

Celebrate La Dolce Vita!

Written by Debbi Covington
Tuesday, 03 May 2016 11:08



A Taste of Italy – Part Two

By Debbi Covington
Photography by Paul Nurnberg

Have you ever dreamed of exploring Italy, visiting the cities and countryside, and eating as the Italians do? Join me on a culinary tour. Just choose a recipe and start cooking. By cooking and sharing regional dishes, we can experience some of the colors, flavors and traditions of Italy.

Pork Chops with Fennel and Caper Sauce

Aromatic fennel adds a delicate anise flavor as it cooks. Lemon zest adds brightness.

¼ cup olive oil

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4 (2-inch thick) boneless pork chops

Salt and freshly ground black pepper

2 fennel bulbs, thinly sliced (reserve and chop some of the fronds)

2 large shallots, thinly sliced

2/3 cup chopped fresh Italian parsley, divided

1/2 cup white wine

1 (28-ounce) can petite diced tomatoes

Zest of 1/2 lemon

2 tablespoons capers

1/2 teaspoon salt

1/2 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper

In a large, heavy skillet, heat the olive oil over medium-high heat. Season the pork chops with salt and pepper. Add the pork chops to the pan and brown on both sides, about 4 minutes on

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each side. Remove the pork from the pan; cover loosely with foil and set aside. Add the fennel, shallots, and 1/3 cup parsley to the pan and cook over medium heat until beginning to brown, about 5 minutes. Add the wine. Using a wooden spoon, scrape the brown bits off the bottom of the pan. Add the tomatoes and stir. Add the pork chops back into the pan between the fennel and tomatoes so that they are mostly submerged in the pan juices. Cook, uncovered, until the fennel is tender and the pork is done, about 12 to 15 minutes. Place the pork chops on a serving platter. To finish the sauce, add the lemon zest, remaining 1/3 cup parsley, capers, and salt and pepper. Stir to combine. Spoon over the pork chops and serve immediately. Garnish with fennel fronds. Serves 4.

Lemon Spaghetti



One of our favorite pastas! It pairs well with pork, chicken and seafood.

1 pound spaghetti

2/3 cup olive oil

2/3 cup grated Parmesan cheese

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½ cup fresh lemon juice (about 3 lemons)

Salt

Freshly ground black pepper

1 tablespoon lemon zest

1/3 cup chopped fresh basil leaves

Cook the pasta in a large pot of boiling water until tender, about 8 minutes. Whisk the oil, Parmesan cheese and lemon juice in a large bowl to blend. Drain the pasta, reserving 1 cup of the cooking liquid. Toss the pasta with the lemon sauce and ¼ cup of the reserved pasta liquid. Add additional pasta liquid as needed to moisten. Season with salt and pepper. Garnish with lemon zest and chopped basil. Serves 6.

Chocolate, Nut and Butter Cookie Loaf (*Mattonella con biscotti sablee*)

Stuffed with nuts and crisp cookies, this dessert loaf looks like a giant candy bar. I use Leibniz cookies, but any butter cookie will work. You'll need about 3 cups.

1 (7-ounce) package butter biscuit cookies, crumbled

½ cup walnut pieces

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½ cup roasted unsalted almonds



½ cup hazelnuts

1 pound plus 10 ounces bittersweet chocolate (65% cocoa), roughly chopped

12 tablespoons unsalted butter

Fine sea salt

Line a 9x5-inch loaf pan with parchment or waxed paper, leaving a 2-inch overhang on all sides. In a large bowl, combine cookies, walnuts, almonds and hazelnuts. Fill a medium saucepan with 2 inches water; bring to a simmer. Combine chocolate, butter and pinch of salt in a medium heatproof bowl. Set bowl over (but not touching) the simmering water; stir until chocolate and butter are melted and combined. Remove bowl from heat. Pour chocolate over nuts and stir to combine. Pour mixture into prepared pan. Cover pan with plastic wrap and chill until chocolate is firm, about 8 hours. About 2 hours before serving, remove loaf from refrigerator and let stand, unwrapped (this will allow loaf to slice cleanly and easily). Using parchment overhang, pull to loosen loaf from pan; transfer to a cutting board. Cut loaf into slices. Serves 10 to 12.

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