

## FIRST FAMILIES of FOOD SERIES

As part of our First Families of Food Series, we delve into the kitchen of **Marco and Laura Roccasalvo** of Campo de' Fiori to see what Italian delights they make at home

Photography **Harry Weir**

# ITALY *uncovered*

## **Fegato con cipolle** Beef liver with onions

*This is a traditional dish from Rome, where offal is very big. Lamb liver is a lot less common in Italy so they pay quite a bit for beef liver. Here, however, it is relatively cheap as it's in less demand*

### **Serves 2**

50g butter  
3 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil  
300g white onions, chopped julienne  
300g beef liver  
50ml dry white wine  
1 teaspoon sea salt

**1** Using a large non stick pan, add the butter and the oil at medium heat. Now add the onion. Stir fry for four minutes and then add the liver, cut into strips.

**2** Bring the heat to maximum and add the wine and the salt. Cook for three minutes. For best results, the liver should be cut in strips of 2cm and should be cooked on the outside but be slightly raw in the centre.

### **TIP**

Don't overcook the liver or you'll end up with a dry grainy consistency.

**TIP**

The broth is good for three days kept in the fridge. It is important to heat the broth before adding it to the rice.



## Risotto allo zafferano

### Saffron risotto

*We have this dish often at lunchtime as Italians prefer to eat their carbs at lunch rather than dinner. It's best not to make risotto for more than four people or the consistency won't be right*

**Serves 2**

3 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil  
200g carnaroli rice  
50g onion, finely chopped  
30g butter  
70g Parmesan, grated  
1 x 0.125g sachet saffron powder  
or small pinch saffron stems

**For the broth**

3 litres water  
1 medium onion  
2 sticks celery  
1 large carrot  
25g sea salt

**1** First, make the broth. Take a large saucepan and add the water. Peel the onion and cut in four. Wash the celery and cut in four. Do the same for the carrot – peel the external skin and cut in four.

**2** Put the vegetables and salt into the water and bring to the boil, reduce the heat to minimum and leave to simmer for 40 minutes. Then remove all the vegetables and keep the broth warm.

**3** Put a large pan on a medium heat and grease with the oil. Add the onion. Gently fry the onion for three to four minutes, not allowing the onion to colour.

**4** Now add the rice. This action is called 'perlare' and it is a very important step to make a nice risotto. Stir continuously for four minutes until the rice is coloured like a pearl.

**5** Now start to add the hot broth, just enough to cover the rice. Stir continuously for about 15 to 17 minutes, adding more broth once it is all absorbed. Taste the consistency of the rice after 15 minutes. Risotto is al dente when the grain is soft on the outside and slightly crunchy on the inside.

**6** When the rice is al dente, leave on the heat until the broth is completely absorbed. Turn off the heat and add the saffron (if you use saffron stems, leave them in to infuse in 2 tablespoons of hot broth first), the butter and the Parmesan. This moment is another very important step called 'mantecatura'.

**7** Continue to stir until all the ingredients are mixed together. Leave the risotto covered in the pan for three minutes and then serve it.

## Spinaci burro e parmigiano

### Spinach with butter and Parmesan

*This is a very simple side dish that my mother used to give me when I was sick as a child so it's pure comfort food for me. It goes well with any simple fish dish*

**Serves 2**

250g fresh baby spinach,  
frozen spinach leaves are fine  
50g butter  
70g Parmesan, grated  
½ teaspoon sea salt

**1** Wash the spinach and add a cup of water in a large pan. Add the spinach and the salt, cover with a lid and cook at a medium heat for five minutes.

**2** Drain the water if there is any left and add the butter. Bring the pan back to a medium heat and stir until the butter is completely melted and mixed into the spinach.

**3** Now turn off the heat and add the grated Parmesan and mix through the spinach and butter.

**TIP**

This is a great side dish for kids as the spinach is full of iron.



## Polenta con le salsicce al sugo

### Polenta with pork sausages in hot tomato sauce

*A popular dish at this time of year, particularly in Northern Italy where polenta is often served with game, melted cheese, forest mushrooms or with a sauce like this one. To make polenta, follow the instructions on the box. Every polenta has a different cooking time. There is one polenta called 'istantanea',*

*which usually cooks in five minutes. This is a very good option. Otherwise, if you get the ordinary one, you have to stir it for about 40 to 45 minutes*

#### TIP

When polenta gets cold, it's not creamy anymore so it's not good for this kind of recipe. For best results make the polenta just before the sauce is ready.

