

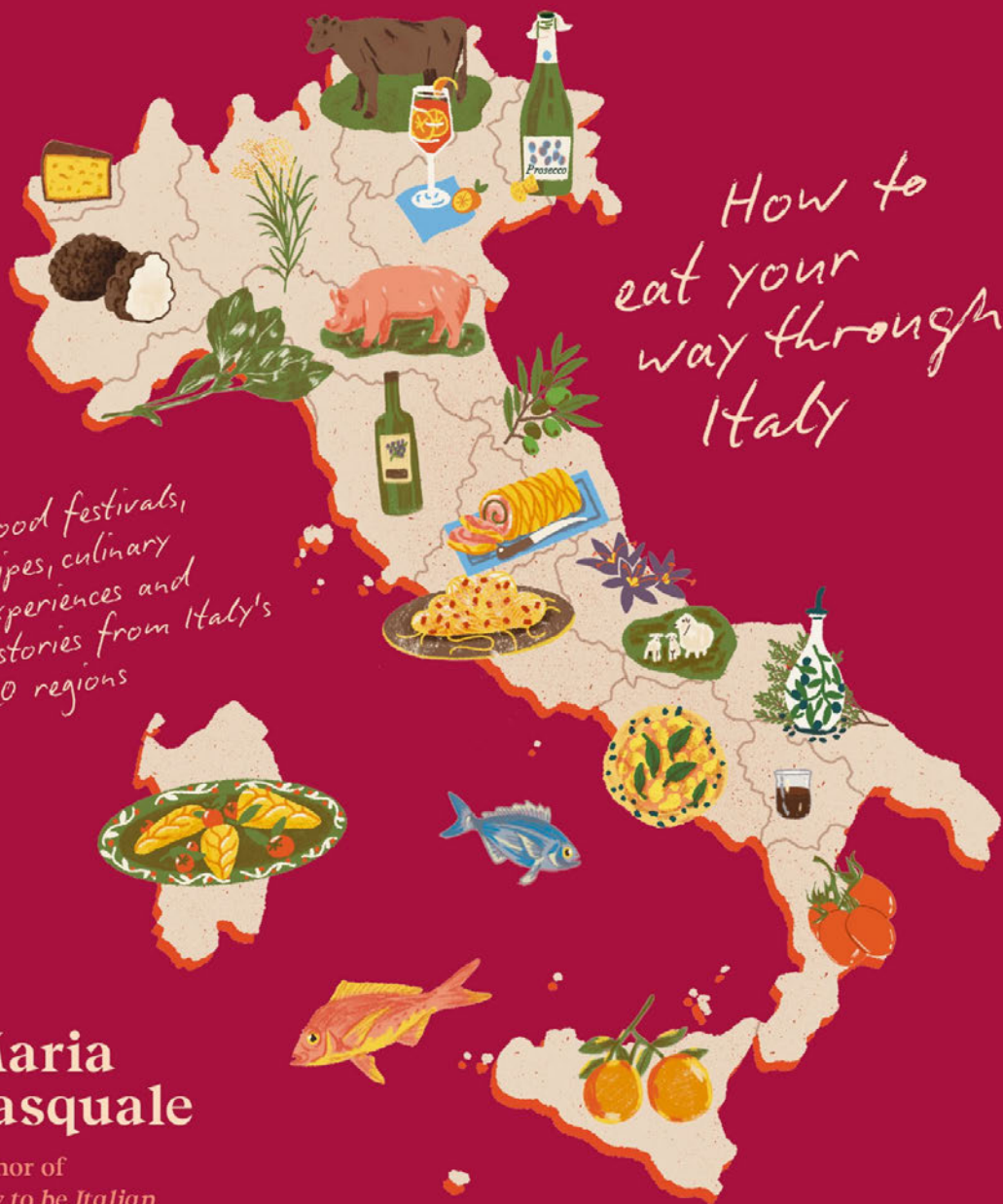
MANGIA

*How to
eat your
way through
Italy*

*Food festivals,
recipes, culinary
experiences and
stories from Italy's
20 regions*

