

ANCHOVY FRITTATA

Frittata di Acciughe

This frittata could be a great lunch, but the salty, savory anchovies make it a great appetizer, sliced or cubed. Served with some dressed arugula, it is delightful. Any leftovers make a great sandwich the next day.

Serves 6

- 12 large eggs
- ½ cup whole milk
- 1 teaspoon kosher salt
- ½ cup grated Grana Padano or Parmigiano-Reggiano
- 2 cups crustless day-old bread cubes, from a loaf of country bread
- ¼ cup extra-virgin olive oil
- 1 pound medium zucchini, thinly sliced
- 1 small onion, thinly sliced
- 1 bunch scallions, trimmed and chopped
- 12 good-quality anchovy fillets

Preheat the oven to 400 degrees F. In a large bowl, beat the eggs with the milk, salt, and cheese. Stir in the bread cubes, and let the bread soak while you cook the zucchini.

In a 12-inch nonstick skillet, over medium heat, heat the olive oil. When it is hot, add the zucchini, onion, and scallions. Cook until softened, about 5 minutes.

Spread the vegetables out to cover the bottom of the skillet, and pour the eggs and bread over them. Arrange the anchovies on top like spokes in a wheel.

Set the skillet with the frittata in the oven, and bake until the top is golden and the eggs are set, about 20 to 25 minutes. Slide a paring knife around the edge of the skillet to help unmold if the frittata seems to be sticking. Slide onto a cutting board, cut into slices, and serve.

PEPPERS PIEDMONTESE

Peperoni alla Piemontese


Just about everybody is familiar with fried peppers, but try adding a fillet or two of anchovies, as they do in Piemonte, and the flavor path takes another superb twist. Just be attentive with the salt, since the anchovies deliver a good dose of it. This dish is a great addition to any anti-pasto or buffet table, and delicious when added to a bun with a juicy burger.

Serves 6

- 6 yellow or red bell peppers
- 3 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
- 6 garlic cloves, peeled and sliced
- 8 anchovies, chopped
- ¼ teaspoon kosher salt
- 3 tablespoons chopped fresh Italian parsley

Char the peppers as they are—whole and uncleaned—on the stove flame on all sides (or under the broiler). Immediately put the charred peppers in a large bowl and cover tightly with plastic wrap. Let them steam until cool. Peel the charred skin from peppers, remove the stems and seeds, and cut into 1-inch-thick strips.

To a large skillet, over medium heat, add the olive oil. When the oil is hot, add the garlic. Once the garlic begins to sizzle, add the anchovies. Sauté until the anchovies fall apart and dissolve into the oil. Stir together the garlic, anchovies, and grilled pepper strips, and season with the salt. Sprinkle with some parsley, and toss 3 to 4 minutes, so the peppers absorb the garlic-and-anchovy flavor. Serve peppers warm or at room temperature.

 Mozzarella is best when it was made the same day and has not yet been in the refrigerator. In Campania, the region of which Naples is the capital, where mozzarella is king, they deem it best within 3 hours after it has been made. Mozzarella—*fior di latte*, as it is called in Italy—is made from the freshest whole cow's milk. It is milky and rich in taste and at the same time has a resilient texture. There should be a milky juiciness in every bite. Fresh mozzarella should not be runny or acidic. Mozzarella can also be made from the milk of the water buffalo, and appropriately called *mozzarella di bufala*. Keep mozzarella packaged in the refrigerator until ready to use, but let it stand at room temperature 15 minutes before eating it.

MOZZARELLA AND CELERY SALAD

Insalata di Mozzarella e Sedano

Everybody is familiar with the Caprese salad, the perfect combination of tomato and mozzarella, or mozzarella and roasted peppers. This recipe made with celery instead is a fresh and tasty alternative, especially in the winter months, when tomatoes are not at their best.

Serves 6

- 2 tablespoons fresh lemon juice
- 2 teaspoons Dijon mustard
- ¼ teaspoon kosher salt
- 3 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
- 1 pound fresh mozzarella, cubed
- ½ cup walnuts, toasted and coarsely chopped
- 2 cups celery thinly sliced on the bias, with some leaves

In a serving bowl, whisk together the lemon juice, mustard, and salt. Then slowly whisk in the olive oil to make a smooth dressing.

Add the mozzarella, walnuts, and celery. Toss well with the dressing, and serve. Or you can plate a more formal version with fanned, sliced mozzarella and the dressed celery and walnuts on top.

