



TAILORED TASTE TIDBITS

VOLUME VII, ISSUE I WINTER 2012 FOOD NEWS FROM TAILORED TASTE PERSONAL CHEF SERVICE

Roma!

When I was young, my aunt traveled the world visiting Rome, Madrid, Lisbon and Mexico City among other seemingly exotic locations. She always returned with gifts for me and my siblings. My sister and I received very cool dresses from time to time such as the turquoise off-the-shoulder number from Mexico. Yes, they were matching dresses and being the younger sister, I got to wear them twice – once when we received them and again when I grew large enough to wear my sister's hand-me-down.



One dress I remember with great fondness had three pockets on the front which were labeled London, Paris and Rome. I really wanted to see those three cities. London was the first I visited after my freshman year in college; Paris came much later in my 20's. But until this past November I had not seen Rome. Oh, I wish I hadn't waited so long.

What a magical place! The Coliseum took my breath away and the size of the Vatican is shocking. Those of you who have been to Rome know the light is different there, the history is layered and the food magnificent. The simplest pizza in a corner café defies replication here.



Happily I'd arranged a private cooking lesson with a Roman chef with Neapolitan roots. Chef Daniela del Balzo starts her lessons with a walk through her local market not far from Circus Maximus to purchase vegetables, cheeses and meats for the class. During my lesson we made

Miniature Fried Pizzas, Roman Cauliflower (see photo on left), Lamb Innards with Artichokes, Leg of Lamb braised in White Wine, Paccheri with Buffalo Ricotta Tomato Sauce, and Flourless Ricotta & Dark Chocolate Cake. Oh my! What a meal, what a lesson and what a great teacher.

Our hotel was wonderful and not fully occupied allowing the staff more time to pamper us – Matteo the server and part-time bread baker took us to the hotel kitchen for an impromptu bread baking session and Kissa the bartender and I have been swapping cocktail recipes via email.

Great trip, new friends, and a nice break from the routine - bellissimo!

Spritz Anyone?

My newest cocktail craving started *before* my trip to Rome when I attended an Italian cocktails class during the Women Chefs & Restaurateurs conference in Boston this fall.

Mini cocktail after mini cocktail was shaken, stirred and poured for the class. We sampled Negronis (campari, sweet vermouth, gin); Joy of Grappa (grappa, amaro, orange bitters); and Cynar Flip (cynar, honey, bourbon, egg white, nutmeg). But the stand-out sip for me was the Aperol Spritz (aperol, prosecco, club soda).

I was so enamored of this aperitivo that I served it before Thanksgiving dinner. My sister's comment upon her first sip sums it up – "Ooh, this tastes like Italy!"

So the first evening in Rome I ordered an Aperol Spritz (see me sampling it in the photo below) and the deal was



sealed. It's light, refreshing, and not too sweet. For now it's replaced my beloved Aviation (see Fall 2011 newsletter). I've tweaked the proportions of

the three ingredients and have settled on the recipe on the back as my standard. Saluté!

Paccheri with Fresh Ricotta & Tomato Sauce

*Daniella del Balzo**, my favorite Italian chef, made this simple yet delicious pasta dish as one of the many courses we enjoyed during my class in Rome. There are two parts – the sauce and the pasta – and that's it.

Notes on Ingredients:

Paccheri – a pasta shape that's common in Rome but not here. Use rigatoni or other thick tubular pasta.

Ricotta – use fresh ricotta if you can find it (generally sold at cheese shops). Even better, if you come across **buffalo** ricotta snap it up and call me!

Canned tomatoes – please buy an Italian brand such as San Marzano.

1 tablespoon extra virgin olive oil
1 large garlic clove, halved lengthwise
28 oz crushed tomatoes, canned
salt and pepper to taste
pinch of sugar
5-8 large fresh basil leaves
1 pound pasta
1 cup (250 grams to be precise) ricotta

Put the oil in a pot and turn heat to medium. Add the garlic pieces and cook just until garlic begins to color and give off a great smell. Remove and discard the garlic.

Add crushed tomatoes, salt, pepper and sugar. Stir in the basil leaves and let simmer over low for 15 minutes or longer to fully infuse the basil into the sauce.

Cook the pasta according to directions on the box. While it cooks, remove the basil from the sauce and add the ricotta, stirring. The sauce will turn to a lovely shade of wild salmon-pink.



Drain pasta, place in serving bowl and toss immediately with some of the sauce. Add more sauce as necessary. Enjoy!

*Daniela's Cooking School in Rome
www.danielascookingschool.com

Electrons or Pulp?

Did you welcome the arrival of 2012 by flipping a page or scrolling to the right? Or both? I read a very interesting column in the *Washington Post* that Franklin Covey (the day planner company) was experiencing a mini-resurgence in the sale of day timers – the old-fashioned, paper calendars where we write our daily appointments in pencil or ink and flip the pages to see what's coming tomorrow or next week.

Nearly everyone has at least one electronic device that functions as a scheduler of our time, whether it's an iPhone, Droid, or simply Google Calendar on a computer. Yet I'm not alone in having a large wall calendar posted next to my desk where with a quick glance I can see what my future holds. As much as I love Google Calendar, which I share with three other family members, I still like being able to check the wall for my commitments.

Admittedly I'm generally the last person to glom onto new technology but this article says that even hi-tech folks are sometimes using paper systems especially in corporate settings where it's more acceptable to flip through a day-timer's pages in a meeting than to scroll on an iPhone which might be misconstrued as playing Angry Birds.

Happy 2012!

Aperol Spritz

1-1/2 oz Aperol
2 oz Prosecco (make sure it's not too sweet!)
Splash of club soda
Slice of an orange (Cara Cara or Blood Oranges are pretty!)

Place ice in a large stemmed glass.

Add Aperol, Prosecco and a splash of club soda.

Stir and garnish with a slice of orange.



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