

Award Winning Chicken Cacciatore

Le ricette di cucina di Mickey and Barbara Vergera

Courtesy of Grandmother 'Mama' from Reggio, Calabria



Contest Entrance Letter

Mama Bertolini's Italian Recipe Contest:

Please accept the enclosed recipe for your contest and indulge me as I reminisce about its origin. It came with my grandmother from Reggio, Calabria, Italy, to Little Italy on the lower east side of Manhattan just before the turn of the century.

My first memory of it is at the Sunday gathering at her home, where without any invitations, all eight children automatically came with an ever growing number of grandchildren (that's me). Now in the suburbs, my grandfather would still get the chickens from the live poultry market on Arthur Avenue in the Bronx. At times, my brother and I accompanied my grandfather on the Saturday shopping expedition. What a treat, the bread store, the pork store, the cheese store, the municipal market with its produce and fruit and the fish market. The pizzerias would sell a slice on the street for 20¢!

"Mama", as she was affectionately known, would pluck, clean and cut the birds with a cleaver, small pieces we couldn't recognize, but it didn't matter because it was all so good.

Naturally my mother and wife have tried to continue making it in "Mama's" image and hopefully now we can pass it on to future generations.

Preparation Time: 25 - 30 minutes

Cooking Time: 55 minutes

Serves: 4

Ingredienti

- 1 - 4 pound frying chicken**
- 2 - large garlic cloves, put through press or 1 - 35**
- 1 - 35 oz. can Italian plum tomatoes chopped fine**
- 1 - 8 oz. can tomato sauce**
- 1 - Tbsp. dried oregano**
- 1 - large onion, peeled and diced**
- 1 - Tbsp. dried basil**
- ½ large green pepper, seeded and diced**
- ¼ - ½ tsp. red pepper flakes to taste**
- 2 large stalks celery, diced**
- 3 - Tbsp. extra virgin olive oil**
- 2 large carrots, peeled and diced**
- 3 - Tbsp. butter**

8 - oz. mushrooms, brushed and sliced Salt and freshly ground pepper to taste

Come Fare

Cut chicken in pieces *, removing excess fat and excess skin as you go. Wash under cold running water, pat dry.

Salt (1 Tbsp.) and pepper pieces and brown on all sides in 2 Tbsp. olive oil and 2 Tbsp. butter combined in a large frying pan or Dutch oven that has a cover.

Remove pieces from pan and set aside.

Add 1 Tbsp. olive oil, 1 Tbsp. butter to pan and sauté onion, green pepper, carrots, celery, mushrooms and garlic for five minutes.

Return chicken to pan. Add tomatoes (crushed by hand, removing cores) and juice from can.

Add 1 tsp. salt and pepper and all other ingredients; mix well and bring to a boil. Reduce to a slow simmer, cover and cook for 45 minutes, stirring 3 or 4 times.

Serve chicken as main course with its sauce over a side dish of pasta or Italian style: pasta first with sauce and chicken second.

May be cooked ahead, held for several hours; refrigerated if longer, or frozen and reheated.

** Small pieces of chicken are better, i.e., each breast in 3 pieces, wing in 2 parts, cleaver thighs in half, cut back in 3 pieces, cleaver off knob at end of leg. Breaking bones releases flavor and small pieces allow more contact with sauce enhancing flavor of chicken.*

Buon Appetito!

Please send recipes, comments and suggestions to

recipes@lasocietaitaliana.org

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