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How to be Italian



Pesto genovese

Basil pesto

If Liguria was a dish, it would undoubtedly be trofie al pesto, and I'm so glad Executive Chef Corrado Corti at the luxurious Splendido, A Belmond Hotel, Portofino, chose to share his version with me. His isn't a contemporary instalment but is prepared the classic way. He says that the dish is a Ligurian love story, and considering the Latin origin of the word 'basil' means 'king', you could say the love story is a regal one. The traditional pesto around these parts has these five, and only these five, ingredients. The difference in flavour will depend on the quality of the produce and the amount of love you put into it.

Stir your pesto through trofie pasta (or whichever short pasta you have on hand) or use in sandwiches or on crostini. This recipe makes a large batch that can be stored in airtight jars or containers in the fridge for up to a week. (Pour a layer of olive oil over the top to keep the oxygen out.)

Alternatively, the pesto can be frozen for up to three months. For a smaller amount simply halve or quarter the quantities below. Enjoy!

MAKES ABOUT 750 G
(3 CUPS)

200 g (7 oz) basil leaves
(the best quality you can find)

125 g (4½ oz) pine nuts

2–3 garlic cloves, cut lengthways,
inside germ removed

200 ml (7 fl oz) extra virgin
olive oil (preferably from Liguria),
plus extra if needed

150 g (5½ oz) Grana Padano,
finely grated

150 g (5½ oz) Pecorino
(preferably Fiore Sardo),
finely grated

Rinse the basil leaves and pat dry carefully.

Blend the pine nuts, garlic and olive oil in a food processor or blender until the pine nuts are finely chopped. Add the basil and process or blend on high until creamy and evenly mixed. Add the cheeses and pulse the mixture until combined. With the machine running, add a little more oil to thin the consistency, if you like. Season with salt, to taste.



Carbonara

In Rome, not much is debated more than the humble carbonara. Traditionalists insist on its unwavering authenticity and are horrified by any variations that stray from the classic. This beloved dish is strictly defined by its three ingredients: crispy guanciale, Pecorino Romano and eggs – notably, no cream. And the art of crafting the perfect carbonara hinges on precision, as a mere few seconds can mean the difference between a velvety masterpiece and scrambled eggs. Still my favourite in Rome, this recipe from Da Enzo al 29 is taken from my book *The Eternal City*. It's consistently satisfying with just the right balance of saltiness and decadent silkiness.

SERVES 6

700 g (1 lb 9 oz) rigatoni
 350 g (12½ oz) guanciale,
 rind removed, cut into 1 cm
 (½ in) thick strips
 4 whole eggs
 2 egg yolks
 300 g (10½ oz) freshly grated
 Pecorino Romano, plus extra
 to serve

Note: In Italy, carbonara is usually prepared with 'pasta gialla' eggs, which give the dish its yellow hue. Regular eggs will create a paler carbonara, but the flavour will still be the same.

Bring a large saucepan of salted water to the boil, add the rigatoni and cook until al dente.

Meanwhile, place a very large dry frying pan over high heat, add the guanciale and fry for 4–5 minutes, until the fat melts and the meat becomes crisp.

In a bowl, beat the whole eggs and egg yolks until well combined, then mix in the pecorino and season with a generous grind of black pepper.

Drain the rigatoni, reserving 125 ml (½ cup) of the pasta cooking water, and add the pasta to the pan with the guanciale, stirring well to coat the pasta in the fat. (If your pan isn't large enough to hold all the pasta, you may need to remove half the guanciale and fat and do this in two batches.) Turn off the heat and, if you are feeling confident, add the egg mixture to the pan, tossing the ingredients together rapidly to avoid the egg scrambling. If needed, add some of the pasta cooking water to help loosen the sauce. Alternatively, the foolproof method is to add the pasta and guanciale to the bowl with the egg mixture and stir well, along with some of the pasta cooking water. The heat from the pasta will cook the egg and the sauce will remain silky smooth.

