

SICILY

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whatever topping of choice. Soft crust peanut butter and jelly sandwiches and Sazi-Q's seemed odd and unappetizing. Summer lunches were figs eaten under backyard fig trees, grapes from the backyard vine and meatball or fried bologna sandwiches. I've since eliminated the meat, but still refuse to buy figs unless the squirrels get carried away in our trees.

If you don't have time to make the meal, buy it from a good market. Chimento's sells real caponata, authentic rice balls stuffed with cheese and rolled in egg and bread crumbs and good quality olive oil.

A few learned rules of a Sicilian cooking and dining:

- Never rinse pasta after it's cooked and strained
- It's not extra virgin, forget it.
- Cook sauce slow on low. Three hours minimum.
- Stir
- Sandwich bread comes from a bakery. Bread to feed the ducks at the summer cottage comes from big grocery stores.

- Fig trees are kept outside in the summer and covered warmly or brought inside by November
- It needs more garlic
- Cannolis are better than Twinkies. Pink and white frosted sugar cookies are better than Oreos. A life lesson learned early in life when kids trade parts of their lunch at school.
- Unstuffed bread comes in a paper bag. In plastic, it's garbage.
- There's no such thing as crust that's too hard, see above.
- Basil from the garden should be picked just minutes before it goes into the sauce. Tear it with hands, don't chop with a knife.
- Grow Roma (pear) tomatoes.
- A piece of fruit is the last course at dinner.
- Music after dinner nourishes the soul
- In Italy, dining is an evening-long event with friends and relatives, and that's a good tradition. As a kid, and still today, two hours at the family dinner table isn't uncommon. A typical meal may consist of: caponata; spaghetti with hours-long cooked red sauce; hard crust sesame seed bread with butter

or olive oil; tomato-cucumber-onion salad; a cannoli or cookie and then an orange, fig, watermelon or grapes as the finale.

OLD WORLD, NEW WORLD

The old-world style of dining, back when plates were rare, was to serve pasta not on dishes but directly on the butcher block table... straight onto the wood. It didn't carry into America and that's okay because in some areas modern ways are best, says my dad who considers himself a proud American first and Italian second. Still I won't be surprised when someday a restaurant uses the idea as their signature serving style. Pasta, hard-crust bread, caponata, pink cookies, figs and all.

Lana Mini is a food writer for The Observer & Eccentric. Regularly her columns relate to animals and the environment and run twice a month in the Community Life section. She recognizes that times bring change and a few jarred sauces are acceptable today such those made at local restaurants like Andiamo or Cafe Cortina.

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Try a taste of Sicily this summer

SICILIAN GREEN BEAN AND POTATO SALAD

(Serve on a hot summer day as a main course — or as a side dish.)

- 1 large red onion
 - 2 large red-skin potatoes, unpeeled
 - 4 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
 - salt and black pepper to taste
 - 1/2 cup green olives, halved
 - 4 tablespoons balsamic or red wine vinegar
 - 10 ounces green beans, trimmed
- Preheat oven to 400°F. Rub onion with 1/2 teaspoon oil and place on ungreased baking sheet. Roast for 45 minutes or until center is soft. Let cool and peel away the layer that should look charred. Cut into 1-2 inch chunks. Place potatoes in a medium saucepan with enough water to cover and bring to boil. Reduce heat and cook for 20 minutes until center is tender — do not over-soften. Potatoes should remain tender but firm. Drain. Cool and cut into 2 inch chunks.

Boil water in a medium size saucepan and add green beans and cook until tender, but still crisp. This should take about five minutes. Drain. Rinse lightly with cold water. Drain and cut.

Now place onion, potatoes, green beans and olives in the remaining oil in a medium to large size serving bowl. Season with salt and pepper and vinegar. Mix gently and serve cold or room temperature.

LINGUINE WITH RED PEPPER AND TOMATO MARINARA

- 3 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
- 1 pound vine ripe tomatoes, seeded, seeded and chopped
- 1 large red or yellow bell pepper
- 1/8-1/4 teaspoon crushed red pepper flakes
- 4 tablespoons fresh chopped basil
- 3 tablespoons vegetable
- 1 large onion, finely chopped
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 3 large cloves garlic, fine chopped
- 1 pound linguine

Blanch tomatoes to peel easier. Drop tomatoes in boiling water for 25-30 seconds.

Heat oil in large, deep, nonstick skillet on low-high heat. Sauté onion until clear about 15-20 min-

utes. Add garlic and sauté until onion caramelizes at medium heat. Add peppers, tomatoes, red pepper, salt and pepper and simmer until nearly boiled. Then reduce heat and simmer until bell pepper is soft — about 20 minutes. Transfer mixture to a blender or food processor and puree. Put mixture back in skillet and add basil on low heat. Add broth, stir and simmer until sauce is smooth. In a sauce like this, cooking on low-medium or lower heat for an additional hour — while stirring often — will enhance the tomato flavor. (As our family says, you can never cook a tomato sauce too long. We prefer three hours).

Cook linguine according to directions — make sure not to overcook. In a large bowl add the pasta and sauce. Serve hot.

