

ITALIAN RENAISSANCE COOKERY COURSE

SATURDAY

10 am - Welcome and Introduction to the Course. This course concentrates on the practical skills used in the fifteenth and sixteenth century Italian kitchen, with a particular emphasis on re-creating the recipes of Maestro Martino and Bartolommeo Scappi. We will also look at some of the culinary developments of the longer Renaissance, and try out a couple of wonderful baroque dishes. Discover the wonders of Italian food before the tomato!

10.45 -13.00 – Ravioli in tempo de carne - a fifteenth century ravioli dish from Maestro Martino, stuffed with capon's breast, cheese and herbs lightly cooked in saffron broth.

Macaroni romaneschi – we will use some of the pasta dough to make one of Martino's macaroni dishes for this evening's *cena*. **Crostata de piggioni** – an early Renaissance open tart with a filling of spit-roasted pigeon meat tempered with *agresto* (verjuice), *visceole* (sour cherries) and herbs.

13.00 - 14.00 - Lunch

14.00 – 17.00 - We will prepare a number of dishes for our evening *cena*. **Sorbetto aurora** – a baroque ice cream with candied pumpkin and pinenut comfits. **Roasting with a Renaissance *macchina* or *molinello d'arosto***. We will prepare a loin of veal for the spit (*il lombo della vitella nello spedo*). **Torta d'uva moscatella** – a tart of muscatel grapes and other exotics.

17.00 - 20.00 - Free

20.00 - *Cena* of Italian Renaissance dishes at Wreay Farm

SUNDAY

10.00 - 13.00 – Insalata reale – an extraordinary salad from Baroque Naples.

10.45 - 13.00- Coppiette in the Roman style (*Coppiette del modo romano*), fifteenth century recipes for small savoury morsels of meat cooked on the spit or gridiron (*graticola*). **Zucche fritte** – a fifteenth century recipe for squash.

13.00 - 14.00 - Lunch

14.00 - 17.00 Pizza in the Neapolitan manner – not what you think.

RECIPES

RAVIOLI FOR MEAT DAYS

Ravioli in tempo de carne

For ten helpings take half a pound of old cheese and a little fat cheese (probably soft cheese). Cook until tender a pound of fat pork belly or the head of a calf. Then grind it well and add some finely chopped good herbs, pepper,

cloves, and ginger; a capon's breast, also pounded, would be even better. Mix all these things together (that is whether you use pork, calf's head or capon, mix them with the two cheeses). Then roll out your pasta very thin, and enclose your filling in it in the usual way; these ravioli should not be more than half the size of a chestnut. Cook them in good chicken or meat broth made yellow with saffron for the length of two paternosters. Dish them up and serve with grated cheese and sweet spices mixed together and sprinkled over. And similar ravioli can be made with breast of pheasant, partridge, or other game. From Martino, Libro de Arte Coquinaria. c.1450

I use pecorino picante for the old cheese and ricotta for the fat cheese.

PASTA RECIPE FOR ABOVE

400 gms durum wheat flour (pasta flour)

4 eggs

Sift the flour into a mound shape on a board, make a well in the middle and break the eggs into this. Mix the eggs with the tips of your fingers drawing in the flour. It will be very sticky at first, but as you work the flour in, it will be easier to handle. Form it into a ball and knead well for about fifteen minutes. Cover it and leave to rest for 30 minutes. Divide into two and roll out into very thin sheets. You will all learn how to make the ravioli by hand on the course.

PIGEON OR POULTRY CROSTATA

Crostata di piggioni ó de pollastri

First of all, cook the meat a little until nearly done, then cut it into small pieces and fry it in good lard. Next line the tart pan with a pastry crust as thick as that for pastelli (a sort of turnover), put the meat in it and on top of that dried prunes or perhaps cherries. Then take some good-quality agresto (verjuice), a little fat broth, and eight eggs (I tend to just use the yolks) and beat them all well together. Chop some parsley, marjoram, and mint very finely with a knife, and put them with the egg and broth mixture in a pot on the fire, that is over the coals, stirring continuously until it starts to thicken and stick to the spoon. Now pour this mixture over the crostata and cook in front of the fire as you would a pie. When it seems done, send it to the table. Make your crostata sweet or sharp according to taste or how your patron likes it. From Martino, Libro de Arte Coquinaria. c.1450

I use a shortcrust pastry and bake it blind in a tart pan. Then fill the tart case and bake it in front of the fire in a reflector oven.

