

## **SICILIAN RECIPES**

Ingredients used for these recipes can be bought anywhere and are very much affordable.

These are not just sumptuous recipes but they are also very healthy foods that you and your family will love.

### **Introduction**

Sicilian cuisine is essentially an agricultural and maritime one: simple but genuine, with thousands of different nuances.

The centuries of domination by various populations have also enriched the range of typical local dishes with new ingredients and flavours.

Sicilian civilization is unique and has preserved its particular features over the years. It is no coincidence that pasta was born in Sicily, along with sweet and sour sauces (agrodolce), "cassata", stuffed meat and a wide range of stewed vegetables. Furthermore many delicacies were imported from the Middle East and Spain, bringing with them the cultural heritage of their origin countries.

The island has a unique environment with volcanoes, the mild climate, the sea, the abundant fertile soil, the sloping hills, the table lands, the vast plains where a wide range of crops are grown. Sicily is famous in the world for its delicious ice creams (gelati) made with the luscious fruits available throughout the year. Even the frugal meals of the peasant feature a whole series of spicy, attractive dishes.

The ingredients are always wholesome – "semola" flour, wild vegetables, freshly picked herbs, eggs and cheese and, of course, extra virgin olive oil, used to make pies, "mpanate" and all kind of fritters.

As islanders we have our own way of making the various local dishes, using ancient recipes handed down by our grandmas, mums and aunts, and the following recipe have been passed on me in the same way. The result is a rich variety, thanks also to the influence of the various invaders, which have no equals elsewhere.

The great travelers of the eighteenth century, struck by the beauty of the island, did not neglect to illustrate the local delicacies. The most famous of the, Goethe, left us evocative memories of "cavateddi" made by shy young girls, and poetic descriptions of the countryside.

The main motif of Sicilian cuisine is tradition, genuine ingredients, and simplicity – a heritage dictated by the very essence of the Sicilian character, a treasure to be protected and preserved.

## **Panelle**

**(Chickpea pancakes)**

**Ingredients: (serves 4)**

1 liter water, 350 g chickpea flour, 1 bunch of parsley finely chopped, 2 tbsp extra virgin olive oil, seeds oil for frying, salt, black pepper.

Dissolve the chickpea flour in salted, warm water stirring lightly so that no lumps form. Put the saucepan over the heat, add the parsley, the pepper and the olive oil and whisk constantly as the batter slowly heats until it starts to thicken.

Using a wooden spoon or a spatula spread a small amount of the mixture out on a platter or plate creating a thin layer 1.5 cm.

When the mixture has cooled down, remove and cut into small triangle shapes 6-7 cm side.

To fry the panelle, pour enough vegetable oil into the heavy skillet to cover the bottom with 1/8 inch of oil, and set over medium heat. When the oil is hot, lay in the panelle, leaving plenty of space between them. Fry about 3 minutes, until the underside is crisp and golden, then flip them over and brown the second side, about 2 minutes more. Set the panelle on paper towels to drain and cool for a minute, but serve while they are still warm (though they taste good at room temperature too!).

## **Pummaroru cini**

**(Filled tomatoes)**

**Ingredients (serves 4):**

4 large tomatoes, extra virgin olive oil, 1 onion, 4 salted anchovies, 100 g breadcrumbs, ½ cup grated parmesan or pecorino cheese, 1 tbsp capers, ½ cup pitted green olives, parsley, basil, olive oil, for drizzling

Cut a round slice from the top of the tomatoes to be used later as a lid top. With a scoop, scrape out the flesh of the tomato, being careful not to break the skin. Set aside the pulp and the juice.

Sautee chopped onion with the olive oil, for about 3 minutes. Add the anchovies and mash them with a wooden spoon.

Add the breadcrumbs and turn continuously until they are lightly toasted. Remove from flame and set aside to cool.

Chop the pulp and mix it with juice; in a bowl combine the pulp and juice with the cooled breadcrumb mixture, add the cheese, parsley, basil, capers, olives, salt, and pepper to taste.

Sprinkle salt inside the hollow tomatoes, and equally fill the tomatoes. Cover with lids top, and arrange in a greased baking dish, standing the stuffed tomatoes with lid side up. Drizzle with 2 tablespoons of olive oil and bake at 180° C for 45 minutes.

