



Ambassador

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Season's Greetings!

Cooking Italian for the Holidays

**The Rampini Ornaments
of Gubbio**

**Torino's National
Risorgimento Museum**

Best Pizza in America?



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Lobster Fra Diavolo

lengthwise, clean body cavity, leaving in the tomalley. Cut tail from body.

- Bring a large pot of salted water to boil for pasta. In a large Dutch oven, over medium-high heat, add vegetable oil. Spread the flour on a rimmed baking sheet. Dredge cut-side pieces of lobster body and tail (but not the claw pieces or little legs) in the flour, tapping off the excess. Add to pot, cut side down and cook just to seal the meat, about a minute or so. Remove to a plate. Add claw pieces and cook just until they begin to change color, about a minute. Remove to a plate.

- Pour off vegetable oil, return pot to medium heat and add 3 tablespoons of the olive oil. Add the onions and garlic. Sauté a few minutes, then add ½ cup of the pasta cooking water and simmer to soften the onions, another 2 to 3 minutes. Increase heat to let the water boil away and clear a space in the pan. Drop in the tomato paste, let sizzle a minute or 2, then stir the tomato paste into the onions. Add the crushed tomatoes and slosh out the cans with 2 cups of the pasta cooking water, adding that to the pot as well. Bring sauce to a rapid boil and stir in pepperoncino and salt. Add all of the lobster, except for the tail pieces and let simmer until sauce is thickened, about 10 minutes. Add the tail pieces and simmer until meat is just cooked through, about 2 to 3 minutes more.

Meanwhile, add spaghetti to the boiling water. When the sauce is ready, transfer about half of the sauce (without the lobster) to a large skillet and bring to a simmer. When

pasta is al dente, remove with tongs to the simmering sauce. Drizzle with remaining tablespoon of olive oil and sprinkle with the shredded basil. Toss to coat the pasta with the sauce. Serve pasta in shallow bowls, with the extra sauce and lobster pieces over top.

St. Joseph's Fig Cookies

Makes about 4 ½ dozen

Ingredients:

½ cup honey
6 tablespoons grappa or brandy
4 teaspoons orange juice
2 cups diced dried black figs
3 ¾ cups all-purpose flour
½ cup sugar
1 ½ teaspoons baking powder
¼ teaspoon kosher salt
2 large eggs
6 tablespoons milk
2 teaspoons lemon zest
¼ teaspoon cinnamon
½ cup walnut pieces

Glaze:

1 ½ cups confectioner's sugar
3 tablespoons milk, or as needed

Directions:

- In saucepan, bring honey, grappa and orange juice to boil. Add figs and bring to a simmer. Simmer until figs are plumped, about 2 to 3 minutes. Remove from heat and let cool thoroughly while you make the dough.

- In a food processor, combine flour, sugar, baking powder and salt. Pulse to combine. In a small bowl, beat together eggs and milk. With the processor running, pour egg/milk mixture into dry ingredients and process

until dough forms a ball, about 15 to 20 seconds. Knead dough on counter once or twice, then wrap in plastic wrap and let rest in the refrigerator at least 1 hour or until firm.

- When the filling is cool, scrape into a food processor and add lemon zest and cinnamon. Process to make a smooth paste. Add the walnuts and pulse a few times, leaving the nuts slightly chunky. Transfer filling to a bowl and freeze until firm, about ½ hour.

- Preheat oven to 350° F. Divide dough in half and roll one half, between parchment paper, into a rectangle about 16-by-7 inches. Cut strip in half to make 2 long strips. Roll a quarter of the filling into a log that fits down the center of one strip. Wet the edges of the strip with water and use parchment as a guide to roll into a log and seal. Flatten the top slightly with the palm of your hand. Repeat with remaining dough and filling.

- Using a wet knife, cut logs into 1-inch lengths and place with the cut sides facing out on parchment lined baking sheets. Bake until golden, about 15 to 20 minutes. Transfer cookies to wire rack and cool completely.

