

AMARETTI BISCUITS

- 300 gr. of sweet almonds
- 50 gr. of apricot kernels or bitter almonds
- 350 gr. of sugar
- 4 whisked egg whites
- Grated rind of one lemon

In one of the many anti-cancer websites I visited, I read that apricot kernels have really powerful anti-cancer properties.. It's from the Vitamin B17 found in the kernels. There are lots of people on videos to be found saying that they beat their cancer with this B17.

So I decided to buy tons of apricots and make kilos and kilos of jam as well as preparing apricots in syrup just so as I could get to eat the apricot seeds. They're very bitter!

Then, while talking to my oncologist, I discover that not only do these kernels not have curative properties but that I had even run the risk of poisoning myself! So I guess that will teach me to trust what I read on the web. Nevertheless, since hope springs eternal, I decided to try using these kernels by using them to make amaretti

which can be made from bitter almonds (difficult to find and expensive) or apricot kernels. The cooking makes them quite safe!

-

Chop the almonds extremely finely (I smash them in a tea towel because I don't like the result to be too even - but you could use a food processor) and then crush them with some of the sugar with a mortar and pestle. Mix the sugar, grated lemon rind and whipped egg whites together.

Once you have gently mixed them together, divide the mixture into small balls (slightly smaller than a golf ball) and then place on a baking tin that you will have buttered and floured.

Bake in a 100°C preheated oven for 15 or 20 minutes and remove them as soon as they start to turn golden.



PANCETTA WRAPPED MONKFISH STUFFED WITH PEPPERS IN PINE NUT SAUCE

- 500gr of monkfish (gutted)
- 2 red peppers
- 1 courgette
- 2 cloves of garlic
- 8 thick pancetta slices
- 70gr of pine nuts
- 100gr of butter

This is the recipe I would cook if I wanted to charm someone. Actually I did and it worked!

It is not the easiest dish to make, but as long as you proceed with care - with all your love... it will turn out to be delicious!!! Please buy your fish from a fishmonger, and try to find Mediterranean pine nuts (they're a bit more expensive but are much tastier than the Asian varieties.)

-

Colour the two garlic cloves (whole) in a little olive oil in a pan then add the washed and finely diced courgette and peppers with a little salt. Keep cooking for a few minutes until the courgettes and peppers are soft. Take it off the heat to cool.

Prepare the monkfish by slicing it lengthwise in two halves, removing its spine and opening it up as if it were a book.

Place the pancetta slices side by side on a sheet of cling film and rest the fish on top, placing the vegetables, which will have cooled down by now on top and in the middle of the fish. (Make sure you keep a couple of spoonfuls aside to help make the sauce.)

Use the cling film to help you, roll the pancetta around the fish and continue rolling it until there are several layers in a sausage shape. Then twist the ends of the cling film with two tight knots, as if it were a candy wrapper to seal the "sausage." Be very careful to keep it water-tight so water won't get in while it's boiling.

Bring some water to the boil and throw the "fish candies" in, letting them boil for 3 to 4 minutes before taking them out - then placing them in cold water and ice to stop them from cooking any further.

(This procedure is necessary as it keeps the pancetta wrapped around the fish without having to use fidgety strings.)

Take the "candies" out of the cold water and remove the cling film and place them in a baking tin with a little olive oil and cook in a preheated oven at 200 °C for roughly 15 minutes.

Lightly toast the pine nuts in a pan (no oil) then add the rest of the courgette and pepper mixture with a pinch of salt and a little oil. Blend this mixture to make a sauce for the fish.



CURATIVE PRAWN AND SQUID INZIMINO WITH SPINACH

- 3 big prawns (which you'll open lengthwise)
- 50 gr. of small fresh squid (if you're tired, ask the fishmonger to clean them for you)
- 6 cherry tomatoes
- 2 generous handfuls of spinach
- 3 cloves of garlic
- A few parsley leaves
- A few spoons of olive oil
- Salt and pepper

Coming back home from my third course of chemo, I felt an irresistible craving for fish and spinach. (Lisa, my neighbour, says her mum found spinach, watercress and all dark green vegetables to be fantastically helpful for chemo side effects.

So after buying myself a nice bunch of flowers, which are always good for the soul, I purchase everything to make my "Curative Inzimino".

