

The Marchetti Family Cookbook

Three kitchens, one long table

Typeset by Quietforge Studio · 12 recipes

*For Nonna Elvira, who never wrote anything down, and for everyone who stood next to her
trying to watch her hands.*

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Things we start with

Nonna's Sunday Sauce

From the kitchen of: Elvira Marchetti · Serves: 8, with leftovers · Time: 4 hours, mostly waiting

INGREDIENTS

- 3 tbsp olive oil
- 1 large onion, chopped fine
- 4 cloves garlic, sliced thin
- 2 tbsp tomato paste
- 1 glass red wine
- 2 large tins whole tomatoes, crushed by hand
- 1 whole carrot, peeled
- a handful of basil stalks, tied with string
- salt and pepper
- a pinch of sugar, only if the tomatoes are sharp

METHOD

1. Warm the oil in your heaviest pot over a low flame. Add the onion and let it go soft and sweet without browning, about 12 minutes.
2. Add the garlic and cook one minute more, until you can smell it from across the room.
3. Stir in the tomato paste and let it darken for two minutes. This is the step everyone skips and it is the one that matters.
4. Pour in the wine and let it bubble away until the smell of alcohol is gone.
5. Add the tomatoes, the whole carrot and the tied basil stalks. Season.
6. Bring to a bare simmer, then turn the flame as low as it will go. Leave it for three hours with the lid tilted, stirring whenever you walk past.
7. Fish out the carrot and the basil. Taste. If it is sharp, a pinch of sugar; if it is flat, more salt.

She never measured the wine. She poured until it looked right, then poured a little for herself.

Bread Soup for a Cold Evening

From the kitchen of: Pietro Marchetti · Serves: 4 · Time: 40 minutes

INGREDIENTS

- half a loaf of stale bread, torn
- 2 tbsp olive oil, plus more to finish
- 1 onion, sliced
- 2 sticks celery, sliced
- 1 tin cannellini beans, drained
- 1 litre vegetable stock
- 2 big handfuls cavolo nero, shredded
- salt and pepper

METHOD

1. Soften the onion and celery in the oil over a medium flame, about 10 minutes.
2. Add the beans and stock and bring to a simmer.
3. Add the cavolo nero and cook until it is tender, around 8 minutes.
4. Stir in the torn bread and take the pot off the heat. Cover it and leave it 15 minutes; the bread should disappear into the soup.
5. Season, and finish each bowl with a hard pour of olive oil.

Pickled Summer Vegetables

From the kitchen of: Rosa Marchetti-Hale · Serves: fills two 500 ml jars · Time: 30 minutes, plus three days

INGREDIENTS

- 300 ml white wine vinegar
- 300 ml water
- 2 tbsp sugar
- 1 tbsp flaky salt
- 1 tsp black peppercorns
- 2 bay leaves
- 500 g mixed vegetables: carrot batons, cauliflower florets, sliced fennel

METHOD

1. Bring the vinegar, water, sugar, salt, peppercorns and bay leaves to the boil in a small pan, then take it off the heat.
2. Pack the vegetables into clean jars, tightly but without bruising them.
3. Pour the hot brine over the vegetables until they are covered. Seal the jars.
4. Cool to room temperature, then refrigerate. They are good on the third day and better on the tenth.

Rosa's rule: never pickle a vegetable you would not eat raw.

The long table

Baked Pasta with Sunday Sauce

From the kitchen of: Elvira Marchetti · Serves: 8 · Time: 1 hour, once the sauce is made

INGREDIENTS

- 500 g short pasta with ridges
- 1 litre Nonna's Sunday Sauce
- 250 g ricotta
- 150 g mozzarella, torn
- 60 g hard cheese, grated
- a handful of basil leaves
- salt

METHOD

1. Heat the oven to 190 C (375 F).
2. Boil the pasta in well-salted water for two minutes less than the packet says. It will finish in the oven.
3. Drain it and stir it through two thirds of the sauce.
4. Spread half the pasta in a deep dish. Dot with half the ricotta and half the mozzarella, and tuck in some basil.
5. Repeat with the rest, then spoon the last of the sauce over the top and scatter on the grated cheese.
6. Bake 35 minutes, until the edges are dark and catching. Let it stand 15 minutes before you cut it, or it will slide.

Chicken Roasted Over Potatoes

From the kitchen of: Pietro Marchetti · Serves: 4 to 5 · Time: 1 hour 30 minutes

INGREDIENTS

- 1 chicken, about 1.6 kg
- 1 kg waxy potatoes, cut into thick coins
- 3 tbsp olive oil
- 1 lemon, halved
- 6 sprigs rosemary
- 4 cloves garlic, unpeeled
- salt and pepper

METHOD

1. Heat the oven to 200 C (400 F).
2. Toss the potatoes with the oil, half the rosemary, the garlic, salt and pepper, and spread them in a roasting tin in one layer.
3. Dry the chicken well, salt it generously inside and out, and put the lemon halves and the rest of the rosemary in the cavity.
4. Sit the chicken directly on the potatoes so everything it gives up lands on them.
5. Roast 1 hour 15 minutes, turning the potatoes at the edges once halfway, until the juices from the thickest part of the thigh run clear.
6. Rest the chicken 15 minutes on a board. Put the potatoes back in the oven while it rests.

The potatoes are the point. The chicken is how you cook the potatoes.

