



Campania countryside with vineyard



Chapter 1

Campanian Cuisine through the Ages

A famme fa asci 'o lupo ru bosco.

Hunger makes the wolf come out of his den.

Campanian cuisine began its evolution thousands of years ago around hearths of ancient Samnite tribes—Hirpini, Pentri, Caudini, and Caraceni—a rustic people of *massari*, peasant farmers, and *pecorari*, herdsmen and shepherds, who lived by a simple agrarian economy in small hamlets of *massarie*, with communal grazing lands rather than concentrated urban centers. The Sant' Agatese descended from the Caudini, who lived on the western perimeter of the Campanian plain in the Isclero valley and in the mountains around Mount Taburno and the Trebulani mountains. Samnite lifestyle was frugal and austere with few luxuries; they were a country folk in tune with their natural environment, deeply rooted in cultivating the soil and raising and tending herds of sheep, goats, and oxen. Rugged Samnite herdsmen lived in *case repentine*, small seasonal huts, driving flocks to the hills during summers and traveling long distances to the plains along ancient *tratturi*, trails across Samnium during winters.

The Samnites cultivated a variety of fruits, including *mele annurche*, apples, in higher regions, and grew *frumento*, oats, wheat, barley, and cereals, and *ortaggi*, vegetables and herbs, on the plains. Their principal foods were greens, legumes, wild game, various goat, cow, and sheep cheeses, and honey that they harvested from their own beehives. Unlike the more illustrious Roman and Greek civilizations, the Samnites left no ancient ruins to uncover, cities to unearth, or classical literature to preserve their legacy. Only a few bronze and stone tablets with inscriptions in their Oscan language survive, and most of our knowledge of them comes from the observations of Greek and Roman writers. But the modern-day towns of Cerreto Sannita and Gioia Sannitica still pay proud homage to the name bearing the ancestral roots of the people of Campania. During the great migration at the turn of the century, the Samnite name found its way to American shores when a baseball team of Italian Americans from Campania emblazoned

“Sannios” on their uniform shirts and won the New Haven city league championship in 1910.

The Samnites were contemporaries of the Etruscans and Greek colonizers who named southern Italy *Magna Grecia*, Greater Greece, in the seventh century B.C. The Greeks used a Campanian setting for their myth of Parthenope, a Siren who drowned herself in the bay of Naples because she could not seduce Odysseus. Roman writers described the Samnites as a family-based society whose principal form of government was the tribe rather than the state, a nation of fierce warriors who dared challenge the military might of Rome during three Samnite Wars, and fought with Hannibal, Pyrrus, and Marius in various wars until they were finally crushed in 82 B.C. Wealthy Romans who owned magnificent vacation homes in Campania called it “*Campania Felix*,” or Happy Countryside, because of its rich, tillable land, beautiful coastline, and friendly people. Paying homage to a land that produced crops year round, the Roman naturalist Pliny the Elder described Campania in the first century as “*Felix illa Campania*,” that fruitful Campania.

Centuries before Christian saints appeared in churches with miraculous powers to grant favors to the faithful, the Samnites worshipped in holy gardens with outdoor altars to honor their most venerated goddess Kerres, later Ceres, the divine patron of the harvest, cereals, and agriculture. Her holy intercession continues: Campanians are still blessed with fertile farmlands and

230 days of sunshine. They are a people who continue *l'arte della buona cucina*, the ancient art of preparing wholesome, nutritious, and flavorful food, maintaining a culture that never lost its connection to the soil. Farmers in the contradas around Sant' Agata still mark the changing seasons by winds with names: 'O *Scirocco Che Porta Aqua*, the warm winds from Northern Africa in the fall that come before days of high wind, humidity, and rain; 'O *Vento I Terra*, a wind close to the ground that ripples through seas of golden wheat fields; and *La Tramontana*, the winter wind cascading from the mountains that dries the skin and numbs the face. As winter wanes and the days of spring become longer, so does the stride of the chickens and their bigger farm brethren, the lambs: *Santa Catarina/Allonga nu pass 'i gallina* (Saint Catherine/The chicken's stride is longer) and *Sant' Aniello/Allonga nu pass 'i ainello* (Saint Aniello/The lamb's stride is longer). When horizons blaze fiery red in the fields at dusk, the Sant' Agatese often recite to one another, “*Rosso di sera/Buon tempo si spera*” (Red sunset at evening/Hopes for good weather tomorrow).