It's strange but sometimes I feel like a dog that eats grass; meaning that it is my body which tells me what food it needs. I reckon it's something that simply happens to everyone, just like getting desperate for strange foods when you're pregnant.

Throughout the whole treatment, I ate enormous amounts of pomegranates. I always saw them in

"Le Pascalou", the shop near the hospital, a lovely delicatessen on 159 Fulham Road where Vincent is always smiling and ready to give you advice and information on his produce.

After completing the treatment I found out that pomegranates are a renowned anti-cancer agent. And I got better!

-

Clean the fish, chop the garlic and parsley coarsely and wash the tomatoes.

Heat the oil in a frying pan and sauté the garlic and parsley. Add the fish, tomatoes, some salt and sauté until golden brown. Add the spinach and cook for a few minutes and voilà your curative potion is ready.



GRAPE BREAD

- 500gr black grapes
- 300gr self raising flour
- 1 teaspoon of Maldon salt
- 4 tablespoons of olive oil
- 100gr of sugar

For this delicious dessert all you need are some grapes, flour, sugar and a little salt and oil.

This is my own version of Tuscany's typical "schacciata con uva" which is traditionally made during the grape harvest to feed the grape-pickers.

You can avoid using yeast as the fermenting grape and sugar mixture makes it rise naturally by acting as a raising agent, although sometimes it doesn't rise so much.

Make sure the dough is quite hard, just like bread dough

so add more or less flour as seems right. (Although use the amounts below the first time to see how it works)

Mash the grapes in your hands, add the flour, salt and oil and knead thoroughly together to make the dough. Then lay the dough onto an oiled baking tray and sprinkle the sugar on top.

Bake in a preheated oven at 160°C for about 20 minutes, then turn up the heat (180) until the sugary crust turns golden brown.



COURGETTE, GARLIC AND BASIL FARFALLINE

- 200 gr of farfalline
- 2 medium courgettes; chopped into discs or julienned it's up to you.
- 4 cloves of garlic
- A generous handful of basil
- A few spoonfuls of olive oil
- Salt & pepper
- Chilli is optional
- A handful of parmesan (roughly 30 to 40 gr.)

The ideal season for this recipe is the summer, when the basil and the courgettes are bursting with flavour. Farfalline is the ideal pasta for this dish, but any other type of short pasta will do if you run out, like penne or shells. If you are cooking for an important dinner you can serve the farfalline on crunchy parmesan baskets. The secret lies in cooking the courgettes on a low heat so as not to burn them, otherwise they turn bitter. Add the basil only at the end; tearing it with your hands, so to make all its flavour scream out!

-

Finely chop the garlic, let it quickly brown in a pan with a few spoonfuls of oil, add the courgettes and let them

cook slowly. Add salt, a pinch of pepper and a little chilly for those who like it.

Turn off the flame once the courgettes are cooked and add the basil.

All you need to do to make the parmesan baskets is to let the grated parmesan melt in a non-stick pan (you have to use good quality parmesan for this to work) and turn this out onto the top of a mug to form the right shape.

Boil the pasta in plenty of salted water and flavour it with the sauce and a generous sprinkle of parmesan.



PAPPA AL POMODORO (Tuscan tomato ,bread and basil soup)

- 400 gr of tomatoes (if not in season then 250 gr of pelati)
- 150 gr of Tuscan unsalted stale bread
- 2 garlic gloves
- 1 chili
- good extra virgin olive oil
- salt
- basil

Tuscan cooking is made with simple and poor ingredients "cucina povera"my grandmother used to get cross if anyone ever threw stale bread away. Old bread is used in a lot of traditional Tuscan recipes: the famous Panzanella salad , the Acquacotta, the pappa al pomodoro or it can be used for stuffing or grated as a coating for frying. I get a lot of pleasure cooking with left over ingredients.

In a pot (better a crock pot) brown the crashed garlic and the sliced chili with four tablespoon of good olive oil .

Add the chopped tomato or the pelati and gently

cooked until you have a nice thick sauce.

Adjust with salt and then add the bread previously cut in small cube .

Make sure to use Tuscan bread or a bread made with water and oil base. Milk or butter base bread will make it too mushy.

