicky piece.

The warm bread will absorb the oil. Serve hot.

## *Dolce/Dessert*

### RICOTTINO WITH PISTACHIOS

## *Ingredients*

- \* 1.5 pounds (24 ounces) of whole-milk ricotta\*
- \* Zest of 1 orange or 1 lemon
- \* 1 teaspoon of pure vanilla extract
- \* 1/2 cup - 3/4 cup of confectioners' sugar
- \* Chopped unsalted pistachios (optional)

# Preparation

Spoon the chilled ricotta into a large mixing bowl, folding in the grated citrus zest. Add in vanilla before stirring in 1/2 cup of confectioners sugar.

Taste it. If it is not sweet enough, add another 1/4 cup of sugar.

If you like the sweetness, leave it as is.

Fold the sugar into the mixture until you have a smooth, moist cream. Let it sit on the counter for 5 minutes -- this will help the powdered sugar melt into the ricotta.

Chill in the fridge until you serve. Before serving, sprinkle 1/2 teaspoon of chopped pistachios on each ricotta serving.

A drizzle of honey adds a rustic flare to this humble sweet.

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