The oldest known recipe from the *la cucina popolare* (the kitchen of the common people), so reflective of the rustic simplicity of ancient Samnite culinary tradition, is *pacche e fasul*, a hearty, peasant dish of macaroni and beans, flavored with thin slices of 'a *còtena*, fresh pork skin, onions, tomatoes, and basil. Chef Silvio recalls his grandmother's step-by-step way of making *pacche e fasul* from scratch, with a few basic ingredients:



Old street in Cusano Mutri, Benevento

Pacche e Fasul Homemade Macaroni and Beans

SERVES 4-6

PREPARATION TIME: 1 HOUR

When it was time to make *pacche e fasul*, my grandmother used to say, “*Mo facimmo’ na pettola e maccarun’ frisc,*” which meant “It’s time for us to roll out some fresh macaroni” and make *pacche e fasul*. She used to take out her *tavulill*, a large round wooden disk on which the pasta dough was mixed and kneaded. Then she placed it on the kitchen table, mixed flour and water, kneaded the dough by hand, added salt and pepper, and then rolled it out with a *lainatur*, a rolling pin, into a *pettola*. *Pettola* is a word to describe how the sheet of rolled out pasta looks like the rounded backside of a shirt or even a *pettola ru mantesín*, the hanging front part of a kitchen apron. Sometimes when my shirt was hanging out of my pants she’d say, “*Mett ’a pettola ra cammissa in du cazon.*” (Tuck your shirt in your pants.) When someone was always distrustful, people used to say in a sarcastic way, “*Chill’ si mett paura che ’o culo si roba ’a pettola.*” (He’s always afraid his butt is going to steal his shirt.) *Pacche* is an old dialect word that means something that is cut into pieces. “*Piglia sta’ pacca e puorc e mettela ncoppa ’a tavola*” (Take this side of pork and put it on the table) or “*damme una pacca di mele*” (give me a piece of apple) was often heard in the kitchen. *Pacche* also describes how the macaroni for this recipe is cut in *pacche*, pieces.

After the *pettola* was rolled out and cut into long strips about three inches wide, she left them to partially dry for a few hours to a sort of leathery consistency. Then she took all the strips, stacked them up, and cut them across into half-inch-wide *pacche*. Then she laid them on a tray lined with linen cloth, ready to be cooked. She used to dry all the pasta the same way, including that for *pasta e fasul*, macaroni and beans, as well as other kinds of pasta like *strangolaprievete*, *gnocchi*, and *orecchiette*, little ear pasta. But I remember how, while she cooked these dishes, *’a nonna* used to sing in the kitchen, songs like “*Signorinella*” with verses like “*Signorinella dolce / della casa dirimpetta*” (Sweet young girl / who lives in the house across the street), “*O Sole Mio*,” and “*Auciello Friddiglius*.” Then, after I finished eating, for dessert, she used to say to me, “*Veni cà, a bella nonna, tu vuoi i fiche secche?*” (Come here, grandmother loves you, would you like some dried figs?)

In the years following World War II, pasta was difficult to find and she made her own, *maccheroni i casa*, homemade



’O tavulill e lainaturu

macaroni. The poor laborers had to go the *ammassa*, a distribution center run by the town with a *tessera*, an identity card, to get *maccheroni* according to how many children they had. Even *i signori*, the wealthy people of means, although they had money, had no food, and they’d come knocking on her door to buy chickens, eggs, sausage, and flour. Then they’d bring it home and give it to their cooks to make dinner with it.

The ingredients for this recipe are in two parts. The first is for a *pettola*, the rolled-out sheet of homemade macaroni. The second is for *’a salsa*, the sauce. You can also make this with *’a còtena*, using the same directions as *pasta e fasul* (page 20).