Then add a glass of water and continue to stir until the bread is softened and then add the chopped basil.

Turn it off the stove and let it rest .

Can be served warm or cold with some extra olive oil.



PANZANELLA SALAD

- 4 slice of Tuscan bread (better if is old)
- 1 cucumber
- 1 red onion
- 1 hand full of pitted black olives
- 3 tomatoes
- basil
- salt
- extra virgin olive oil
- white vinegar

Preheat the oven, rub your bread with the garlic glove and then slice up into small cube crouton-like squares.

Put the bread in a baking tray, season with salt , pepper and some table spoon of olive oil, and then roast them until are crispy and golden.

Slice the red onion, the cucumber and the tomatoes and season with salt, pepper, white vinegar and good extra virgin olive oil. Add the olives the croutons and

plenty of basil .

If you like you can add canned tuna, as my mum used to do.

NB The real Panzanella is made with stale bread soaked in water overnight and rinsed, but I prefer this version as the bread stays more crispy... my mother would disapprove!



FOOD LAB PICKLES

- 1 kg of any vegetable (carrots, peppers, courgettes, mushroom, cauliflower, onionany)
- 1 tablespoon of sugar
- 1 tablespoon of salt
- 1 glass of white wine vinegar. (I use Aceto Ponti.)
- 1 glass of good olive oil....I use Giaggiolo.

I got this recipe from my friend, Rosanna Centini , during an Easter picnic. Me and my husband went bonkers for her fantastic "Agrodolci."

Since then, this is how we prepare our pickles in Foodlab. It's so simple and the vegetables are crispy and keep their flavor wonderfully.

-
Cut your vegetable in small, bit-sized, pieces, add the sugar, salt, oil and vinegar and leave to rest for about 4 hours .

Then put your vegetables in pickle jars with the juice

and screw the lid tight.

Put the jars into a large saucepan and cover with cold water and let them boil for roughly 10 minutes. (the time depends slightly on the size of the jar - bigger jars need a little longer).

Switch off the heat and let them cool down completely while still covered with water.

When they're cool, dry them off, pop them in a cupboard and use whenever!



MY MOMMA'S RAGU

Serves 10

(You should make a generous quantity because even if there aren't ten of you for dinner, as you can always freeze what remains and use it another time)

- 600gr minced beef
- 100gr pancetta (bacon)
- 2 medium seized white or golden onions
- 2 medium seized carrots
- 4 celery sticks
- 200gr tomato paste (one tube)
- 1 can of peeled tomatoes
- 1 glass of olive oil
- 1 glass of milk
- Salt and pepper
- 3 or 4 glasses of stock or water

The smell of different foods can often trigger strong reactions within me.

When I touch the lunch box I used to take to playschool, I feel I can smell garden peas. The frozen ones that I used to eat with fish fingers!

This dish smells like Sunday morning to me. The smell of my mother's Bolognese on a Sunday! My mum used to wake up early, put the ragu to cook and start to make the fresh pasta. She would make us spinach and ricotta tortelli or tagliatelle if she was short for time.

As the smell of the sauce enveloping the room woke me up, I would go to the kitchen and dip a piece of bread into the boiling pot.

You couldn't walk past the kitchen with your Sunday dress, as its perfume would stick to your clothes and you could never get rid of it...and, in the end, you would have to throw them away.

So here's the recipe for Giuliana's sauce, but make sure that your kitchen ventilator is as open as your kitchen door is shut, otherwise your house will be smelling of ragu for weeks!

One of the secrets of this recipe is to use milk instead of wine and make sure the meat is well cooked before you add the milk.

-

Use a deep earthenware, cast iron or aluminium pot (not steel! It gets too hot!)

Finely chop the onions, carrots and celery, letting them slowly brown with the pancetta for 5 minutes and then add the minced meats.

Once the meat is nicely coloured, add the milk and let it evaporate. Then add the chopped tomatoes and tomato paste and let it cook with frequent stirs.

Add a spoon of sugar to help reduce the tomato's acidity.

Once it turns a nice dark colour, add the stock and let it boil for roughly two hours, occasionally steering and adding boiling stock to it, if the sauce is drying out too much.

Add salt and pepper only at the end when the sauce is nice and thick.