Fish Baked in Paper

From the kitchen of: Rosa Marchetti-Hale · Serves: 2 · Time: 30 minutes

INGREDIENTS

- 2 white fish fillets, skin off
- 1 courgette, sliced into ribbons
- 12 cherry tomatoes, halved
- 8 olives, torn
- 2 tbsp olive oil
- half a lemon
- a few sprigs thyme
- salt and pepper

METHOD

1. Heat the oven to 200 C (400 F) and cut two large squares of baking paper.
2. Pile the courgette ribbons in the middle of each square and sit a fillet on top.
3. Scatter over the tomatoes, olives and thyme, season, and add a squeeze of lemon and a spoon of oil to each.
4. Fold the paper over and crimp the edges tightly all the way round so no steam escapes.
5. Bake 14 minutes. Open a parcel at the table, not in the kitchen.

Lentils for the New Year

From the kitchen of: Elvira Marchetti · Serves: 6 as a side · Time: 50 minutes

INGREDIENTS

- 300 g small brown lentils
- 2 tbsp olive oil
- 1 onion, diced
- 1 carrot, diced
- 1 stick celery, diced
- 2 bay leaves
- 1 tbsp red wine vinegar
- salt and pepper

METHOD

1. Soften the onion, carrot and celery in the oil over a low flame for 15 minutes, until sweet.
2. Add the lentils and bay leaves and enough water to cover them by three fingers.
3. Simmer 25 to 30 minutes, until the lentils are tender but still whole. Top up with hot water if they drink it all.
4. Take out the bay, season well, and stir in the vinegar off the heat.

One lentil for every good thing you want next year. Eat plenty.

Flour and patience

Nonna's Olive Oil Cake

From the kitchen of: Elvira Marchetti · Serves: 10 · Time: 1 hour

INGREDIENTS

- 200 ml mild olive oil
- 200 g caster sugar
- 3 eggs
- 250 g plain flour
- 2 tsp baking powder
- zest of 2 oranges
- 120 ml orange juice
- a good pinch of salt
- icing sugar, to finish

METHOD

1. Heat the oven to 175 C (350 F). Line a 23 cm tin.
2. Whisk the sugar and eggs until pale and thick, about 4 minutes.
3. Pour in the oil in a slow stream, whisking all the time.
4. Fold in the flour, baking powder, salt and zest, then the juice, stopping as soon as it comes together.
5. Bake 40 to 45 minutes, until a skewer comes out clean and the top is deeply golden.
6. Cool in the tin 10 minutes, then turn it out. Dust with icing sugar once it is cold.

Sunday Morning Focaccia

From the kitchen of: Pietro Marchetti · Serves: makes one large tray · Time: 3 hours, almost all of it rising

INGREDIENTS

- 500 g strong white flour
- 400 ml warm water
- 7 g dried yeast
- 12 g fine salt
- 4 tbsp olive oil, plus more for the tin
- flaky salt
- a sprig of rosemary

METHOD

1. Stir the yeast into the warm water and leave it five minutes.
2. Mix the flour and fine salt in a large bowl, pour in the yeast water and 2 tbsp of the oil, and stir to a very wet dough. Do not knead it.
3. Cover and leave two hours, folding the dough over itself four times at the half hour and again at the hour.
4. Oil a tray generously. Tip the dough in and coax it to the corners with oiled fingers. Leave 45 minutes.
5. Heat the oven to 220 C (425 F). Dimple the dough all over with your fingertips, right to the base of the tray.
6. Pour the last 2 tbsp of oil over it, scatter flaky salt and rosemary, and bake 22 minutes until the top is blistered.

Almond Biscuits for the Tin

From the kitchen of: Rosa Marchetti-Hale · Serves: makes about 30 · Time: 45 minutes

INGREDIENTS

- 250 g ground almonds
- 180 g caster sugar
- 2 egg whites
- 1 tsp almond extract
- a pinch of salt
- 60 g flaked almonds
- icing sugar, for rolling

METHOD

1. Heat the oven to 165 C (325 F) and line two trays.
2. Mix the ground almonds, sugar and salt.
3. Whisk the egg whites to soft peaks with the extract, then fold them into the almond mixture to a sticky paste.
4. Roll walnut-sized balls, dip the tops in flaked almonds, then roll them in icing sugar and set them well apart on the trays.
5. Bake 16 to 18 minutes, until just set and barely coloured. They firm up as they cool, so take them out while they still look soft.

These are the ones that were always gone before anyone admitted to taking one.

Small things worth writing down

The Dressing That Goes On Everything

From the kitchen of: Rosa Marchetti-Hale · Serves: makes a small jar · Time: 5 minutes

INGREDIENTS

- 6 tbsp olive oil
- 2 tbsp red wine vinegar
- 1 tsp Dijon mustard
- 1 small garlic clove, crushed to a paste with salt
- half a tsp honey
- black pepper

METHOD

1. Put everything in a jar with a tight lid.
2. Shake it hard for 20 seconds, until it thickens and turns pale.
3. Taste on a lettuce leaf, not a spoon. Adjust the vinegar before the salt.

Coffee for Fourteen People

From the kitchen of: Pietro Marchetti · Serves: 14 small cups · Time: 15 minutes

INGREDIENTS

- 140 g dark-roast coffee, ground for a moka pot
- water
- a strip of orange peel
- sugar, on the table and not in the pot

METHOD

1. Fill the base of the largest moka pot to just below the valve with cold water.
2. Fill the basket level and loose. Do not press it down.
3. Assemble it, add the orange peel to the upper chamber, and set it on a medium flame with the lid open.
4. When the coffee rises and the sound changes from a hiss to a gurgle, take it off immediately and close the lid.
5. Pour in one pass around all the cups so everyone gets the same coffee, then go back and fill them.

Written down because every Christmas someone asks, and every Christmas nobody remembers.

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