INGREDIENTS FOR A PETTOLA

- 8 cups sifted all-purpose flour (2 pounds)
- 1 teaspoon salt
- Water

INGREDIENTS FOR A SALSA

- ½ cup extra virgin olive oil
- 4 garlic cloves, finely chopped
- ½ small onion, finely chopped
- 2 large celery stalks, finely chopped
- 1½ pounds ripe plum or other tomatoes, halved, squeezed to expel seeds, and coarsely chopped, or 24 ounces canned San Marzano tomatoes, undrained, and crushed by hand

Leaves of 1 bunch fresh basil
Salt and freshly ground black pepper
3 cups cooked white cannellini beans, or 30 ounces
undrained canned
Peperoncino (crushed dried hot red pepper),
optional

MAKING A PETTOLA

It's a good idea to make the *pettola* the day before or several hours before the meal. Place the *tavullill*, the wooden disk, on the table. If you don't have one, use a wooden board or marble slab. Place flour in the middle and make a well in the center. Add the teaspoon of salt, and then gradually pour water into the well while mixing in flour until all the flour is moistened and a rough dough has gathered into a ball. The dough should not be quite firm but malleable. If necessary, adjust by adding either more flour or more water. Scrape the work surface clean and sprinkle with enough flour to cover. Place the dough on the work surface, sprinkle with flour, and knead with your fist for about 5 minutes, or until the dough is smooth and elastic. Shape the dough into a ball or into 2 balls if easier to manage, and sprinkle flour on the bottom and top. Let rest for 1 hour. With a *lainatur*, a rolling pin, or a pasta pin, roll the dough from the center outward in all directions so that it forms a round sheet. Keep rolling and sprinkle the bottom and top frequently with flour so that it doesn't stick. Roll the dough

between 1/8-inch and 1/16-inch in thickness. Let the pasta sheet rest for 2 hours. Then cut it into strips 3 inches wide, making sure the strips are well floured, top and bottom. Make 2 stacks of pasta strips and cut them across into half-inch-wide pieces. Separate the pieces with your fingers and sprinkle with more flour if needed to keep them dry and apart. Gently spread them in an even layer on a tray lined with a linen towel and let dry for at least 1 hour or up to several hours.

MAKING THE SAUCE

In a large pot, heat the oil over medium heat. Add the garlic, onion, and celery and cook for approximately 5 minutes, or until the ingredients turn golden. Add tomatoes, a dozen torn basil leaves, and some salt and pepper. Simmer, covered, for approximately 5 minutes. Take off the cover, stir in the cannellini beans, and cook for another 5 minutes, or until the tomatoes become soft. Turn off the heat and set aside.

Bring a large pot of salted water to a boil over high heat. Add the pasta to the water. Stir gently until the water comes back to a boil and the pasta comes to the surface. Drain the pasta, saving some of the water. Return the pasta to the pot, mix with the sauce, and add enough cooking water to just about cover the pasta. Bring to a simmer over medium heat, give it a nice stir, and adjust seasoning with salt, pepper, and peperoncino to your liking. If you like it brothy, serve immediately; if you like it thick, let it sit off heat for 10 to 15 minutes with the cover on. Serve garnished with more fresh basil.



Chef Silvio mixing flour and water, kneading the dough, rolling the dough, cutting into the “pacche,” separating the “pacche”

Recipes in this cookbook reflect the cultural influences of foreign invaders and traders on Campanian cuisine. Greek colonizers of southern Italy brought grapevines to the fertile volcanic soil of Vesuvius, along with honey and sesame, in the seventh century B.C. Conquering Romans relied on Campania's rich farmlands to supply food for the Empire and introduced *laganae*, the antecedent of modern-day lasagna. The ancient Roman recipe called *salsa di pesce fermentata*, fermented fish sauce, is closely related to the salted anchovies used to flavor the modern-day classic dish *spaghetti aglio e olio*, spaghetti with oil and garlic. After the fall of Rome, Goths under the armies of Totila invaded and conquered Campania in the fourth century, followed by Longobard legions led by Zottone in the sixth century, who divided the territory into duchies.

Longobards in Sant' Agata de' Goti specialized in game dishes of all kinds, and succeeding Greek Byzantines from the Eastern Empire in the ninth century brought salads and other dishes like *insalata Greca: verdurina di Campania*, baby field greens, *dadini di pancetta rosolata*, small cubes of crispy sautéed bacon, and *crostini di pane arrostiti agliati con olio e aceto aromatico*, thinly sliced toasted bread rubbed with garlic, olive oil, and vinegar.