## **Parmigiana ri Mulinciani** **(Melanzane alla parmigiana)**

Despite the name (parmigiana could means made in Parma) this dish was born in Sicily and then spread all over the country becoming very popular.

The word “parmigiana” seems to be a distortion of the dialectal word “parmicana” which is a type of shutter, alluding to the way in which the eggplant slices are laid.

**Ingredients (serves 4):**

4 eggplants, 1 big can of whole peeled tomatoes, grated cheese (in the original version caciocavallo but parmesan is ok), fresh basil, garlic (for the tomato sauce), olive oil, salt

Prepare tomato sauce: mince garlic cloves in small pieces, fry them in 2 tbsp olive oil, and after ~1 min add tomatoes.

Keep cooking, covered, for ~20 min, then remove lid and let some water evaporate. Add salt to taste, blend with an immersion blender and set aside.

Cut eggplants lengthwise in slices of one cm thick and put them in a plate covered by plenty of salt for about 1 hour.

Wash off the excess salt and dry the slices with a paper towel. Fry them in abundant hot oil. Pour some tomato sauce in a large plate and then place a first layer of fried eggplants. Then, place more sauce and add the cheese and some leaf of basil. Place another layer of eggplants and repeat the process. Pour more sauce and a final layer of cheese and some basil. Put in a hot oven for 15-20 min.

Parmigiana should be served hot.

## **Pasta alla Norma**

**(Pasta with eggplants)**

This dish from Catania is usually made with Ricotta Salata cheese. The semi-hard salted ricotta gives it a distinctive flavour and should be available in specialty shops and some supermarkets. If need be, substitute pecorino cheese for it, it will not be the same, but still delicious. The dish is named "Alla Norma" after the composer Bellini's (born in Catania) Norma.

**Ingredients (serves 4):**

400 g maccheroni or fusilli, 10 ripe tomatoes or tinned peeled tomatoes, 1 garlic clove, 1 aubergine, 1 tsp sugar, 100 g grated ricotta salata, extra virgin olive oil, salt, pepper, basil

Slice the eggplants, sprinkle with salt and leave them to rest for half an hour in a colander so that they deposit the bitter liquid. Prepare tomato sauce chopping in a pan the tomatoes on a low heat. Add a pinch of salt and cook for about ten minutes, then add garlic, pepper, a tsp. of sugar and oil.

Simmer until the sauce is quite thick. Wash and dry and then fry the eggplants in abundant hot oil, chop coarsely and set aside. Cook the pasta al dente in salted water, drain well and add half the tomato sauce. Pour onto serving dishes, cover with the rest of the sauce and the chopped eggplants. Finish the dish sprinkling with ricotta salata and basil leaves. Serve hot.

## **Pasta 'cca muddica**

**(Pasta with anchovies and breadcrumbs)**

Breadcrumbs were often used, toasted, in Sicily as substitute for grated cheese by those who could not afford even this basic ingredient: some was used to call toasted breadcrumbs the "poor man's Caciocavallo".

**Ingredients (serves 4):**

400 g pasta, 8 salted anchovies boned, 1 tbsp tomato puree, 2 tbsp capers, 120 g toasted breadcrumbs, 1 garlic clove, chopped parsley, olive oil, salt, pepper

Toast the breadcrumbs (preferably in an iron skillet) stirring continuously. Before they turn brown, add a little oil and mix until the oil starts to sizzle and the breadcrumbs turn a nice golden colour.

Separately heat some oil in a frying pan with the garlic, remove from heat and add the anchovies, mashing with a fork until they achieve a creamy consistency.

Add the tomato puree and capers and stir over moderate heat for a few minutes. Remove from heat and add the chopped parsley and a pinch of pepper.

Boil the pasta in a large pan of salted water, drain, and cover with the anchovies sauce. Sprinkle with the toasted breadcrumbs and serve immediately.

## **Frittata 'cche sparici**

**(Asparagus frittata)**

Ingredients (serves 4):

6 large eggs, 500 g fresh asparagus, chopped parsley, extra virgin olive oil, 2 tbsp freshly grated parmesan or pecorino cheese, 2 tbsp breadcrumbs, salt

Wash the asparagus and break off the tender parts. Put the asparagus in boiling salted water for about 5 minutes, then drain the asparagus and dry with a kitchen towel.