RAW GARDEN SALAD

Giardiniera sott'Olio

This is a very appealing way to prepare and present vegetables in the summer, when produce is abundant; it stays crisp and crunchy in the refrigerator for quite a while. I use these pickled vegetables on a buffet table as a side dish with grilled meats, or toss them into a salad. They also work wonderfully well topped with canned tuna or a sliced chicken breast, and they make a great addition to a sandwich. As you use the giardiniera vegetables, make sure you also use the oil they are packed in.

Serves 6

- 2 cups carrot sticks 1½ inches long
- 2 cups haricots verts, trimmed
- 2 cups small cauliflower florets
- 1 cup sliced red onion
- ⅓ cup coarse sea salt
- 3 cups white-wine vinegar
- 2 cups extra-virgin olive oil, or more as needed

In a large nonreactive bowl, toss the vegetables with the salt. Cover, and refrigerate overnight.

Rinse both the vegetables and the bowl well, and return the vegetables to the bowl. Toss with the vinegar. Cover, and refrigerate for 4 hours or up to overnight.

Rinse and drain again. Pack the vegetables snugly into a lidded glass jar (a quart-sized jar works perfectly). Pour in the olive oil to cover the vegetables. Close the lid, and refrigerate until ready to serve. To serve, fish out the vegetables needed and drizzle some of the curing oil on top. Save the oil to dress other salads.



ONION TART

Crostata di Cipolle

Think of pie dough when you make this dough. Do not work the dough much; you need to combine the ingredients quickly. The assembly is fast and easy. Keep the dough chilled until ready to roll it out for the tart. The rest could not be any simpler, and once it's finished you have an exquisite tart for your antipasto. I love to serve it warm with some tossed greens next to it. It's a great lunch as well.

Serves 6 to 8

DOUGH

3 cups all-purpose flour, plus more for rolling
1½ teaspoons kosher salt
2 sticks cold butter, cut into cubes
6 tablespoons cold water, plus more as needed

ONIONS

4 tablespoons butter, plus more for the cookie sheet
3 pounds onions, halved and thinly sliced
2 teaspoons kosher salt
1 cup heavy cream
½ cup grated Grana Padano or Parmigiano-Reggiano

For the dough: Pulse together the flour and salt in a food processor. Scatter in the butter cubes, and process in pulses until the butter looks like coarse crumbs. Drizzle in the water, and pulse until the dough just comes together, about 10 seconds. Add a little more water if it's too dry, or a little more flour if it's too wet. Dump the dough on a floured counter and knead a few times, until it comes together; it shouldn't be too sticky or crumbly. Wrap the dough in plastic wrap, and let it rest in the refrigerator while you prepare the onions.

Preheat oven to 350 degrees F. In a large skillet, melt the butter over medium heat. Add the onions, and season with the salt. Cook until wilted but not colored, about 10 to 15 minutes. Add the cream, bring to a simmer, and cook, covered, until tender, about 20 minutes. Uncover, and increase the heat to simmer away any excess liquid, which will take about 15 minutes. Let cool while you roll out the dough.

Butter a 15-by-10-inch rimmed cookie sheet. On a floured surface, roll out the dough to a rectangle a little larger than the cookie sheet. (If you have a hard time rolling out such a large piece of dough, roll between layers of parchment paper.) Fit the dough into the prepared pan, letting the excess dough hang over the edges. Spread the onions on the dough, and sprinkle with the grated cheese. Fold the hanging dough back over the onion to form a border crust around the edges.

Bake until crust is crisp and golden, about 40 to 45 minutes. Let cool on a rack at least 15 minutes before cutting into squares to serve.

BAKED TOAST SANDWICHES

Fagottini al Forno

This is an Italian version of a grilled cheese sandwich. The beauty of this recipe is that once you have made it you will find a hundred ways to reinvent it. Do not forget to be innovative with the bread as well: whole-wheat, mixed-grain, and muffins all work beautifully.

Serves 4

3 tablespoons unsalted butter
8 slices sturdy whole-wheat bread
8 slices low-moisture mozzarella
8 slices deli ham
¼ cup prepared tomato sauce
8 fresh basil leaves
2 tablespoons grated Grana Padano or Parmigiano-Reggiano

Preheat the oven to 400 degrees F. Grease a 9-by-13-inch baking dish with 1 tablespoon of the butter. Arrange four slices of the bread in the dish, not touching. Top each with one slice of cheese and two slices of the ham. Spread the tomato sauce over the ham, and top with the basil leaves, then the remaining slices of cheese. Spread the last four slices of bread with the remaining 2 tablespoons butter, and set on top of the sandwiches, butter side up. Sprinkle the bread with the grated cheese.