Arabs introduced many important crops to Italy, adding new accents and textures to Campanian cuisine. Muslim farmers in ninth-century Sicily applied advanced irrigation techniques to the island's arid soil, using water towers and reservoirs to grow lemon, orange, and fig trees, as well as artichokes, rice, spinach, bananas, sugarcane, cotton, and a hearty form of wheat



Pacche e fasul

known as *triticum durum*, which could be transported long distances without spoilage. Arab settlers in Sicily established the first macaroni factory, which made *itryah*, the form of vermicelli later known in Sicily as *tria*. This pasta was distributed to Calabria and Naples and probably to the maritime city-states of Amalfi and Genoa as well. In the eleventh century, Arab traders brought their prized eggplant to Naples. Arabic words incorporated into Italian document the considerable Middle Eastern influence on Campanian cuisine: *kharshufun* became *carciofo*, artichoke, *laymunum* became *limone*, lemon, *narangun* became *arancio*, orange, and *badhingianun* became *mulinana*, eggplant, in the Neapolitan dialect. Raisins used to garnish southern Italian dishes and *sharbet*, sherbet, made by pouring fruit flavorings on snow gathered from Mount Etna, also owe their heritage to the Arabs of Sicily.

Vermicelli alla Marinara

Vermicelli with Marinara Sauce

SERVES 4 TO 6

PREPARATION TIME: 30 MINUTES

- ½ cup extra virgin olive oil
- 5 cloves garlic, chopped
- ½ cup chopped fresh Italian parsley
- 2 pounds ripe plum tomatoes, halved, squeezed to expel seeds, and coarsely chopped, or 32 ounces canned San Marzano tomatoes, undrained, and crushed by hand
- 15 to 20 pitted Calamata olives, halved
- 2 tablespoons capers
- Salt and freshly ground black pepper
- 1 pound vermicelli pasta, preferably imported from Italy
- 1 cup fresh basil leaves, ½ cup torn

In a medium-sized saucepan, heat oil over medium heat. Add garlic and parsley and sauté only for a few seconds. Add tomatoes and cook, stirring, for just a few minutes, or until the tomatoes soften but still retain their shape, without breaking down into a sauce. Add olives, capers, and salt and pepper to taste.

In a separate pot, cook the pasta *al dente* in boiling salted

water following the directions on the package. Drain the pasta, return it to the pot, and add the tomato sauce. Add the torn basil and stir well. Serve immediately in a pasta bowl, garnished with the whole basil leaves.

Fettucine Alfredo

SERVES 4

PREPARATION TIME: 20 MINUTES

- 2 cups heavy cream
- 4 tablespoons butter
- Salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste
- 2 egg yolks
- 2 pounds *fettucine all'uovo* (egg fettucine), fresh or 1 pound dried
- 1½ cups grated parmigiano cheese
- ¼ cup chopped fresh Italian parsley

In a large pan, bring the cream, butter, and a pinch each of salt and pepper to the simmer. Remove from heat, add the egg yolks, and immediately whisk them into the cream. Following instructions on the package, cook the pasta *al dente* in a pot of boiling salted water. Drain and add the pasta to the cream sauce. Add half of the cheese. Heat until bubbling, stir well, and serve immediately, sprinkled with the rest of the cheese and the parsley.

Rigatoni Casalinga

Home-Style Rigatoni

SERVES 4 TO 6

PREPARATION TIME: 25 MINUTES

- ½ cup extra virgin olive oil
- 1 pound Italian sausage, cut into 1-inch pieces
- ½ onion, thinly sliced
- 6 ounces fresh mushrooms, thickly sliced
- ½ cup dry white wine
- 2½ cups Chef Silvio's marinara sauce
- 1 cup fresh basil leaves, torn



Orecchiette con cime di rape e salsiccia

1 pound rigatoni pasta

1½ cups grated parmigiano cheese

Salt and freshly ground black pepper

Heat olive oil in a large frying pan over medium heat. Add sausage and cook, stirring frequently to prevent sticking, until sausage gets crispy. Add onions, and cook, stirring, until onions turn golden. Add mushrooms and dry white wine and cook for 2 or 3 minutes, or until the wine evaporates. Add marinara sauce and half of the basil and bring back to a simmer. Cook for approximately 10 minutes, making sure sausage is cooked through. Remove from the heat.

Cook the pasta *al dente* in a large pot of boiling slated water following instructions on the package. Drain pasta, reserving some of the cooking water. Return the pasta to the pot and add half of the sauce and half of the cheese, and stir well. If the pasta seems too dry, add some pasta water. Taste and add salt and pepper if needed.

Serve in pasta bowls, topping each with the remaining sauce and sprinkling with the rest of the cheese and basil.

