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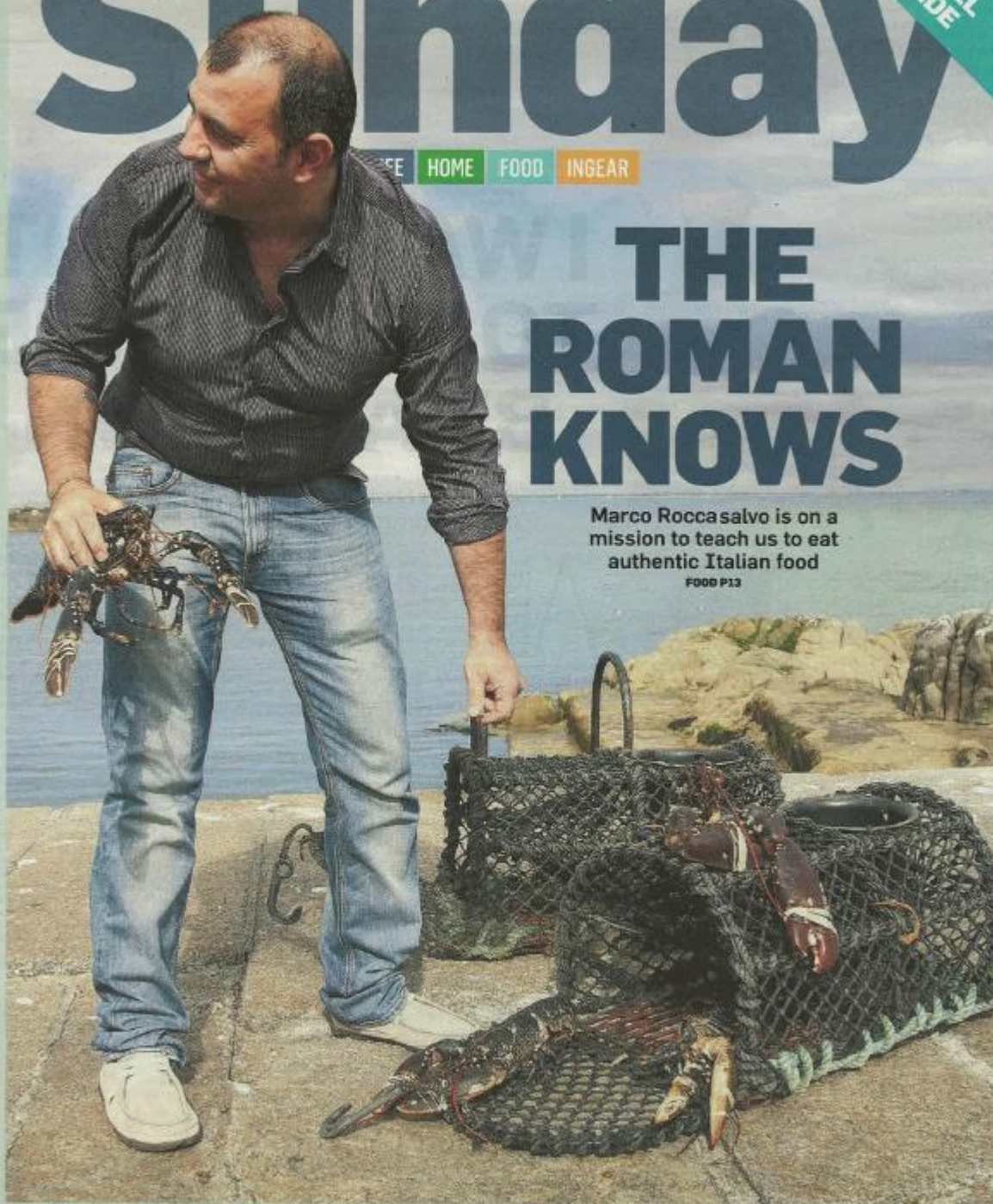
TRAVEL
INSIDE

SE HOME FOOD INGEAR

THE ROMAN KNOWS

Marco Roccasalvo is on a mission to teach us to eat authentic Italian food

FOOD P13





CORINNA HARDGRAVE



Marco Roccasalvo, one of Ireland's top Italian chefs, talks meatballs, mozzarella—and the sin of pairing pasta with chicken

Marco Roccasalvo, the passionate chef and owner of Campo de Fiori, an Italian restaurant in Bray, Co Wicklow, is also a bit of a soothsayer. "The day I start to do pasta with chicken, the world will finish," he says. "And I will never change my mind on this subject."