SUNRISE SORBETTO

Sorbetto aurora

Italy (Kingdom of Naples), late 17th c. (*Brieve e Nuovo Modo farsi ogni sorte di Sorbette*).

To make ten goblets of this sorbetto, take two carafes of milk, which you warm on the fire to blood heat. Put in half a rotolo of sugar, which you dissolve completely and strain it into the freezing pot. Then take an ounce of finely ground cinnamon, put it through a silk sieve and beat it into the milk with a large spoon to incorporate it

into the milk, and put it into the snow. When it has semi-frozen, put in half an ounce of milky cinnamon water and three ounces of finely chopped candied pumpkin. If you want to make it in moulds, pyramids and riccottelle, use three quarters of the amount of sugar. If you make it in moulds, in place of the candied pumpkin you can put in two ounces of pinenut comfits, when you stir it.

This remarkable recipe is from a small pamphlet on ices, published anonymously in Naples in the 1690s. Included among its twenty-one recipes, there is not only this one for the earliest recorded true dairy ice cream, but also the first frozen dessert to be flavoured with vanilla. Ices were made at this time by putting the ingredients in a pewter pot called a *sorbetiera*. This was plunged into a bucket filled with a mixture of compressed snow and salt, which caused the contents to freeze. During the freezing process, the *sorbetto* was stirred with a spatula to create a smooth creamy ice. In Naples at this time a *caraffa* was equivalent to about 1.5 pints. A *rotolo* was just slightly under a pound. These proportions make a rather sweet ice for modern taste, so you might like to reduce the ratio to four ounces of sugar to the pint of milk. Preserved pumpkin or *coccozzata* can be bought in specialist Italian stores, but it is easy to make your own by storing cooked pumpkin in a bowl of dense sugar syrup. Keep this in the fridge. Pinenut comfits were sugar coated pinenuts. Milky cinnamon water was probably an alcoholic distillate of cinnamon. A few drops of oil of cinnamon in some vodka makes a substitute.

ANOTHER WAY TO ROAST OR STEW LOIN OF BEEF

Get the loin with some of its fat, splash it with Greek wine and rose vinegar, and sprinkle it with the above spices and salt. Then set it to cook with a few sprigs of sage around it, stirring the liquid that drips from it. When it is almost done, take it down from the spit, removing the sage, and put it into an earthenware vessel with a spoonful of broth, a quarter of a beaker of vinegar, half a beaker of must syrup, prunes, muscatel raisins and the grease that has dripped from it, along with onions that have first been cooked under the coals; finish off cooking it with that mixture of ingredients. When everything is done, serve it hot with its broth over the top. Into that sauce you can put a quarter beaker of malvasia wine and some rosewater. From Bartolommo Scappi Opera. Venice 1570.*

*(Pepper, cinnamon, nutmeg and cloves). We use a 16th century spit to roast this.

TO PREPARE A MUSCATEL GRAPE TORTA

Seed the grapes, and for every two pounds put four ounces of breadcrumbs with them and stew them in an earthenware or tinned copper pot with six ounces of butter. When they are stewed, strain them with eight ounces of fresh ricotta and ten egg yolks. After straining, add in four ounces of grated cheese, an ounce and a half of ground Neapolitan mostaccioli, six ounces of sugar, half an ounce of cinnamon and

two ounces of orange juice or of candied orange peel cut up into small pieces. With that filling make up a tourte with a rather thick bottom, bake it in an oven or braise it, making its glaze with sugar and cinnamon. Serve it

hot or cold as you like. In this manner you can make the same with gooseberries or verjuice grapes. From Bartolommo Scappi *Opera*. Venice 1570.