Serve with a sprinkling of extra pecorino and a good grind of black pepper.



BY FULVIO PIERANGELINI, MASSERIA TORRE MAIZZA,
A ROCCO FORTE HOTEL

Orecchiette con cime di rapa

Orecchiette with broccoli rabe

Regarded by his peers as one of Italy’s finest chefs, Fulvio Pierangelini guides every aspect of gastronomy at each Rocco Forte Hotel around the world. The beautiful simplicity of his approach includes a profound respect for excellent produce combined with local tradition, and so the food of each outlet reflects its surrounds. Masseria Torre Maizza in Savelletri is no different, and it really doesn’t get much more ‘Apulia’ than orecchiette con cime di rapa. If I close my eyes tightly, I’m back on the restaurant terrace eating this rustic pasta dish with broccoli rabe, sourced from the on-site veggie patch.



Puglia

SOUTHERN ITALY

SERVES 4

- 250 g (9 oz) fine durum wheat semolina flour, plus extra for dusting
- 1.5 kg (3 lb 5 oz) broccoli rabe
- 40 ml (1½ fl oz) extra virgin olive oil, plus extra for drizzling
- 1 garlic clove, peeled
- ½ bird’s eye chilli
- 6 anchovy fillets in oil, drained
- grated pecorino, to serve (optional)

Place the flour on a work surface and make a well in the centre. Gradually pour in 120 ml (4 fl oz) of lukewarm water and use your finger to gradually mix the ingredients together, then knead until you have a smooth and elastic dough – this will take 12–15 minutes.

Form the dough into a ball, cover with a damp, clean cloth and leave to rest for 15 minutes.

Divide the dough into four pieces and roll each into a long, thin sausage shape about 1 cm (½ in) thick. On a lightly floured surface, cut each length of dough into 1 cm (½ in) pieces.

To form the orecchiette, drag a smooth-bladed knife over each piece of dough to make a rounded shell shape, then turn the shape ‘inside-out’ to form the orecchiette. Continue until all the dough has been used.

To make the sauce, trim and separate the broccoli rabe into three parts: the large outer leaves and tender stalks, the middle leaves, and the interior with the unopened flower buds, setting a few sprigs aside for garnish.

Bring a large saucepan of lightly salted water to the boil and cook the rabe outer leaves and stalks for 7–8 minutes, until softened but still green. Leaving the water in the saucepan, use tongs to remove the leaves and stalks and plunge them into iced water. Squeeze out the excess water, then roughly chop.

Heat a drizzle of olive oil in a large frying pan over medium heat, add the chopped rabe and cook for 1–2 minutes, until warmed through. Remove from the heat, then blend the rabe in a food processor or blender, adding a sprinkle of salt and a drizzle of olive oil to form a smooth cream.

Return the water to the boil and add the orecchiette. After 2 minutes, add the middle leaves from the rabe and cook for 3 minutes or until the orecchiette is al dente. Drain, reserving 250 ml (1 cup) of the cooking water.

Meanwhile, heat the olive oil in a large frying pan over medium heat. Add the whole garlic clove, chilli and anchovy fillets and cook, stirring, for 2 minutes. Using the back of a fork, press the anchovies into the oil to help them break down and dissolve. Add the remaining uncooked broccoli rabe and cook for a couple of minutes, adding a few tablespoons of the reserved pasta cooking water to stop the pan drying out.

Add the pasta mixture to the frying pan. Remove the garlic and chilli and toss everything until well combined.

To serve, spread the rabe cream across the base of four plates. Top with the orecchiette and rabe sprigs, drizzle with olive oil and sprinkle with pecorino, if desired.