Thankfully, he won't need to any time soon. In a country where Italian cooking so often fails to rise above the pool of overseasoned, gloopy sauce at the bottom of your pasta bowl, the reputation and clientele of Roccasalvo's modest, seafront eatery has flourished since its humble beginnings in 2004, despite his refusal to engage with the established norms of Hiberno-Italian cooking.

"It is still a problem, because when people come to the door, they don't find what they know. They say, 'Do you make pasta with meatballs?' No. 'Do you do lasagne with chips?' No. 'Do you do pasta with chicken?' No. After the third or the fourth 'no', they leave," says Roccasalvo. "Now Campo de Fiori is known as an authentic restaurant, but I have spent years explaining to people what we are trying to do. My wife, Laura, sometimes says, 'Marco, why don't you change your mind? We could be rich.' But I will never do it."

If it has taken time to win over the locals, the folks back home are mightily impressed. In 2006, the restaurant received a Silver Plate award from the Accademia Italiana della Cucina, in recognition of its authenticity and adherence to Italian culinary traditions.

Last year, it won a Ospitalità Italiana Seal of Quality award, along with another Eastern seaboard Italian, Via Veneto in Ennisworth, Co Wexford. The award is an initiative that aims to certify the best Italian restaurants all over the world, and its



Roccasalvo in Bray, where he owns a 'risto-market', below, and Campo de Fiori restaurant; bottom, risotto with cuttlefish ink



PENNE AND PAPER

recipients include the Michelin-starred Locanda Locatelli and Zafferano, both in London.

Now Roccasalvo has published *Buon Appetito: The Campo de Fiori Cookbook*. It even has a recipe for meatballs from his wife's family, but in this case they are served on their own as a main course—never with pasta. "Nobody in Italy cooks spaghetti and meatballs," he says. The tomato sauce the meatballs are cooked in is not served

with them either, but used later for pizza instead.

"The way that we eat, the Italian way, is first antipasto, which could be a soup, a bruschetta or a pot of mussels, and then you have pasta. In Italy, if you're having a full meal, the pasta is a middle course called primo piatto," says Roccasalvo. "And then there is the second pasta, what is considered the main course here, and usually it is meat or fish. And we serve it

with a side order, which could be a salad, spinach or chips. It's never pasta or rice. Then we finish with fresh fruit or dessert."

Roccasalvo grew up in Rome with Sicilian parents. He remembers a childhood filled with the intoxicating aroma of ragouts slowly cooking on the stove on a Sunday morning as his mother's handmade pasta hung from the ceiling to dry. Having learnt how to cook at home, he

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Georgia Laia of Calgari in Sardinia with fresh pasta

PERFECT PASTA

Mario Roccasalvo's guide to cooking the Italian staple.

For each 100g/3½oz of pasta, use 1 litre/1½ pints of water and 7g/¼oz of salt. Use a very large pot that can hold up to at least 6 litres/10½ pints. The pasta will cook better.

Don't put in the pasta until the water is boiling. Add the salt when the water boils, not when the pasta is already cooking, and do not put oil in the water.

Never cool pasta in cold water. If you are preparing a cold dish, place the pasta on a tray to cool down at room

temperature.

If using dry pasta, stick to the cooking times suggested on the packet.

Drain a minute before the time that is recommended. If you are putting it back in the pan to toss it with sauce.

Pasta should always be cooked al dente (with a little bite). This gives it a nicer texture and makes it easier to digest.

Never break spaghetti in half. This is a mortal sin in my book. Fresh pasta cooks much quicker. The thinner the dough, the quicker the cooking. Fresh fettuccine or tagliatelle cook in three minutes. Learn to taste the pasta while it's cooking to make sure you never overcook it. Remove excess flour from fresh pasta before cooking. Excess flour will turn into glue.

Always add the pasta into the sauce, and not the other way around. Toss the pasta with the sauce, to make sure all the sauce is nicely absorbed.

Always set aside a ladle of pasta cooking water; you may need it if your sauce is dry. Never precook pasta. It must always be cooked fresh.