#### Serves 2

750ml water  
1 teaspoon sea salt  
200g polenta flour istantanea  
3 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil  
100g chopped onion  
2 cloves garlic, chopped  
1 small red hot chilli pepper or  
½ teaspoon crushed chilli  
250g fresh Italian pork sausages,  
chopped to 2cm pieces  
400g chopped tomato  
½ teaspoon of salt  
½ teaspoon caster sugar

**1** Bring the water to the boil with the salt and then start to sieve in the polenta flour. Do not add the polenta in one go or it will become lumpy.

**2** Stir continuously for five minutes with a wooden spoon until the water is completely absorbed. Be careful, use a long wooden spoon or a kitchen glove, because when polenta is boiling, it could splatter and burn your skin. When polenta is ready, cover the saucepan with a lid and keep warm.

**3** Take a large saucepan and grease it with the olive oil. Gently fry the onions with the garlic and chilli. Stir for three or four minutes.

**4** Add the sausages. Continue cooking at a medium heat for five minutes. Add the tomato, salt and sugar. Reduce the heat to low and leave the sauce cooking for another 20 minutes until the tomato is reduced by one third and is thick.

**5** Serve the polenta in a plate, and cover it with the sausages and tomato sauce.



#### TIP

It's important the the pancetta is not smoked as it will overpower the sweetness of the peas.

## Pisellini con cipolla e pancetta

### Garden peas with pancetta and onions

*This is a very versatile side dish that we serve all year round with any meat dishes, or even fried eggs. We don't put it with fish dishes though because of the pancetta*

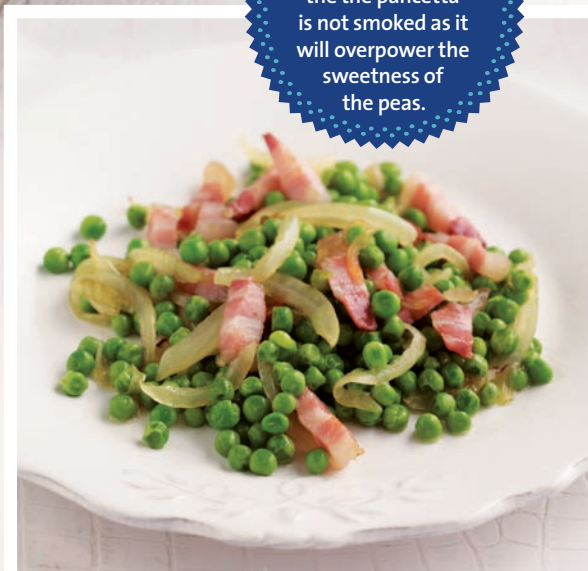
#### Serves 2

5g sea salt, plus a pinch  
50g garden peas, frozen are fine  
2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil  
50g onion, finely sliced  
50g non-smoked pancetta, cut into strips

**1** Bring a large pot of water to the boil and add 5g of salt. Add the garden peas and follow the cooking instruction on the bag. It's usually five minutes.

**2** When they are cooked, drain and keep to one side. Take a non stick pan and grease with the oil. Heat at medium and add onion and pancetta. Stir fry for five minutes until the onion is golden and the pancetta is crispy.

**3** Now add the garden peas and stir together for another five minutes, still at medium heat, add a pinch of salt and serve.







## Quaglia al marsala con asparagi e prosciutto

Quail in Marsala sauce served with asparagus and Parma ham

*We much prefer quail to chicken and tend to have it in the fridge quite often. Asparagus has a short season in Ireland but provides a nice hit of iron*

### Serves 2

2 large quail  
4 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil  
1 garlic clove  
20ml Marsala  
50ml fresh cream  
3 pinches salt  
12 asparagus tips  
500ml water  
5g sea salt  
4 slices of Parma ham

**1** Cut the quails. You can cut in two with a breast and leg for each, or if you prefer you can divide legs from the breast and this will be easier to cook and eat.

