



Cooking with
Viola Fuitoni

Italy by Ingredient: Pasta **4/29/2021**

I struggled on whether to include a pasta chapter in this Italy by Ingredient™ cooking series of classes. If on one hand there is arguably no ingredient as representative of Italian cooking, on the other, the faces of pasta are so many and so varied that a 90 minute class barely scratches the surface.

In the end, pasta won. I couldn't stay from an ingredient so intimately connected to the daily rituals of Italian table culture.

There is no limit to the colors you can apply to the canvas of pasta. Indeed, I am hard pressed to find an ingredient in my pantry and refrigerator that I haven't had on a pasta sauce.

For today's class, I chose 3 shapes that are both regional and national and that are always present in my pantry.

The sauces are representative of my daily cooking and my ongoing exploration of the delightful relationship between Bay Area agriculture and the best Italian agri-food imports. While we cook we will also talk about origins, jargon, shopping, shapes and best cooking practices to always give your pasta the perfect bite.



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Rigatoni al tonno e pomodoro Corbarino

Rigatoni with tuna and Corbarino tomatoes

for 2 people

salt as needed

1/2 yellow onion

6 to 8 basil leaves

1 can tuna packed in olive oil

3 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil

1 teaspoon dried oregano

1 14 ounces can of Corbarino tomatoes (or other peeled tomatoes)

pepper to taste (or red chili flakes)

6 ounces rigatoni (or other largish tubular short pasta)

Put 2 quarts of water to boil and season with $\frac{1}{2}$ tablespoon of salt.

Slice the onions paper thin. Stack the basil leaves, roll them and slice them in thin ribbons. Drain the tuna from its packing oil and flake with a fork.

Coat the bottom of a sauté pan with 2 tablespoons of olive oil. Place over medium heat. When its fragrance effortlessly wafts to your nostrils and it is shimmery, add the onions. Stir occasionally and add a little water if needed. It will take 6 to 8 minutes.

Raise the heat to high and add the tuna, oregano and half the basil. Swirl quickly to coat the tuna in delight, then pour in the peeled tomatoes. Fill the empty can half way with warm water and add to the pan.

Break up the tomatoes with a masher or a wooden spoon and bring to the boil. Lower the temperature to medium. Let simmer lively.

The water should be boiling by now. Add the rigatoni and cook 3 minutes shy of the suggested time.

Season the sauce with black pepper (or chili flakes) and adjust salt if necessary.

Transfer the pasta to the pan with a handheld strainer and add 1 or 2 ladlefuls of cooking water and bring to completion. Finish with 1 tablespoon of olive oil and transfer to a warm serving bowl.

Garnish with the remaining basil and serve right away.



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Tagliolini alle punte di asparagi e speck della Valtellina

Tagliolini with asparagus tips and speck from Valtellina

for 2 people

2 slices speck
salt as needed
1 small shallot
1 marjoram sprig
10 thin asparagus
3 tablespoons olive oil
1/2 cup white wine
pepper to taste
6 ounces tagliolini (or other long egg pasta)
grated parmigiano

Turn the oven to 300° F. Place the speck slices on a cooling rack over a sheet pan and bake them until they are a little frilly and hardened. Mince the shallot with 1/2 teaspoon of salt. Pick and chop the marjoram leaves.

Hold an asparagus by the tip and run the thumb and index finger along the stem slightly bending, until you find the place to snap, let the asparagus tell you where that is, do not force. Clean all the asparagus and cut into thin rounds leaving the tips whole.

Coat the bottom of a skillet with 2 tablespoons of olive oil and place over medium heat. When its fragrance effortlessly wafts to your nostrils and it is shimmery, add the shallot. Soften until it is translucent and almost melting, it will take about 6 minutes.

Add the asparagus wheels and cook for about 5 minutes, until they start shining and slightly yield to the touch. Raise the heat to high and douse with the white wine. When its vapors no longer punch your nose but they caress your eyes, adjust salt and pepper.

While the asparagus is cooking, add the tagliolini to 2 quarts of salted boiling water and stir. Cook for 2 minutes shy of the time suggested on the package. Transfer the tagliolini to the pan with tongs and add 1 or 2 ladlefuls of pasta cooking water. Swirl to finish cooking, adding a little more water if necessary.

Finish with the remaining olive oil and 1 tablespoon of parmigiano. Transfer to a warm serving platter and crumble the oven dried speck slices over it. Serve right away with more parmigiano on the side.



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Orecchiette alle cime con acciughe di Cetara

Rigatoni with tuna and Corbarino tomatoes

for 2 people:

3 peeled garlic cloves
3 Cetara anchovy fillets (or other anchovies)
salt to taste
1/2 pound broccoli rabe
1/4 cup olive oil
1 to 2 pinches red pepper flakes
6 ounces orecchiette
grated pecorino for serving (optional)

Add 2 garlic cloves to a pot with 2 quarts of salted boiling water and cook it for 10 minutes. Add the cleaned broccoli and cook until tender but still bright green.

Strain the garlic and greens out of the water with a hand held strainer. Chop the broccoli and garlic very finely. Leave the cooking water in the pot to cook the pasta.

Bring the water back to a boil, and add the pasta. Calculate about 3 minutes less than what suggested on the package.

While the pasta is cooking, smash and peel the remaining garlic cloves. DO NOT CHOP IT. Chop the anchovies.

Heat 2/3 of the olive oil in a sauté pan with the peeled garlic clove, anchovies and chili flakes over low heat. When the wafts of garlic rise to your nose check to see if the garlic is blistered on one side, turn it to blister the other, then remove and discard it. Add the cooked greens and garlic and sauté for a couple of minutes, stirring often. Adjust salt and pepper.

The pasta should be ready by now, fish it out of the water with a handheld strainer and transfer it to the sauté pan. Raise the heat to high and add 4 to 5 tablespoons of cooking water.

Finish cooking the pasta in the sauté pan until you achieve your preferred tenderness. You may need to add some more cooking water if it seems too compact.

Toss with the remaining olive oil and serve immediately with the pecorino on the side.



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SHOPPING LIST

Produce

- 8 to 10 basil leaves
- 1 sprig marjoram
- 1/2 yellow onion
- 3 peeled garlic cloves
- 1/2 pound broccoli rabe
- 1 small shallot
- 10 asparagus spears

Pasta

- rigatoni
- tagliolini
- orecchiette

Protein

- 1 can tuna packed in olive oil
- 2 slices speck
- 3 Cetara anchovy fillets (or other anchovies)

Dairy

- 1/4 cup grated parmigiano
- 1/4 cup grated pecorino for serving (optional)

Miscellaneous

- salt
- pepper
- red chili flakes
- olive oil
- 1 small jar Corbarino tomatoes (or other peeled tomatoes)

EQUIPMENT LIST

- well washed hands
- 2 to 3 kitchen rags
- cutting board
- chef's knife
- paring knife
- 5 to 6 medium and small bowls for prepping
- 1 large bowl for refuse



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- 3 skillets or sauté pans
- 2 sauce pots for pasta (3 to 4 quarts is plenty)
- colander
- handheld strainer
- wooden spoons
- tongs
- zester
- small ladle
- tasting spoons

PREPPING LIST

- print recipes
- pull out ingredients and divide according to recipe
- wash all produce
- pull out equipment and have available within arm's reach