Roccasalvo with the Florinis, who own the independent Gadiolo wine estate in Montepulciano, Tuscany; below the chef's latest book

Continued from page 13 opened a restaurant in Albano Laziale in the hills just southeast of Rome when he was 23, serving the simple food he grew up with, making fresh pasta and changing the menu regularly. At 31, his first marriage ended and, in search of a change, he sold up and left Italy.

After a brief stop in London, he headed to Italian friends in Athlone, then moved to Dublin where he worked

for three years in the popular Roccasalvo on Dame Street. Here, the focus was on authentic Italian food and ingredients. Then, after much searching, he found the perfect premises for his own restaurant, and in 2004 he opened Campo de' Fiori on Albert Avenue in Bray. Carlo Santinelli, with whom Roccasalvo had worked at Roccasalvo, came with him to work front of house.

In 2010, he married Laura and a year later moved to a larger

premises on the seaford, and six months later had converted the original restaurant into a "risto-market", a combination of a deli and trattoria, serving pizza, pasta and simple dishes. Customers sit on stools and share the table space.

The word spread and Campo de' Fiori quickly built up a reputation for its authentic food and became a destination restaurant.

Central to Roccasalvo's approach is his insistence on using top-quality ingredients.

"When you're buying your ingredients wholesale, usually there are three price options and the difference between the cheapest and the most expensive is very little, like with a kilo of flour it is just 20c,"

he says.

"We prefer to increase the prices by only that amount, and give our customers the best. Similarly, the difference in serving

top-quality prosciutto is about 40c per serving."

Despite the fact that many in Ireland are appreciative of authentic Italian food, Roccasalvo says there are misconceptions about it, in particular our use of the term parma ham.

"The correct Italian name for ham is 'prosciutto' and it comes from numerous regions, around the country, not just Parma." He also says that whereas buffalo

mozzarella is popular here, in Italy they mainly eat cow's milk mozzarella.

With pizza, Roccasalvo says it is important to let the dough rise slowly so it matures and makes the wheat in it more digestible. He proves it for 72 hours before cooking the pizza for about four minutes at 350C to give a crispy base. "First, we let it rise for 24 hours and then we leave it for 48 hours in the fridge. Then, we

remove it from the fridge and leave it for two more hours until it is soft. That's the way we make pizza in Rome."

During the downturn, people have cut back on taxis, so the trade from Dublin has fallen off, except on Sundays. In response, Roccasalvo has launched a mid-week "cheap and chic" menu at the main restaurant, using lesser-known cuts of Piedmontese beef from an Italian breed raised in Co Laois. "There is branzino, a braised meat made with the brislet. After five hours cooking with chianti wine, it starts to be very soft. It's fantastic. So people are now getting four courses with an amuse-bouche, homemade pasta, meat and a dessert for €20."

For 2014, Roccasalvo "would love to open a very small place in Dublin". However, not everyone has bought into his plans. "My wife says, 'If you open another restaurant, I will leave you.' But I'm looking for a small place, with eight tables. I think Dublin would be a nice place for us."

If Mrs Roccasalvo gets her way and it doesn't happen, Dublin foodies might be disappointed, but it won't be the end of the world — he still won't be serving pasta with chicken.



KITCHEN KIT

SEAL OF APPROVAL

Making evenly sized ravioli requires a steady hand and patience. Fortunately, World of Flavours' Italian 40cm Ravioli Rolling Pin helps make perfect pasta parcels with none of the hassle. Simply sandwich the filling between two sheets of pasta and roll the device across, while gripping the handles to produce ravioli that looks as though it has been made by a professional. €18.90, amazon.ie



OVER
TO YOU

"This is my second cookery book," says Marco Roccasalvo. "The reason I decided to do it was to share my recipes with other people. Everything I have inside, I give to the guys I work with and I like to share recipes with my customers, too. There are no secrets."

Roccasalvo says the concept is to make Italian food with ingredients that you can find in Ireland.

"You can make tomato sauce with tinned tomatoes,"

he says. "In Italy, it is made fresh only when it is in season. But it's important to buy good tinned tomatoes."

In order to adapt his recipes for the home cook, Roccasalvo says he tested them in the restaurant and at home.