**2** Take a non stick pan and heat at medium with the oil and the chopped garlic.

**3** Add the quail and cook for 10 minutes, turning each side very often. Season with

salt. Add the Marsala and leave to reduce for one minute. Now add the cream and continue to cook until the sauce is thick.

**4** Boil the asparagus for three minutes in 500ml of water with 5g of salt. Drain the asparagus and make four bunches of three asparagus spears each and wrap them with the Parma ham. Serve the quail with the asparagus on the side.

### TIP

This dish would go well with the peas or with polenta in place of asparagus.







Marco and Laura Roccasalvo

## Panna cotta alla cannella

### Cinnamon panna cotta

*There are many different flavours of panna cotta you can make but for us, it has to be cinnamon, particularly during the colder months. You can also make it with coffee, Baileys or fruit if you prefer*

#### Serves 4

½ vanilla pod  
350g fresh cream  
35g caster sugar  
1 stick cinnamon or 2g powdered cinnamon  
5g gelatine leaves

**1** Cut the vanilla pod in the middle and, with the help of a knife, remove all the seeds inside. Put the seeds and the empty pod in a saucepan with the cream, sugar and cinnamon. Bring the cream to the boil and stir, making sure all the sugar is dissolved.

**2** Soak the gelatine in cold water for 10 minutes and, when soft, squeeze it and add to the cream, vanilla and sugar mixture.

**3** Now divide the panna cotta into four cups or glasses and leave it to cool down for 30 minutes. Once cool, store in the fridge for at least four hours or until ready to serve.

#### TIP

This is a good one for a dinner party as it can be kept in the fridge for up to a week.



## Finto millefoglie alla mia crema pasticcera

False millefoglie with my custard cream

*This is a very simple dessert of pastry and custard that can be served on a plate or in a bowl. This custard is also lovely crumbled with Savoiardi biscuits for a quick and easy treat*

### Serves 4

1 lemon  
1 vanilla pod  
500ml milk  
6 egg yolks  
150g caster sugar  
50g plain flour  
1 sheet of frozen puff pastry, defrosted

**1** Wash and peel the lemon and keep the skin. Open the vanilla pod and remove the seeds with a knife.

**2** Bring 400ml of the milk to the boil with the lemon skin, the vanilla seeds and the empty vanilla pod. Allow to cool slightly.

**3** With the electric whisk, beat the yolks and sugar until you get a soft compote.

**4** Remove the lemon skin and the vanilla pod from the milk. Take one third of the milk and add it to the compote. The milk must be lukewarm. Continue to beat with the whisk.

**5** Using a sieve, add the flour to the compote and continue to mix with the whisk. Now add your compote to the milk and bring it to the boil again. Reduce the heat and leave it to simmer for three minutes.

**6** Now slowly add the 100ml of cold milk and turn off the heat. Continue to mix for a couple of minutes. Your 'crema pasticcera' is ready.

**7** Preheat the oven to 220°C/gas mark 7. Take a sheet of puff pastry. Cut six squares of 10cm each. Line a baking tray with baking paper and put the puff pastry squares on top. Bake in the preheated oven for 12 minutes. They are ready when they are puffed up at least 3cm. Remove from the oven and leave them to cool.

**8** Cut the squares horizontally in two and start to build your dish. Put some crema pasticcera on the plate followed by a layer of puff pastry, then some crema pasticcera and again puff pastry. Repeat four times, finishing with some crema pasticcera. Dust the plate with icing sugar and serve. 🍴

### TIP

You can make the crema pasticcera in advance. It lasts for four days in the fridge covered in clingfilm. Ensure the clingfilm does not touch the top of the crema.



With thanks to **Marco and Laura Roccasalvo** and all the team at **Campo de Fiori Restaurant** in Bray, County Wicklow. As well as the restaurant and wine bar, Campo de' Fiori Risto-Market on Albert Avenue offers a range of Italian delights for enthusiastic foodies, including cured meats, cheeses, wines, Italian coffee, fresh fish, fruit, veg and freshly baked pizza slices.

**Campo de' Fiori Restaurant,  
Wine Bar & Risto-Market  
1 Marlborough Terrace,  
Strand Road, Bray Seafront,  
County Wicklow.  
Tel: +353 (0)1 276 4257;  
[www.campodefiori.ie](http://www.campodefiori.ie)**