Puglia

SOUTHERN ITALY

BY MASSIMO MANTARRO, PRINCIPE CERAMI,
SAN DOMENICO PALACE, TAORMINA, A FOUR SEASONS HOTEL

Busiate alla trapanese

Busiate with Trapani-style pesto

The second season of the HBO hit series *The White Lotus* had us all dreaming of Sicilian sunsets, infinity pools and hotel bar cocktails. Shot at Taormina’s iconic San Domenico Palace, a Four Seasons Hotel, it certainly took la dolce vita and Italian old-world glamour to new heights. Their in-house Principe Cerami restaurant (with one Michelin star, no less) and executive chef and Sicily native Massimo Mantarro elevate this Trapani pasta classic with eggplant chips and a pecorino fondue to make it extra special. While you could prepare this dish with most varieties of pasta, I implore you to look for the long twisty busiate. I ate it for the first time in Trapani with the traditional rustic version of this pesto and I still think about it to this day.



Sicilia

ISLANDS

SERVES 4

- 200 g (7 oz) busiate
- 3 spring onions (scallions), sliced
- 150 ml (5 fl oz) vegetable stock
- 1 tablespoon slivered almonds
- chopped parsley, to serve

Confit tomatoes

- 1 garlic clove, crushed
- 2 tablespoons thyme leaves
- 2 tablespoons marjoram leaves
- zest of 1 large lemon
- zest of 1 large orange
- 15 g (½ oz) sea salt
- 2 tablespoons icing (confectioners’) sugar
- 500 g (1 lb 2 oz) red and yellow datterini or cherry tomatoes, halved lengthways

Eggplant cream

- 400 g (14 oz) eggplant (aubergine), peeled and roughly chopped
- splash of extra virgin olive oil

Pecorino fondue

- 80 ml (2¾ fl oz) cream
- 80 g (2¾ oz) pecorino, grated

Eggplant and garlic chips

- 150 ml (5 fl oz) extra virgin olive oil
- 60 g (2 oz) baby eggplant (preferably perlina variety), sliced into very thin rounds
- 4 garlic cloves, sliced

Parsley oil

- 35 g (1¼ oz) parsley stalks and leaves
- 100 ml (3½ fl oz) extra virgin olive oil

Preheat the oven to 50°C (120°F) fan-forced or as low as your oven will go.

To make the confit tomatoes, combine the ingredients except the tomatoes in a bowl. Place the tomatoes, cut-side up, on a baking tray and scatter with the herb mixture. Cook for 3–4 hours, until soft and sweet.

Increase the oven temperature to 180°C (350°F) fan-forced.

To make the eggplant cream, toss the eggplant with a splash of olive oil. Spread half the eggplant on a small baking tray and bake for about 8 minutes, until tender. Place the remaining eggplant in a small frying pan and cook over medium–low heat, stirring occasionally, for 10 minutes or until tender. Blend both eggplants together in a high-speed blender or with a stick blender until creamy.

For the pecorino fondue, heat the cream in a small heavy-based saucepan over high heat until boiling, then add the pecorino and whisk vigorously. Strain through a fine sieve and set aside in the fridge, covered, to cool.

To make the eggplant and garlic chips, heat the olive oil in a small saucepan over medium–high heat to 130–140°C (265–285°F) on a kitchen thermometer. Add the eggplant and garlic and fry for 1–2 minutes, until crisp. Remove with a slotted spoon and drain on paper towel.

To make the parsley oil, blend the parsley, olive oil and a pinch of salt in a blender until smooth. Strain the parsley oil through a fine sieve lined with muslin (cheese cloth) and set aside. The parsley oil will keep in a sealed jar in the fridge for 2–3 days.

When ready to serve, cook the busiate in salted boiling water until al dente. Meanwhile, in two small saucepans, heat the eggplant cream and the pecorino cheese fondue separately over medium–low heat until hot.

Heat a splash of olive oil in a frying pan over medium heat, add the spring onion and cook for 1–2 minutes, until soft, then add the vegetable stock and bring to a simmer.

Drain the pasta and tip it into the pan with the spring onion and stock.

To serve, spread the warm eggplant cream across the base of four plates, add the busiate and confit tomatoes, and top with the eggplant and garlic chips. Finish the dish with a swirl of pecorino fondue, a sprinkling of almonds and parsley, and a drizzle of parsley oil.

Sicilia

ISLANDS