Orecchiette con Cime di Rape e Salsiccia

Little Ear Pasta with Broccoli Rabe and Sausage

SERVES 4 TO 6

PREPARATION TIME: 35 MINUTES

1 pound broccoli rabe

1 pound Italian sausage, cut 1 inch across

½ cup extra virgin olive oil

6 cloves garlic, chopped

Peperoncino (crushed dried hot red pepper)

Salt

1 pound orecchiette pasta

1½ cup grated parmigiano cheese

Cook broccoli rabe in boiling salted water for 8 to 10 minutes until it's tender but not too soft. Drain and set aside.

In a large frying pan over medium heat, heat the oil, add sausage and cook until crispy. Add garlic and cook until golden. Stir in the broccoli rabe and crushed red pepper and salt to taste. Set aside.

In a separate pot, cook the pasta in a pot of boiling salted water following directions on the package for *al dente*. Drain, reserving some of the cooking water. Combine the pasta, broccoli rabe, and sausage in the pasta pot and add enough reserved pasta water to make it slightly soupy. Add half of the cheese and toss well. Serve in a pasta bowl, sprinkled with remaining cheese.

Linguine Puttanesca

Hooker-Style Linguine

SERVES 4 TO 6

PREPARATION TIME: 40 MINUTES

- 1/3 cup extra virgin olive oil
- 8 cloves garlic, chopped
- 6 filets canned anchovies, chopped
- 1 tablespoon capers
- 15 pitted Calamata olives
- 1/4 cup dry white wine
- 25 ounces canned San Marzano tomatoes, undrained, and crushed by hand
- 1 cup fresh basil leaves, torn
- Salt and freshly ground black pepper
- 1 pound linguine pasta
- 1 1/3 cups grated pecorino romano cheese
- 1/2 cup chopped fresh Italian parsley

Heat olive oil in a large frying pan over medium heat. Add garlic and cook until blond in color. Add anchovies, capers, and olives and cook for approximately 2 minutes, stirring constantly. Add white wine and wait until it evaporates. Add tomatoes and half of the basil. Bring to a boil, then simmer for approximately 10 minutes. Taste for salt and pepper. Remove from the heat and set aside.

Cook pasta in a pot of boiling salted water following the directions on the package for *al dente*. Drain and save some cooking water. Add half of the sauce, half of the cheese, and half of the parsley to the pasta. Toss well and add some pasta water if needed to moisten. Serve in pasta bowls and top with the rest of the sauce, cheese, and parsley. Garnish with the rest of the basil.

Mulignana a Parmigiana

Eggplant Parmesan

SERVES 6 TO 8

PREPARATION TIME: ABOUT 1 HOUR

- 2 large eggplants (1 1/2 to 2 pounds each)
- 2 cups all-purpose flour
- 6 eggs, beaten
- About 4 cups vegetable oil for frying
- 4 cups Momma's Marinara Sauce (page 87) or Chef Silvio's Sunday Sauce (page 101), plus more for serving
- 2 2/3 cups grated parmigiano cheese, plus more for serving
- 1 pound shredded mozzarella cheese

Slice each eggplant lengthwise about 1/4-inch thick. Flour both sides, then dip the slices in beaten egg. Heat 1 inch of oil in a deep-fryer or a large, deep frying pan to 350 degrees. Working in batches, fry the slices on both sides until golden, approximately 1 minute on each side. As the slices are fried, set them on paper towels to drain.

Spoon a thin layer of sauce over the bottom of a 13 x 9 x 2-inch baking pan or other pan of similar dimensions, then add a layer of eggplant slices. Cover with a thin layer of sauce, then sprinkle with grated parmigiano cheese and top with a layer of mozzarella. Repeat until all ingredients are used, finishing with a top layer of sauce, parmigiano, and mozzarella. Try to divide the ingredients evenly among the layers. Bake at 375 degrees for 20 to 25 minutes, or until bubbling and nicely browned on top. Let sit for about 10 minutes. Cut into squares any size you like and serve with a spatula. Top each square with a little more sauce and sprinkle with a little parmigiano cheese. *E buon appetito!*

Suggestion: Have extra sauce on hand in case someone would like it.