"When I cook, I work with my hands and the recipe is in my brain," he says. "But when you're writing a recipe for a cookbook, you have to cook with the

weighing scales beside you and weigh everything. So I started to write ingredient by ingredient, weighing everything."

"If you follow them exactly, you will get it right. Anyone can make these dishes."

Featured below are three recipes from *Buen Appetito, The Campo de Fiori Cookbook*, by Marco Roccasalvo, available for €20 plus €6.90 shipping, from campodelfiori.ie



TARTARA DI MANZO

Serves 2
Beef tartare

What you will need

10 olives (Taggiasca from Liguria or Paranzana from Apulia)
160g/5oz lean beef (fillet or loin), cut into cubes about

1cm/1/2in thick
Juice of 1 lemon
Extra-virgin olive oil
Sea salt and freshly ground black pepper

How to prepare

Pit the olives and cut them into small pieces. Place the cubed beef into a bowl and add the lemon juice and olive oil. Season well with salt and ground black pepper. Cover and place in the fridge for two hours.

Take the mixture out of the fridge half an hour before serving. To serve, you can use a stainless steel ring mould. Place the mould on a plate, fill the mould with the beef and then press down gently, then carefully lift the mould away.

The oil you see at the base of the plate, above, can be made by blending some fresh parsley with extra virgin olive oil. It will add a nice colour contrast to the dish.

TAGLIONI CON ZUCCA, PROSCIUTTO,
POMODORINI E PARMIGIANO

Serves 2
Taglioni with pumpkin, ham, cherry tomatoes and parmesan cheese

What you will need

For the sauce
Extra-virgin olive oil
300g/10½oz yellow pumpkin
flesh, cut into bite-size cubes
30ml/1½ oz white wine
150g/5oz prosciutto crudo,
such as perma ham, cut
into thin strips
150g/5oz fresh cherry

tomatoes, washed and
cut in half
Freshly ground black pepper
and sea salt
For the pasta
200g/7oz egg pasta like
tagliolini or tagliatelle
30g/1oz butter
100g parmesan cheese, grated

How to prepare

Place a large heavy-bottomed pan over a medium heat, and add two tablespoons of oil. When the oil is warm add the pumpkin and cook gently for about four minutes. Increase the heat a little and when the pan starts to sizzle, add the white wine and then reduce to a low heat and continue cooking for about 10 minutes.

Add the ham and tomatoes to the pan and mix all the ingredients well. Season with salt and black pepper.

Follow my instructions on how to make the perfect pasta, cooking al dente (see panel, left). Drain, and add it with the butter into the pumpkin and tomato sauce, tossing so the pasta is well coated. Serve in warmed pasta bowls and sprinkle with the parmesan cheese.

NASELLO AL POMODORETTO
E BASILICO

Serves 2
Hake with tomato and basil

What you will need

Extra-virgin olive oil
1 tbsp white onion, finely
chopped
½ clove garlic
1 x 400g/14oz tin cherry

tomatoes
10 basil leaves, torn up
roughly
Pinch of sea salt
½ tbsp sugar
400g/14oz hake fillet, skin

How to prepare

Heat two tablespoons of extra virgin olive oil in a pan (with a lid) over a medium heat. When the oil is warm, add the onion and chopped garlic and cook for a minute or so, then remove from the heat and continue to stir so the onion and garlic do not brown but continue to cook, gently infusing the oil with flavour. Add the tomatoes and the basil leaves. Place the pan on a medium heat again and bring to the boil. Add a pinch of sea salt and a pinch of sugar.

Add the hake, cover the pan with a lid and reduce the heat to a minimum. Cook for 10 minutes and check the sauce does not reduce too much. If it does, add two tablespoons of water. Take the lid off for the final few minutes of cooking to allow the sauce to thicken slightly.

Serve the fish with the tomato sauce poured over and finish with an extra drizzle of olive oil if you like.

Real Italian coffee at home

De'Longhi is proud to unveil the PrimaDonna XS – at just 19.5cm in width, it is the slimmest De'Longhi Bean to Cup machine with integrated milk frothing carafe. The new, beautifully slim coffee machine is the latest addition to the brand's best-selling PrimaDonna range and combines outstanding style, versatility and performance into one small but perfectly formed package. Prepares any type of coffee using fresh beans and fresh milk at the touch of a button.

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