ROYAL SALAD

Insalata alla Reale

Take endive, or scarola (another species of endive or chicory), mince it finely and put it to one side, until you have prepared a large basin, at the bottom of which are eight, or ten biscottini, friselle, or taralli, soaked in water, and vinegar, with a little white salt; put the said chopped endive on top, intermix with other salad stuff, albeit minced finely, make the body of the said salad on top at your discretion, intermix with radishes cut into pieces lengthways, filling in the gaps in the said basin with the ingredients listed below, all arranged in order. Pinenuts four ounces, stoned olives six ounces, capers four ounces, one pomegranate, white and black grapes ten ounces, twelve anchovies, tarantello (salted belly of tuna) four ounces, botargo three ounces, comfits, six ounces, preserved citron (and) preserved pumpkin twelve ounces, four hard boiled eggs, whole pistachios four ounces, four ounces of raisins, other black olives six ounces. Caviar, four ounces, minced flesh of white fish, six ounces, little radishes, salt, oil, and vinegar to taste, garnish the plate with slices of citrons, and citron flowers round about in order, take heed not to add salt or seasonings, until it goes to the table, and is about to be eaten.

From Antonio Latini, *Lo Scalco Moderna*. Naples 1692 and 1694.

This is a Southern ancestor of the well-known modern Tuscan bread salad. *Biscottini*, or ‘little biscuits’ are in this case ship’s biscuit, a hard dry rusk made by cutting bread into slices and putting it in the oven a second time to dry. *Friselle* and *taralli* are hard ring-shaped breads which are both still made in Southern Italy. Like *biscottini* they were usually softened in water. The radishes of this period were white and long-rooted rather than the round, bright red ones popular today. *Tarantello* was a common ingredient in Italian recipes of the early modern period. It was made by salting part of the belly of young tuna fish. The city of Taranto was the centre of production, but this ancient delicacy is no longer made in modern Italy. *Botargo*, however, is still available; the most prized being made by salting tuna roes. Citrons or *cedri* were commonly grown in Southern Italy and both the preserved peel and fresh flowers were popular ingredients in both sweet and savoury dishes. Fresh lemon or orange flowers would make a good substitute. To make up for the lack of *tarantello*, a few extra anchovies could be used. Sugared comfits were a common garnish for dishes of this kind – those of anise or fennel being the most popular.

COPPIETTE IN THE ROMAN STYLE

Coppiette del modo romano

Cut the meat into pieces about the size of an egg, but do not cut through completely as they should stay joined to each other at the base. Take a little salt and pounded coriander or fennel seeds and spread them over the meat, then press them under a weight for a while. Cook them on a spit, with a thin slice of lardo (fat bacon or pancetta) between each piece of meat to keep them succulent.

From Martino, *Libro de Arte Coquinaria*. c.1450

FRIED SQUASH

Zucche fritte

*Take your squash and peel them carefully, then slice crosswise as thin as a knife blade. Bring to the boil some water, then remove them and leave to dry. Salt a little, dust all over with white flour, and fry them in oil. Dish up and serve with ground fennel flowers, garlic, and breadcrumbs moistened with agrest (verjuice) and pushed through a sieve to make a thin sauce. This is just as good dressed only with agresto and fennel flowers. You could, if you like, colour the sauce yellow with saffron. From Martino, *Libro de Arte Coquinaria*. c.1450*

TO MAKE A TORTA WITH VARIOUS INGREDIENTS, CALLED PIZZA IN NAPLES.

Get six ounces of shelled Ambrosian almonds, four ounces of shelled, softened pinenuts, three ounces of fresh, stoned dates, three ounces of dried figs and three ounces of seeded muscatel raisins; grind those up in a mortar. Into it add eight fresh raw egg yolks, six ounces of sugar, an ounce of ground cinnamon, an ounce and a half of crumbled musk-flavoured Neapolitan mostaccioli and four ounces of rosewater. When everything is mixed together, get a torta pan that is greased and lined with a sheet of royal pastry, into this put the filling, mixed with four ounces of fresh butter, letting it come up to no more than a finger in depth. Without it being covered, bake it in an oven. Serve it hot or cold, whichever you like. Into that pizza you can put anything that is seasoned.

From Bartolommo Scappi *Opera*. Venice 1570.