

Gentile  
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Michael layers half the Scacciatu with sliced potatoes, onion, black olives and Italian sausage then folds over the dough and crimps it shut. There are two things, that make the dough perfect: Warm hands and cake yeast.

"If you don't have warm hands, run them under warm water before kneading your dough," he says. As for the yeast: "My grandmother uses the cake. Those recipes come out a lot airier, and they don't have that yeasty flavor."

Giovanni cracks an egg into the soup, then ladles some into a bowl when the yolk is still a bit soft. It's delicious, redolent with vegetables and made hardy by the egg. In other words, it's a perfect meal.

"This is something you can leave on the stove. If people come in and want an egg, you can just bring the soup back up to a boil and drop in the egg," he says.

The Gentile brothers love to show off their culinary skills. Michael, a professional soccer player for the Minnesota Thunder, especially enjoys cooking for company.



Family time: seated: Nora Piruzza (holding cookbook), Nori Bonura (granddaughter); Giuseppe Piruzza; standing: Michael and Giovanni Gentile (grandsons), Jennifer Gentile, Peter Bonura (grandson); Michael and Cathy Bekie (granddaughter, holding great-grandson Michael).

"I love the joy of creating and replicating recipes. I enjoy watching people eating them and realizing how good I am," he says with a touch of bravado.

It's tradition in the Gentile family to hold cooking competitions on Sundays to determine who makes the best pasta, lasagna, pizza or whatever dish is chosen for that day. Giovanni won the recent pasta contest.

"Michael and my dad tied," he says. "But there was a little controversy. There was a later category, pasta utilization, how well you use the pasta. I made bowls out of the pasta. Michael was mad because I had won the pizza competition the month before."

Michael laughs. His time will come. It's all a matter of being together as a family. Giovanni, a part-time musician with his own band, said the family is so "tight," that, for him, there would be no choice between attending a rock concert or a family cooking contest — "I'd do the contest."

Fresh, fresh, fresh  
Giuseppe Piruzza, the son of a farmer, was forced to take a job in the auto industry to support his family after he immigrated to Canada. However, his heart was in the soil, and soon the bounty from his small backyard garden became legendary. Nora's canned

tomatoes tasted of sunshine, even in the winter.

Like their grandparents, the Gentile brothers, both of whom have worked in restaurants, use only the freshest of ingredients. The tomatoes and even the olives they use are home-canned. They also make their own lemon ice — a delightfully tart palate cleanser — with fresh lemon juice, sugar and lemon rind.

Another food Giovanni and Michael like to serve in between courses is chilled fennel, which they slice and dress with olive oil, vinegar, salt and pepper. It has a natural peppery taste calmed down by the olive oil. I've never tasted fennel before, but I'm a convert.

Surprisingly, Giovanni and Michael are less fussy when it comes to olive oil. Ordinary or virgin olive oil is fine for sautéing, they say. However, their father is more particular.

"My husband uses the extra virgin olive oil exclusively," says Francesca. "In Sicily, we made our own. My grandfather had his own press."

Giovanni and Michael gave their grandparents the cookbook this past Christmas.

"She just cried," says Francesca about her mother's reaction. "Everyday they just rave about it. My dad has home care, and everybody that comes over, he brings out that book."

Giovanni and Michael have put together enough cookbooks for family members. It's been an expensive project, and they're looking for a publisher. But for now, they're pleased they have preserved Giuseppe's and Nora Piruzza's legacy for generations to come.

As they say in the Piruzza and Gentile households, "Buon appetito!"

Cookbook offers comfort food, Sicilian style

SCACCIATA  
(SICILIAN STUFFED BREAD)

- 3 cups flour, sifted
- Pinch of salt
- 3/4 oz. cake yeast
- 1 cup warm water
- 1/2 egg, beaten
- 1/8 cup vegetable oil (may use olive oil)
- 1 large potato, peeled and sliced
- 1 large onion, peeled and sliced
- 1/2 cup black olives, halved (optional)
- 1/2 cup uncooked Italian sausage (optional)
- Grated Romano cheese
- Salt and pepper
- Vegetable oil (may use olive oil)

Mix yeast until dissolved into 1/2 cup warm water, and then add salt. Stir flour into a large bowl. Make well in center of flour and add oil and egg. Beat egg and oil with fork within the well until combined. Add yeast mixture. Combine ingredients using a fork, then slowly incorporate the flour by using circular motions with the fork, moving outward until dough begins to form. Add 1/4 to 1/2 cup warm water to incorporate the rest of the flour. Place dough on lightly floured board and knead about 4-5 minutes. Cover and let rest about 10 minutes.

Preheat oven to 400 degrees. Knead dough a second time, 3-4 minutes, and let rise again for about 10 minutes. Stretch dough to desired width, let sit and stretch again (approximately 14 x 14-inches) Drizzle oil over half the dough and add the Italian sausage (removed from casing and chopped). Cover half the dough with potatoes, leaving about 1/4 inch at the edges. Sprinkle with salt. Add the olives, then the onions and again sprinkle with salt, pepper and Romano cheese. Drizzle with oil. Fold over the other half of dough and crimp edges together, leaving corners

open. Flatten with hands and reseat. Drizzle top with oil and sprinkle with salt and Romano cheese.

Bake 20-25 minutes and enjoy. Recipe can be divided into two small dough balls.

Recipe compliments of Nora Piruzza

OVO RUTTO L'AGUA  
(EGG SOUP)

- 4 1/2 cups chicken stock
- 2 cloves garlic, sliced fine
- 1/2 cup Italian flat parsley
- 1 medium-sized onion, chopped
- 1/3 cup fresh jarred tomatoes, chopped
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 4 medium potatoes, peeled and diced
- Eggs, as many as desired
- Salt to taste

In a large pot, bring 4 1/2 cups of chicken stock to a boil. Reduce heat to medium-low and continue to simmer.

In a separate pot, heat olive oil 2-3 minutes. Sauté garlic, parsley and onion on medium heat 5-6 minutes or until onions begin to caramelize. Add the tomatoes and continue to sauté another 5 minutes. Add the chicken broth and bring to a boil. Add the diced potatoes. Cook an additional 8-10 minutes.

The delectable soup is now ready for the main ingredient, eggs! Crack eggs directly into the soup (as many as desired) and cook them approximately 5-6 minutes (cook longer for a more hard-boiled egg). Serve at once with some fresh Italian or French bread. Buon Appetito! Serves 4.

(Use 1 medium potato per person. Use 1 cup chicken stock per person plus 1/2-1 cup extra as stock will reduce slightly when cooking.)

Recipe compliments of Nora Piruzza

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Paolo Scavino is another name to remember. His stunning 1998 and 1999 Barolos will be available later this year. In the meantime, enjoy his fun 2000 Rosso da Tavola \$14 with your next pizza.

Italy's Tuscany region

Sangiovese grapes find multiple expressions from Chianti Classico, Tuscany's most famous red wine. And in the region, sangiovese artistry extends to Brunello di Montalcino, Vino Nobile di Montepulciano and Carmignano.

Super Tuscans often carry a

fantasy name and are blended with French varieties such as cabernet sauvignon. Wines called Rosso di Montalcino or Rosso di Montepulciano are made from young vines. They are fresh, lighter in style and very drinkable. To get a handle on the "rosso" style, try 2000 Del Rosso di Montepulciano \$12.

The Healds are Troy residents who write about wine, spirits, food, and restaurants for the Observer & Eccentric Newspapers. To leave them a voice mail message, dial (734) 953-2047, mailbox 1864#.

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