Bake until the bread is toasted and the cheese is melted and bubbly, about 15 minutes. Let sit for a few minutes before serving.

CARROT AND APPLE SALAD

Insalata di Carote e Mele

This salad is not only delicious by itself but also a great platform for smoked meats or fish; it works well with trout, salmon, duck breast, and ham. Serve the proteins alongside the salad and you have a great appetizer or meal. It is a sandwich stuffer as well; instead of using mayonnaise or other fatty dressings, use this juicy salad. It is especially good on a sandwich of sliced turkey, chicken, or ham.

Serves 6

3 large carrots, peeled and julienned
(about 2 cups)

2 Granny Smith apples, skin on,
julienned (about 3 cups)

Juice of 1 orange

3 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil

2 tablespoons chopped fresh Italian
parsley

¼ teaspoon kosher salt

Freshly ground black pepper

Toss the carrots and apples in a salad bowl with the orange juice and olive oil. Sprinkle with the parsley, season with the salt and pepper, and toss again. Serve cold.

FENNEL AND GORGONZOLA SALAD

Insalata di Finocchio e Gorgonzola

Blue-cheese dressing over iceberg lettuce is common in steak houses around America. This is the Italian counterpart: fresh fennel with a Gorgonzola dressing. When you have some unfinished Gorgonzola in the refrigerator—because the longer it sits, the stronger it gets—think about making this salad dressing.

Serves 6

8 ounces Gorgonzola dolce, rind
removed, crumbled

½ cup heavy cream

½ cup buttermilk

3 tablespoons white-wine vinegar

3 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil

¼ teaspoon kosher salt

3 medium bulbs fennel, halved,
cored, shaved on a mandoline

2 tablespoons chopped fresh Italian
parsley

In a mini-food processor, combine the Gorgonzola, heavy cream, buttermilk, vinegar, oil, and salt. Pulse to make a chunky dressing.

In a large bowl, toss the shaved fennel and parsley. Drizzle the dressing over the contents, and toss well.

STRING BEANS, CAPERS, AND BASIL SALAD

Insalata di Fagiolini, Capperi, e Basilico

This is a refreshing salad, particularly in the summer months. Do play with the different kinds of string beans available in season. I love the flat Roman green varietal, but a mixture of green and yellow wax beans is delicious. This base salad can be enhanced to become a main course by adding canned tuna or sardines. It is also a great way to use leftover grilled fish or chicken.

Serves 6

- ¼ teaspoon kosher salt, plus more for the pot
- 1 pound string beans, trimmed
- ½ cup loosely packed fresh basil leaves
- ½ cup drained tiny capers in brine
- 2 tablespoons red-wine vinegar
- 2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil

Bring a large pot of salted water to boil. Add the string beans, and blanch until tender, about 7 to 8 minutes. Drain, and rinse to cool slightly.

Shred the basil. Put the string beans in a bowl, and toss with the capers and basil. Drizzle with the vinegar and oil, and season with the salt. Toss to coat, and serve slightly warm or at room temperature.

RUSTIC SALAD

Insalata Rustica

Sometimes I just want a salad for a meal, with lots of complex textures and flavors, and this is one of my favorites. Both refreshing and substantial, it delivers a wallop of flavor. Best of all, a lot of the ingredients can come straight from the cupboard.

Serves 6

- 1 pound russet potatoes, peeled, cut into 1-inch chunks
- ½ teaspoon kosher salt, plus more for the pot
- 6 anchovy fillets
- 2 tablespoons red-wine vinegar
- 1 tablespoon Dijon mustard
- ¼ cup extra-virgin olive oil
- One 15-ounce can cannellini beans, drained and rinsed
- 1 bunch scallions, trimmed and chopped (about 1 cup)
- 6 cups baby arugula
- 2 hard-boiled eggs, peeled and quartered

In a medium saucepan, put the potatoes in salted cold water to cover. Bring to a simmer, and cook until tender but not mushy, about 10 to 12 minutes. Drain well.

While the potatoes cook, make the dressing. In a mini-food processor, pulse together the anchovies, vinegar, and mustard. With the processor running, drizzle in the olive oil to make a smooth, emulsified dressing.

When the potatoes are cooked, put them in a large bowl with the beans and scallions. Season with ¼ teaspoon salt, and toss with about three-quarters of the dressing.