- To glaze cookies, sift confectioner's sugar into a bowl and whisk in milk to make a smooth glaze. Dip a cookie in the glaze. It should stick to the cookie in a thin layer. If not, adjust consistency of glaze with more milk or confectioner's sugar. Dip cookies in glaze and let dry on wire racks.



St. Joseph Fig Cookies

Mamma Agata

Zeppole and Sausage and Red Pepper Pasta with tomato sauce

“The Christmas season is a beautiful moment when hearts and families come together,” says Mamma Agata Lima, who shares her belief that “cooking is love” with her daughter Chiara Lima, founder in 1994 of the Mamma Agata Cooking and Wine School, in Ravello, on Italy’s Amalfi Coast. Chiara also is the author of “Mamma Agata: Simple and Genuine” (MA-Hidden Treasures; \$50).

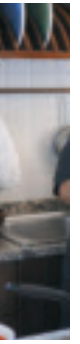
“It is such joyous time around the table, reconnecting and laughing while sharing stories and, of course, good food!” adds Mamma Agata.

Cooking since she was a young girl, eventually for noted celebrities visiting Italy such as Humphrey Bogart, Jacqueline Kennedy and Elizabeth Taylor, Mamma Agata now spends hours in the kitchen with Chiara and Gennaro Petti, Chiara’s husband who is a professional sommelier. They’ll be preparing their traditional Christmas dishes and there is always an abundance of food. “The more food you have, the longer everyone stays together around the table,” says Mamma Agata, “and the more holiday memories that you make!”

Every Christmas, one of the most treasured recipes is Mamma Agata’s zeppole, the fried donuts traditionally prepared for the holidays that everyone eagerly awaits to enjoy them while they are still hot! For a wonderful holiday entrée, she loves serving her Pappardelle con peperoni e salsiccia (sausage and red pepper pasta) with tomato sauce.

“For us, Christmas is truly the time to leave any worries or problems at the doorstep and simply savor the time together with our family,” she says.

Visit Mamma Agata’s Cooking School website at www.mammaagata.com.





Mamma Agata and daughter Chiara Lima at their Cooking School kitchen in Ravello, Italy



Mamma Agata's Zeppole

Ingredients:

about 1 pounds potatoes
 ½ cup whole milk
 10 ½ tablespoons butter
 3 ½ tablespoons cake yeast
 (or substitute dry yeast)
 2 ¼ pounds flour (Fine "00"
 or white pastry flour)
 1 cup sugar
 3 teaspoons cinnamon
 (powder)
 2 tablespoons baking
 powder
 1 pinch sea salt
 1 teaspoon pure vanilla
 extract/essence
 Finely grated zest of one
 lemon
 6 eggs
 1 quart peanut or vegetable
 oil for frying (note: do not
 use olive oil)
 1 cup granulated sugar
 2 teaspoons cinnamon
 powder

Directions:

- Prepare all of your ingredients to be able to make the dough quickly, including the potatoes (below), sugar, cinnamon, baking powder, sea salt, vanilla, lemon zest and eggs.



Mamma Agata's Zeppole

- Put the butter and milk in a pan and set aside (to help the process go faster later).
- Crack all of the eggs into a bowl.
- Boil the potatoes in salted water until they are soft but not mushy. Remove the potatoes from the water and let them cool to the touch. Remove the skins from the potatoes and discard the skins. Set the potatoes aside.
- Mamma Agata's Secret: Boil the potatoes with the skins on, starting in cold salted water and cooking for approximately 50 minutes. Letting the potatoes cool before peeling them enhances and preserves the flavor of the potatoes.
- On your workstation, create a circular mound of flour with a hole in the center.
- Add sugar, cinnamon, baking powder, salt and vanilla to the flour.
- Add the lemon zest to the flour.
- Mix the ingredients together with your hands.
- Once again, create a hole in the center of the mound.
- Mash the meat of the potato with a potato masher or ricer and work the mashed potatoes into the flour mixture.
- Heat the milk and butter that we put in the pan earlier over low heat just until the butter is melted (not too hot—as too hot or too cold will kill the yeast).
- Once the butter is melted, immediately remove the pan from the heat and let it return to a little warmer than room temperature, so the butter does not re-solidify, but it is not too hot.
- Dissolve the cake yeast into the milk and butter mixture. Starting from the center of the mound, with your hand,

stir in a circle, incorporating the melted butter, milk and cake yeast to the flour and mix.