Whisk the eggs in a large bowl along with the chopped parsley, grated cheese, breadcrumbs, pinch of salt and ground pepper.

Heat a 24 cm omelet pan over moderate heat, add the eggs and then add the asparagus. Allow the eggs to cook for a minute or two, and then begin folding the uncooked runny eggs underneath with a spatula.

Flip the frittata in the pan, or place a plate over the pan and carefully turn over the pan, drop the eggs onto the plate and then slide the eggs back into the pan. Cook until the eggs are completely cooked and have turned lightly golden. Serve hot or cold.

## **Viscotta 'ri mennula**

**(Almond biscuits)**

Ingredients:

300 g blanched almonds, 100 g sugar, grated zest of 1 lemon, 2 egg whites, salt, 1/2 teaspoon almond extract, ½ teaspoon vanilla extract, 30 whole blanched almonds, pine nuts, or candied cherries

Preheat the oven to 180 C°. Butter and flour a large baking sheet.

Working in batches, combine the blanched nuts with some of the sugar in a food processor. Process until finely ground. Transfer to a large bowl, add the rest of the sugar and the lemon zest, and combine well.

Beat the egg whites with a pinch of salt and the almond and vanilla extracts until stiff but not dry. Add the egg white mixture to the almond mixture and stir lightly, not to flatten the egg whites. Pinch off enough dough to form a 2.5 cm ball. Flatten the balls very slightly, and place them 2.5 cm apart on the baking sheet. Insert a whole almond or pine nut, pointed end up, or a candied cherry in the centre of each cookie.

Bake until the cookies are lightly browned and have small cracks on the surface, 25 to 30 minutes. Let cool briefly on the pan, then transfer to wire racks to cool completely.

## **Affucaparrini**

**(Strozzapreti biscuits)**

Meaning choke a priest. The origin of this name comes very likely from a priest that must have choked on it.

**Ingredients (Makes about 30 Biscuits):**

5 cups flour, 1/3 cup sugar, 5 large eggs, pinch of salt, juice 1 lemon, flour for dusting, water

Make a well with the flour, place in it and combine sugar, eggs, salt, and lemon juice. Mix the ingredients; add some water if needed.

Keep kneading until mixture is smooth. On a well-floured board, cut dough in 2 pieces and each piece in 2 parts. Knead dough to make it compact and shape each piece into an elongated roll 1.5 cm in diameter. Cut it into 8 pieces and roll each piece into S shape or small rings.

Place each piece into a floured pan. Bring a large pot of water to a boil and immerse the biscuits, a few at a time into the boiling water. Using a slotted spoon, remove them as soon as the water starts to boil again.

Place the biscuits in pans and cover with clean kitchen towels. Store them in a cool place for 24 hours. Place the biscuits on baking paper, setting those 5 cm apart. Bake at 350 degrees for about 15 minutes, until cookies are light golden color. Serve the Affucaparrina with wine, preferably a sweet wine like Marsala, Moscato or Passito.

## **Turrini ri mennula**

**(Almond nougat)**

**Ingredients:**

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1 kg toasted almonds, 500 g honey, 500 g castor sugar, orange zest, cinnamon

In a saucepan melt the honey on a low heat and add, little by little, the sugar mixing well until all becomes caramelized.

Pour the almonds, mix well and add the cinnamon and the orange zest cut into small pieces. Mix everything for a couple of minutes and pour the almond nougat on a surface covered with sugar and roll out with an oily wood rolling pin. Cut into pieces before the nougat cools down and wrap in greasy paper when cold.

## **Crema ri ricotta**

**(Ricotta cream)**

The ricotta cream is widely used in Sicilian desserts as filling for cannoli, cassate, crispelle, sfingi and other various pastries. The rich taste of this mixture also makes it a dessert to serve alone dressed with chocolate chips or caramelized sugar.

**Ingredients (serves 8)**

1 kg ricotta, 250 g icing sugar, zest of 1 orange, 3 pinches of cinnamon powder, 1 drop of vanilla essence

**Preparation**

Mix well in a large bowl the ricotta and sugar until smooth. Blend in the zest of orange, cinnamon oil and the vanilla, store in the fridge for a few hours. Before using it, mix the ricotta cream with a wooden spoon to make it silky-smooth.