In another bowl, toss the arugula with the remaining ¼ teaspoon salt and the remaining dressing. Add the eggs, and toss gently. Serve the salad on plates, with the arugula-egg mixture mounded on top of the potatoes.

CUCUMBERS WITH WHOLE WHEAT COUSCOUS

Cetrioli con Couscous Integrale

When you are looking for a sensible and delicious finger-food appetizer or a party snack, this salad, served with crackers or crostini, should be on your menu. It is refreshing, easy to make, and different from your neighbor's ordinary antipasti. It can be adapted to various kinds of cooked grains, such as barley, wheat, or even lentils. Just keep in mind the cooking time of the grain or legume. Serve it in Chinese soup spoons.

Serves 4 people

- 1 teaspoon kosher salt
- 1 cup whole-wheat couscous
- 1 pound Persian cucumbers, sliced
¼ inch thick
- 1 pint cherry tomatoes, halved
- ¾ cup plain Greek yogurt
- ¼ cup extra-virgin olive oil
- ¼ cup white-wine vinegar
- 2 tablespoons chopped fresh mint

In a small saucepan, bring 1¼ cups water and ½ teaspoon of the salt to a boil. Add the couscous. Remove from heat, cover tightly, and let it stand for 5 minutes to steam. Uncover, and fluff with a fork. Let cool.

When the couscous has cooled, add the cucumbers and tomatoes. In a small bowl, whisk together the yogurt, olive oil, vinegar, mint, and remaining ½ teaspoon salt. Pour over the salad, and toss well. Serve slightly chilled or at room temperature.

CHICKPEA SALAD

Insalata di Ceci

If you like canned tuna, this is a perfect recipe; the tuna becomes the dressing, and the vegetables and the legumes are the protagonists. I offer two options for the chickpeas: to reconstitute and cook the dry kind, or to buy the precooked canned ones. The salad will be good either way, but dry legumes and beans are so economical, as well as nutritionally valuable.

Serves 6

- Two 15-ounce cans chickpeas,
drained and rinsed, or ½ pound
dry chickpeas, cooked
- 1 small red bell pepper, cut into thin
strips
- 1 small yellow bell pepper, cut into
thin strips
- ¼ cup thinly sliced red onion
- ¼ cup drained tiny capers in brine,
chopped
- ¼ cup chopped pitted green olives
- 3 tablespoons chopped fresh Italian
parsley
- One 5-ounce can Italian tuna in oil,
drained
- 3 tablespoons dry white wine
- 2 tablespoons white-wine vinegar
- 1 tablespoon Dijon mustard
- 1 garlic clove, peeled
- ¼ cup extra-virgin olive oil

In a large bowl, combine the chickpeas, bell peppers, red onion, capers, olives, and parsley.

In a mini-food processor, combine the tuna, white wine, vinegar, Dijon, and garlic. Pulse to combine. With the machine running, drizzle in the olive oil to make a smooth, emulsified dressing. Drizzle the dressing over the chickpeas, and toss to coat the salad.

QUICK TIP

To cook dry chickpeas, soak overnight in just enough water to cover. Drain the chickpeas and set them in a pot with abundant water to cover. Add 2 bay leaves and cook for about 45 minutes, until tender.

LENTIL COUNTRY SALAD

Insalata Contadina

Lentils are good in soup and with pasta, and I love making salads with them. This simple salad can be served warm or cold. It is always a welcoming dish, since there is something so inviting about it. I especially love this salad in the summer, when grilling or on a picnic.

Serves 6 to 8

- 1 pound dried lentils, rinsed and drained
- 1 medium onion, diced
- 2 cups peeled, diced carrots
- 2 cups diced celery
- 3 fresh bay leaves
- ¼ cup extra-virgin olive oil
- 6 ounces pancetta, diced
- ⅓ cup white wine
- 3 tablespoons white-wine vinegar
- 1 teaspoon kosher salt
- 3 tablespoons chopped fresh parsley

In a large saucepan, combine the lentils, onion, carrots, celery, bay leaves, and 2 quarts of water. Bring to a simmer, and cook until the lentils are tender, about 30 to 40 minutes. Drain, and remove the bay leaves. Scrape the lentils and vegetables into a serving bowl.

Meanwhile, in a medium skillet, heat 2 tablespoons of the olive oil over medium heat. Add the pancetta, and cook until crisp, about 4 minutes. Pour off most of the fat, and add the remaining 2 tablespoons of olive oil. Add the wine and vinegar, and season the dressing with the salt. Bring to a quick boil, then pour the dressing over the lentils. Toss with the parsley and serve.