LEMON ICE

- 6 cups water
- 2 cups freshly squeezed lemon juice from about 10-12 large lemons
- 2 cups sugar
- 1/4 teaspoon grated fresh lemon rind
- 4 1/2 teaspoons lemon extract
- pinch of salt

Combine 5 cups water with sugar into a medium saucepan and simmer over medium heat; stirring constantly until sugar is dissolved. Add salt and remove from heat. Stir in remainder of water and let cool naturally. Then cover and chill in a refrigerator for about 60 minutes while simultaneously chilling a cake pan or shallow metal container at least 3 quarts in size in a freezer. Add the lemon rind, extract and juice into the mixture and stir. Pour into chilled pan and freeze for about one hour or more until the mixture starts to freeze just around the edges. Once ice crystals appear on the edges, stir them into the center of the mixture. Repeat this process every 45 minutes until the mixture is slightly, but not completely, frozen, into a "ice" or sorbet texture. This should take three to four hours. Serve in chilled dessert glasses.

To store, place lemon ice in a covered container. It will freeze solid over night so let thaw slightly and then scrape off excess crystals that may have formed on the top. We recently tried the recipe for Lemon Ice from the cookbook "The Mediterranean Vegan Kitchen"

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THE MEDITERRANEAN VEGAN KITCHEN

By Donna Klein, Bookies Publishing Group, \$17.95. Meat-free, egg-free, dairy-free dishes from the healthiest region under the sun. There aren't any photos but easy, authentic recipes make up for it. Most recipes are Sicilian. Dishes like fresh eggplant caponata; spicy tomato & red pepper sauce.

WINE

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tion. Except for climate, development of New Zealand's wine industry somewhat parallels that of California.

Vines were first planted by missionaries in 1819 on the dryer eastern side of the islands. A temperance movement took hold in the 1860s and continued to negatively impact the wine industry until after the end of World War II. During the latter 19th century, phylloxera devastated vineyards, as it did in winemaking regions around the world.

It was offset by introduction of American rootstocks, highly resistant to the root louse.

In 1961, George Fistonich, son of a Croatian immigrant, founded Villa Maria in Auckland. His ownership has

witnessed New Zealand's wine industry burgeon, due to greater emphasis on high quality and the production of bright, fresh wines, bursting with unique flavors.

FROM GRAPES TO WINE

Marlborough, first planted in 1973, is the principal source of New Zealand's world-renowned sauvignon blanc. Well-drained, gravelly soils and long hours of sunshine with very cool nights, produce ripe grapes for concentrated wines with bright acidity, and as Devine put it, "lime and lemon-grass that is not found in a sauvignon blanc from anywhere else in the world."

To taste what he means, try 2001 Villa Maria Private Bin Sauvignon Blanc \$13 which is great with Asian food. More destined for a seafood match is

2000 Villa Maria Cellar Selection Sauvignon Blanc \$19. Riesling is also grown in Marlborough.

"Throughout the U.S.," said Devine, "sales of riesling have taken a big jump." Try the dry 2001 Villa Maria Private Bin Riesling \$13 with sushi and you'll know why.

Because of the similarity of climates and pockets of gravelly soil, the region of Hawkes Bay has been compared to Bordeaux.

But unlike Bordeaux which borders on the Atlantic Ocean, a majority of the Hawkes Bay vineyards are located inland in the dry, shingly soil of river terraces formed by the intersection of three rivers with mountain headwaters.

This is the only New Zealand region that can consistently ripen red Bordeaux varietals. From the Hawkes Bay area,

try the complex, well-structured 2000 Villa Maria Cellar Selection Merlot/Cabernet Sauvignon \$20. The 2000 Villa Maria Reserve Merlot/Cabernet Sauvignon \$33 is a knockout.

Latest frontier news: the entire U.S. allocation of Villa Maria wines (90,000 cases), beginning with vintage 2002, will be bottled with Stelvin Screwcaps, universally considered the best wine closure available.

We opt for loss of traditional ceremony surrounding cork removal from a wine bottle to gaining wines without cork taint.

The Heads 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 18644.

Rosemary, orange add zest to shortbread

BY THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Summer may lend itself to healthy, light and fruity desserts, but every now and then nibbling on something buttery is a nice change of pace.

This recipe adds rosemary and orange zest to a traditional shortbread cookie, updating an old-fashioned favorite.

BUTTERY ROSEMARY ORANGE SHORTBREAD

- 1 cup (2 sticks) unsalted butter, chilled
- 1 tablespoon finely chopped fresh rosemary

- 2 teaspoons finely grated orange zest
- 1/2 cup sugar
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 3 cups all-purpose flour
- 1 egg white
- Sugar for sprinkling

Combine butter, rosemary, orange zest and sugar in a bowl of an electric mixer. Beat with paddle attachment on medium speed until ingredients are combined and butter is very smooth. Add salt and flour until a cohesive dough forms, but do not over mix.

Turn dough out on a lightly floured

board and press it into a smooth rectangle. Roll dough into a 1/2-inch rectangle. Cut into 2 by 2-inch bars. Use a spatula to transfer cookies to a cookie sheet lined with parchment paper. Refrigerate at least 30 minutes. Brush cookies with egg white and sprinkle with sugar.

Preheat oven to 350°F. Bake cookies until they have a very light tan color, 25 to 27 minutes. Cool on cookie sheet, then transfer to an air tight container.

Recipe by Jerry Traufeld on behalf of the American Butter Institute

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