- Add the eggs. Mix and knead the dough for at least five minutes. Lift the dough and let it fall onto the worktop a couple of times to create a nice soft consistency.
- Cut off a small amount of dough and roll it into long sausage-like, cylindrical shape, with a 1-inch diameter/width. Note: The width of the zeppole is what matters for frying. You may play with the length as desired. Create circles with the individual pieces by marrying the ends of the dough.
- Place the circles of dough on a floured tray and set aside in a nice, warm location (away from drafts and air conditioners. Allow the dough to rise for about 90 minutes before frying.
- Using a deep frying pan (about 3 to 4 inches and 10 inches across) with handle, add oil generously until it's about 1 inch from top of pan. Oil should be very hot, at least 374° F before frying. The oil is ready if a small amount of the batter floats to the top and starts to really bubble.
- While the dough is frying, combine the sugar and cinnamon in a bowl.
- Once the zeppole are golden brown on both sides, remove them from the oil and quickly drain any excess oil from the dough. Dip the zeppole in the cinnamon sugar mixture immediately so that they will absorb the flavors of the topping. Serve hot!

Sausage and Red Pepper Pasta

Serves 4

Ingredients:

½ pound long, broad pasta, wider than Fettuccini (pappardelle pasta is best)
 2 ¼ pounds of red and yellow sweet bell peppers
 3 ½ tablespoons butter (a little less than a ½ stick)
 4 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
 ½ small red or white onion (chopped)
 1 pound sweet Italian sausage
 2 ¼ pounds fresh cherry

tomatoes quartered (you can use half Roma or San Marzano and half cherry tomatoes)

5 fresh basil leaves (torn)
 2 pinches sea salt
 1 cup Mamma Agata's tomato sauce



Sausage and Red Pepper Pasta

Directions:

- Prepare Mamma Agata's Tomato Sauce (see below).
- Wash peppers and remove the stems. Cut each pepper in half and remove and discard the seeds. Slice the peppers lengthwise, not too thin and not to thick.
- Sauté the peppers in peanut oil for 10 to 15 minutes until soft. This makes them easier to digest and also brings out the flavor.
- Place towel to soak up the excess oil.
- In a separate pan, melt the butter and olive oil over low heat. Mamma Agata's Secret: When you cook certain dishes (such as Bolognese, Neapolitan Ragù, and this sauce) for a longer length of time, adding butter to the olive oil maintains the flavour intensity through the end of the cooking process. Olive Oil loses its flavor after 30 minutes of cooking.
- Add the chopped onion and cook until golden brown.
- Add the sausage to the pan and sear on all sides. Cover the pan and cook for an additional two minutes. Note: Chop the sausage at the end of the cooking process to preserve the intense flavor. You can





Mamma Agata's tomato sauce

mince some of the sausage for the sauce and chop bigger pieces to serve on top of the pasta.

- Uncover the pan and pierce the sausage with a fork on both sides, to allow the juice of the sausage to flow in the pan and enhance the flavor of the pasta sauce.
- Add the peppers to the pan with the sausage, placing the sausage on top of the peppers. Add the chopped cherry tomatoes, fresh torn basil, salt and the cup of Tomato Sauce to the pan.
- Cover the pan and cook on a low flame for 30 minutes.
- Once cooked, remove the sausage and cut into small pieces, and place it back into the pan.
- Cook the pasta in salted water until al dente. Drain the pasta and add it to the sausage and pepper sauce and cook on low heat for two additional minutes, to marry the flavors.
- Add a handful of grated Parmigiano cheese and serve hot!

Mamma Agata's Tips:

This is a flexible recipe because you can actually use it as two recipes in one. You can prepare half of the sausage and peppers for a pasta dish, and the other half of the sausage and peppers can be served as a separate meat course. You can keep this sauce in the refrigerator for few days. It will make a nice risotto,

garnish a pizza or make a panino. It is a great thing to make when you have a hectic week and not much time to cook!