Mugnana a parmigiana

Mugnana a Funghielli

Eggplant Funghielli

SERVES 4 TO 6 AS AN APPETIZER

PREPARATION TIME: 1½ HOURS

2 medium-sized eggplants (about 1 pound each), unpeeled, and cut into 1-inch cubes

Salt

½ cup extra virgin olive oil

8 cloves garlic, finely chopped

4 large ripe plum tomatoes, cut into ½-inch cubes

2 cups fresh basil leaves, torn

2 tablespoons capers

1 tablespoon dried chopped or fresh oregano

½ cup chopped fresh Italian parsley

Freshly ground black pepper

1 cup grated parmigiano cheese

Toss eggplant with 1 tablespoon salt in a colander and let drain for 1 hour. Firmly squeeze the eggplant by handfuls to press out bitter juice.

Heat oil in a large frying pan over medium heat. Add garlic and cook until gold in color. Add eggplant, stirring constantly, for about 5 minutes, or until eggplant cubes become tender but still retain their shape. Add tomatoes, ¼ cups of basil, capers, oregano, half of the parsley, and salt and pepper to taste. Cook for approximately 5 minutes, or until the tomatoes are softened and the flavors are blended. Remove from heat, add half of the cheese, stir, and taste for salt. Serve hot or at room temperature on a large platter, sprinkled with the rest of the parsley and cheese, and garnished with the rest of the basil.

Optional: Toss the eggplant with a pound of penne, and you will have a beautiful Campanian pasta dish.

Mulignana a Scarpone

Eggplant Scarpone

SERVES 4

PREPARATION TIME: 2 HOURS

2 medium-sized eggplants (about 1 pound each)

Salt

$\frac{2}{3}$ cup extra virgin olive oil

4 large ripe plum tomatoes, finely diced

6 cloves garlic, finely chopped

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup finely chopped fresh basil

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup finely chopped fresh Italian parsley

2 tablespoons capers

1 teaspoon dried or chopped fresh oregano

1 cup grated parmigiano cheese

Freshly ground black pepper



Stuffed eggplant

Cut the eggplants in half lengthwise, leaving the stems attached. With a small knife, make crosscuts into the cut sides going halfway down to the skin, being careful not to cut into the sides so the eggplant halves remain intact. Line them up on a sheet pan, with the cut sides up. Give them a good sprinkle of salt and put them in the refrigerator for at least 1 hour.

In a bowl, combine half of the oil, the tomatoes, garlic, basil, half of the parsley, capers, oregano, and half of the cheese. Give it a good stir and season with salt and pepper to your liking. Set aside.

Squeeze each eggplant half with your hand to press out the bitter juice. Lay them out on a baking pan, cut side up. Spoon the tomato mixture over each eggplant, making sure it falls into the cuts. Don't be afraid to load them with the tomato mixture. Drizzle the rest of the oil over the top. (Some of the tomato mixture and oil will fall onto the pan. *Va bene*—that's good—because you need some oil on the pan.) Bake at 450 degrees for approximately 20 minutes, or until the tops are sizzling and crispy. Sprinkle with the rest of the cheese and parsley, and serve them family style or individually. If you serve them as an appetizer, cut them in two if you like.

Mulignana Scapece

Pickled Eggplant

SERVES 4 TO 6

PREPARATION TIME: 1 HOUR

2 medium-sized eggplants (about 1 pound each)

4 cloves garlic, chopped

Salt and freshly ground black pepper

2 teaspoons dried oregano

2 teaspoons peperoncino (crushed dried hot red pepper)

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup extra virgin olive oil

$\frac{1}{4}$ cup red wine vinegar

This is a very old Campanian recipe. Trim off the stems and cut eggplant lengthwise in slices $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch thick. In a large pot of salted water, simmer the eggplant slices a few at a time for 4 to 5 minutes, or until cooked through but still firm. Lay each on paper towels to drain. In a glass bowl or Pyrex baking dish, arrange the eggplant in layers, sprinkling each with garlic, salt and

pepper, oregano, crushed pepper, oil, and vinegar. Cover with plastic wrap and refrigerate for at least 12 hours before serving. Make a large batch; it keeps for several days refrigerated.

Suggestion: This dish can be served as an appetizer or in a sandwich. For a milder version, leave out the crushed red pepper.