BRAISED CABBAGE WITH PROSCIUTTO

Verza e Prosciutto

This simple recipe can be prepared with regular or Savoy cabbage. It is best when the cabbage is in season and abundant. Bacon can be substituted for the prosciutto, and smoked bacon will add an additional dimension of flavor. I sometimes substitute apple cider vinegar for the white wine vinegar.

Serves 6

- 1/3 cup extra-virgin olive oil
- 6 garlic cloves, peeled and crushed
- 3 ounces thickly sliced prosciutto, cut into strips
- 1 medium head Savoy cabbage, cored and thinly sliced (about 2 pounds)
- 1 cup white wine
- 1/2 cup white wine vinegar
- 1 teaspoon kosher salt

In a Dutch oven, heat the olive oil over medium heat. When the oil is hot, add the garlic. Once the garlic is sizzling, add the prosciutto, and cook until the fat has rendered. Add the cabbage, wine, and vinegar. Season with the salt, and increase the heat to medium-high. Cover, and simmer until the cabbage is completely wilted, about 20 minutes.

Lower the heat, uncover, and simmer until the sauce has reduced and the cabbage is very tender, about 15 minutes more.



YELLOW SQUASH PIE

Torta di Zucca Gialla

The idea for this recipe came to me from The Art of Eating Well. This is my interpretation of the recipe from Pellegrino Artusi's La scienza in cucina e l'arte di mangiar bene, the first truly successful Italian cookbook. I love cooking with squash, especially in the fall, when it is in season. One would normally think of this as a savory dish, but it makes a delicious dessert.

Serves 6 to 8

- 2 pounds yellow squash, grated
- 2 cups whole milk
- ½ cup sugar
- ¼ teaspoon kosher salt
- 1 tablespoon unsalted butter, at room temperature
- ½ cup panko breadcrumbs
- ¼ teaspoon ground cinnamon
- 4 ounces blanched almonds
- 3 eggs

Preheat oven to 350 degrees F. Wrap grated squash in a kitchen towel, and wring out any excess liquid. Put squash in a medium saucepan with the milk, 2 tablespoons sugar, and the salt. Simmer until squash is tender, about 15 minutes. Let cool slightly.

Butter an 8- or 9-inch glass pie plate. In a small bowl, toss together the panko and cinnamon. Line the pie plate with the panko, tapping out and discarding the excess.

In a food processor, grind the almonds into fine crumbs with the remaining 6 tablespoons sugar. Add the cooled squash and the eggs. Purée until smooth. Pour into the lined baking dish, and bake until set, about 45 minutes. Let cool slightly on a rack before cutting into wedges. Can be served warm or at room temperature.

GRANDMA ROSA'S APPLE CAKE

Torta di Mele di Nonna Rosa

Moist and delicious, this is a fruit dessert that you can make year-round. I especially love making it in the fall, when apples are in season. It is also perfect for breakfast. When you have a big crowd coming, pop one of these into the oven, and your guests will devour it along with a dollop of whipped cream and a good cup of coffee.

Serves 8

- 1 stick unsalted butter, at room temperature, plus more for the pan
- 1 cup all-purpose flour, plus more for the pan
- ¾ cup granulated white sugar
- 2 large eggs
- ½ teaspoon vanilla extract
- 1 tablespoon baking powder
- Pinch kosher salt
- Zest of 1 lemon, grated
- 3 baking apples (such as Golden Delicious), peeled, cored, and cut into ½-inch chunks
- 2 tablespoons light-brown sugar
- ½ cup coarsely chopped walnuts, toasted

Preheat the oven to 350 degrees F. Butter and flour an 8- or 9-inch springform pan.

In an electric mixer fitted with the paddle attachment, cream the butter and white sugar until pale and light, about 1 minute. Add the eggs, one at a time, and beat until light and fluffy, another minute or two. Beat in the vanilla.

Sift together the flour, baking powder, and salt. Pour the dry ingredients into the mixer with the lemon zest, and mix until just combined. In a medium bowl, toss together the apples, brown sugar, and walnuts. Scrape the batter into the prepared pan, smooth the top, and then sprinkle with the apple mixture.

Bake until a toothpick comes out clean from the center of the cake, about 35 to 40 minutes. Let cool on a rack, then unmold, and cut into wedges to serve.