

Ronald Holden, FESTA Sept 25<sup>th</sup>, 2022

## **An Easy Sunday Feast At Home**

*Three courses, as befits an Italian feast, but easy to prepare, serve, and clean up.*

### **ANTIPASTO**

#### **Insalata Caprese**

For the Caprese:

- a couple of juicy beefsteak tomatoes
- a couple of fresh mozzarella balls from Galbani
- olive oil (I have some nice stuff but if you've got something on hand, even better)
- balsamic vinegar
- salt
- pepper
- basil fresh (dried basil if no fresh basil is available)

People always complain about tasteless tomatoes. They're right. Tomatoes are tasteless until they are shocked into life.

Here's how: Slice a beefsteak tomato horizontally, set on a large plate so the slices don't overlap. Sprinkle generously with coarse sea salt, then drizzle with a good olive oil.

Cut a fresh ball of mozzarella into quarter-inch slices. Arrange atop the tomato slices. Drizzle with balsamic vinegar.

Just before serving, top with freshly ground pepper and a few shredded basil leaves.

### **PASTA**

For the Pasta

- Isernio's spicy pork meatballs OR Isernio's spicy ground chicken
- Barilla fettuccine OR Barilla fusilli
- 1 28-ounce can of whole tomatoes (San Marzano tomatoes if you can find them)
- 1 medium onion
- 1 head of garlic
- 2 lemons
- Galbani Grated Parmesan

Fusilli with Isernio's ground chicken and fresh tomato sauce

or

Fettuccine with Isernio's Spicy Pork Meatballs and fresh tomato sauce

The key to this dish is the fresh tomato sauce. We won't actually use whole fresh tomatoes but canned whole tomatoes. The sauce is not a slow-cooked *ragù* but a barely cooked *salsa*.

Start with a can of tomatoes. Muir Glen is a good brand, widely available. Whole Foods has its house brand. The best, if you can find it, is San Marzano, imported from Italy, but supply chain problems are making the brand increasingly scarce. If in doubt, buy the most expensive can on the shelf.

Half an onion, finely chopped. Garlic, as much as you like, finely chopped. Melt a TB of butter and sweat the onions & garlic until they're soft. Add glug of olive oil, then add the tomatoes to the pot; if you have a food mill, run the tomatoes through the food mill, or just use a potato masher. Throw in about 1 tsp of salt (for a 28-ounce can of tomatoes), a few coarsely-chopped basil leaves and some oregano. Also a teaspoon or so of crushed red pepper. Bring this to a simmer. Taste it for balance; add more salt if needed. Remove from heat.

Now the trick: grate two whole lemons, and stir half of the grated peels into the sauce. Save the other half.

As for the pasta: boil the water in a big pot; add a fistful of salt. At least 1 TB per quart. When the water is boiling rapidly, drop in your pasta. The fettuccine package says to cook for 10 minutes; set your timer for 8.

Meantime, cook the meatballs according to the package directions in a skillet with some olive oil. If you're using the ground chicken, check the spicing; add more salt or herbs to your liking.

Now, you've got your sauce in the skillet and your pasta almost ready in the pot. With a pair of tongs or a pasta fork begin transferring the pasta into the skillet. Don't drain the pasta, just pick it up and slosh it out of the stock pot into the sauce. Use the tongs to stir the pasta into the sauce. Add half a ladle of cooking water to the skillet to help the sauce stick to the pasta. If it's too sticky, add another ladle of the cooking water; it's full of starch.

When you're done, take the other half of the grated lemon and scatter that across the top of the pasta. If you still have a basil leaf or two, put that on the edge of the plate when you're serving the pasta. Sprinkle with Galbani parmesan

## DESSERT

### *Fresh berries with whipped ricotta*

#### DESSERT

- 1 pint ricotta from Galbani
- 1 cup granulated sugar
- 1 pint fresh berries (strawberries, raspberries, blueberries, whatever looks good)

Ricotta's a relatively bland cheese made from sheep's milk. Widely available here, although usually made from cow's milk in the US. Dump a pint container of ricotta into a mixing bowl and sprinkle it with ½ cup of granulated sugar. Use a wire whisk to blend the sugar into the ricotta. Taste, add another ½ cup, whisk again, taste again.

Fold ½ pint of fresh raspberries into the ricotta mixture and serve.