Mamma Agata's Tomato Sauce

Ingredients:

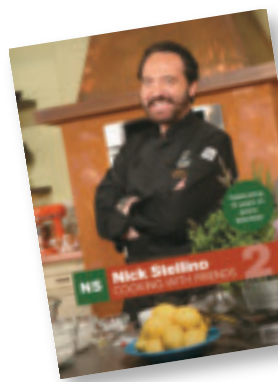
- 1 quart of vine-ripened sweet Roma tomatoes (puréed)
- 10 fresh cherry tomatoes
- 5 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
- 2 cloves of fresh garlic
- 3 fresh basil leaves

Directions:

- Add the olive oil, garlic and basil to a large saucepan. Note: When you add the olive oil, garlic and basil to the pan, do so all at the same time. Do not heat the oil first, then add the garlic and basil to the pan, but rather place all three ingredients into the pan at room temperature and then heat the pan.
- Heat the ingredients over a high flame to release the natural oils contained in the fresh garlic, greatly enhancing the flavors of the tomato sauce. Be careful not to allow the garlic to burn or the oil to smoke. If this happens, you must throw it out and start over. The garlic and oil should only be on the high flame for one to two minutes before proceeding to the next step.
- When the temperature of the oil begins to rise, add the tomato purée and fresh vine-ripened cherry tomatoes to the pan. Note: If the tomatoes are not ripe and sweet, it is okay to add a spoonful of sugar to sweeten the tomato sauce.
- Be careful not to burn yourself or let the oil or tomatoes splash on you. You should hear a nice sizzling sound. Soon you'll enjoy a wonderful aroma from the fragrant ingredients releasing their oils and combining to make this delicious sauce!
- Cook the sauce, first over on a high flame just until the sauce begins to boil. Then, lower the flame to simmer the sauce for a total of 30 minutes (including the time it took to bring it to a boil).

Nick Stellino

Veal Milanese with Tomato Pesto, Salad & Shaved Parmesan and Tiramisù with Strawberry Sauce



Nick Stellino shopping for fresh produce



Listen to Nick Stellino talk about the family table, during the holidays and all year 'round, being "our last tribal meeting ground, where we all sit together and share stories surrounded by great food, great wine, our family and friends," and there's no doubt he's Italian.

A native of Palermo who came to the United States in 1975, Stellino gave up his job in 1991 as a Wall Street stockbroker to pursue his dream and true calling—becoming a chef. To this day, he has no regrets about starting out as a dishwasher and working his way up the culinary ladder to become one of this country's most successful TV chefs and the author of nine bestselling cookbooks, including his latest, "Nick Stellino: Cooking With Friends 2" (Stellino Productions; \$45.95).

The Los Angeles-based Stellino launched his first PBS show in 1995 and his popularity has continued for 15 years. In April, PBS the

start of "Nick Stellino Cooking with Friends II," a show that expounds his basic philosophy: "A family that eats together stays together."

For this holiday season, Stellino offers two traditional favorites—with a slightly different twist!

Visit Nick Stellino's website at www.nickstellino.com.

Veal Milanese with Tomato Pesto, Salad & Shaved Parmesan

Serves 4 to 6

Ingredients:

- 2 eggs
- 2 tablespoons whipping cream
- 1½ pounds veal scaloppine
- 3 cups Italian-style bread crumbs
- 10 tablespoons Pompeian® Extra Light Tasting Olive Oil, divided
- 3 ounces arugula salad
- Salt and pepper to taste
- 2 ounces shaved Parmesan pieces

For the tomato pesto:

- 3 cups tomatoes, peeled, seeded and finely diced
- 6 cloves garlic, finely chopped
- 1 teaspoon C&H® or Domino® sugar
- 1 teaspoon salt
- ½ teaspoon dried oregano
- ½ teaspoon pepper
- ½ teaspoon onion powder
- ½ teaspoon red pepper flakes
- 2 tablespoons basil, freshly chopped
- 1 cup Pompeian® Extra Virgin Olive Oil



Veal Milanese with Tomato Pesto, Salad & Shaved Parmesan