To make a nice looking dessert, sprinkle a dessert dish with icing sugar. Place a generous spoon of ricotta cream and sprinkle with crushed pistachio. Finish the plate with some chocolate cream drops.

## **'Nzalata ri tunnu, patati, ciappiri e aulivi**

**(Tuna, potato, capers, and olives salad)**

**Ingredients:**

180 g can of tuna in olive oil, 2 large potatoes, 8 ripe cherry tomatoes, 2 tbsp capers, ½ cup pitted black olives, oregano, 2 garlic cloves, parsley, 2 tbsp white wine vinegar, extra virgin olive oil, salt, black pepper

Boil the potatoes for around 30 minutes. They should be cooked through, but still firm. Slice the cherry tomatoes in half and set aside.

To make the dressing, finely chop the garlic and mix it in a bowl with the capers, dried oregano, olives, vinegar, and olive oil.

Remove the potatoes from the pot and allow them to cool just enough to handle them and peel them while they are still warm. Cut into 3-4 cm pieces and place them in a salad bowl.

Break apart the tuna meat and add it to the bowl with the potatoes, then add the sliced tomatoes. Add salt and pepper to taste, then pour the dressing over the salad and toss. Add the chopped parsley, more olive oil and vinegar if desired. Serve immediately.

## **Spaghetti 'cca bottarga ri tunnu** (Spaghetti with roe of tuna)

Ingredients (serves 4)

8 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil, 1 tbsp crushed red pepper, 2 garlic cloves thinly sliced, 400 g spaghetti, 2 bunches parsley finely chopped, 150 g Bottarga of tuna, peeler or grater, zest of 2 lemons

Preparation:

Heat 2 litres water to boil and add 2 tablespoons salt. In a 30 cm sauté pan, heat olive oil, red pepper and garlic over low heat until just fragrant, about 2 minutes, and remove from heat. Cook spaghetti according to package instructions until just al dente. Drain and pour into oil mixture and add parsley. Toss to mix well over medium heat and pour into warmed serving bowl. Shave Bottarga over bowl, sprinkle with lemon zest and serve immediately.

## **Cannelloni 'cco sucu** (Cannelloni with meat sauce)

Ingredients (serves 4):

For the pasta: *300 g flour, 2 eggs*

For the stuffing: 300 g of minced beef or pork cooked with tomato sauce; 200 g peas cooked with spring onion; 80 g of grated caciocavallo or parmesan cheese; 200 g tuma cheese; pepper.

Make dough with the flour and eggs. Roll out until very thin and cut into 10 cm squares. Finely chop the cooked meat and mix with the peas and onions, the tuma cheese (this could be replaced with a soft cheese as provola), half of the caciocavallo (or parmesan), ground pepper and a few tbsp of the meat sauce. Cook the lasagne in boiling water a few at a time, strain and lay separately on a clean cloth. Spoon a strip of the filling onto each lasagne, roll



the lasagne up and place side by side in greased oven dish. Cover with meat sauce and sprinkle with the remaining caciocavallo (or parmesan). Bake in a hot oven for about 20 minutes or until the top is golden brown and serve hot.

## **Baccalà 'a matalotta**

**(Salted Codfish marinara style)**

This plate testifies to the influence that French domination left that last to this day; the Sicilian word "Matalotta" comes indeed from the French word "matelot" that means sailor.

**Ingredients (serves 4)**

600 g codfish desalinated, 500 g potatoes, 1 spring onion, 30 g capers, 2 ripe tomatoes, 50 g black olives, 1 garlic clove, 1 bunch of parsley, extra virgin olive oil, salt, black pepper, white wine

Heat a large pan over moderate heat with the olive oil. Toss the garlic cloves, strew olives and capers in the pan and stir until they're sizzling.

Pour in the crushed tomatoes, a layer of sliced potatoes and half glass of white wine and after a couple of minutes 2 or 3 cups of hot water. Turn up the heat, correct the salt and partially cover the pan.

Put the fish boned and cut on top and cook on a low fire. Pour half glass of white wine and cook for about half an hour.

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