Carciofful 'Mbuttinat

Stuffed Artichokes

SERVES 6

PREPARATION TIME: 1½ HOURS

- 6 medium-sized artichokes
- 1 cup plain dry bread crumbs
- 1 tablespoon pecorino romano cheese
- 1 heaping tablespoon chopped fresh Italian parsley
- 1 tablespoon finely chopped garlic, plus 6 whole peeled garlic cloves
- Salt and freshly ground black pepper
- ¾ cup extra virgin olive oil
- 1 lemon
- ½ cup dry white wine
- About 4 cups chicken broth or lightly salted water, hot

Cut off the stems and about ¾ inch off the tops of the artichokes. Swish artichokes in cold water for 1 minute to release grit. Drain artichokes upside down on a towel. In a bowl combine bread crumbs, cheese, parsley, chopped garlic, and salt and pepper to taste, and mix well.

With your thumbs, open the leaves and force some of the bread-crumbs stuffing in between and sprinkle the rest on top so most of the stuffing falls into the center. Make sure the stuffing is divided equally among all of the artichokes. Place the oil and garlic cloves in a pot just large enough to hold the artichokes upright; wedge the artichokes tightly together so they don't fall over. Place the pot over medium heat. Squeeze the lemon over the tops of the artichokes. Wait until the oil and garlic start sizzling and then add the white wine. Cover and cook for 2 minutes. Add enough preheated chicken broth or salted water to come an inch below the tops of the artichokes.

Cover and simmer for approximately 1 hour, or until the leaves pull out easily. Make sure there is still at least 1 inch of liquid in the pot to serve over the artichokes. If there is less, add broth or water. Serve individually in small deep bowls, pouring the juice and 1 garlic clove over each artichoke. Invert a bowl of the same size over each artichoke when serving. Use this bowl for consumed leaves.

Option for stuffed artichokes: Add 2 eggs and 2 slices of finely diced prosciutto to the stuffing, put into the center of the artichokes, then prepare and serve the same way. You now have Old World Artichokes Sant' Agatese.

Three main staples of Campanian cuisine—potatoes, tomatoes, and corn—came from across the Atlantic. After the Spanish discovery of America, the tomato plant arrived in Naples from Peru in 1570. San Marzano tomatoes, planted in the mineral-rich volcanic soil of Vesuvius and named after the town



Carciofful 'mbuttinat



Alleyway in Sant' Agata

in Campania, are considered the finest tasting in the world. They made Neapolitan pizza and its tomato sauce the most recognized dish among the world's cuisines. The milled cornmeal for "polenta" dishes, which became a major staple in the diets of central and northern Italy, came from American *granturco*, corn, around the same time.

Spaghetti Vesuviana

SERVES 4

PREPARATION TIME: 20 MINUTES

- ½ cup extra virgin olive oil
- 6 cloves garlic, finely chopped
- 2 bell peppers, possibly red and yellow, seeded and cut into strips
- 14 ounces canned Vesuvian cherry tomatoes, undrained, or, if not available, canned San Marzano tomatoes, undrained, and crushed by hand
- 1 cup fresh basil leaves, torn
- 15 to 20 pitted Calamata olives, halved
- 1 tablespoon capers
- Pinch dried or chopped fresh oregano
- Salt and freshly ground black pepper
- 1 pound spaghetti
- 1 ½ cups grated parmigiano cheese
- Additional fresh basil or Italian parsley for garnish, optional

In a large frying pan heat the oil, add the garlic and cook until golden. Add the peppers and, stirring frequently, cook until slightly softened, approximately 5 minutes. Add tomatoes, basil, olives, capers, oregano, and salt and pepper to taste. Reduce heat to medium and cook for 10 to 15 minutes, or until the peppers and tomatoes are soft but still retain their shape. Give it a final taste for salt and pepper. Remove from the heat and set aside.

In a pot with salted water, cook spaghetti according to the directions on the package. Drain, reserving some of the cooking water. Add the sauce to the pasta along with half of the grated cheese and toss well. If too dry, adjust using the



Polenta con i funghi

pasta water to moisten. Serve in pasta bowls, sprinkled with the rest of the cheese and garnished with fresh basil or parsley if you wish.

Polenta Con i Funghi

Polenta with Mushrooms

SERVES 4 TO 6

PREPARATION TIME: 45 MINUTES

Polenta mix for 4 people

8 tablespoons butter

½ cup chopped fresh Italian parsley

Salt and freshly ground black pepper

¼ cup extra virgin olive oil

3 cloves garlic, finely chopped

1 pound of your favorite mushrooms, sliced

⅓ cup dry white wine

½ cup grated pecorino romano cheese, optional

Make polenta for 4 people following the directions on the package, adding half of the butter, half of the parsley, and salt and pepper to taste. Spread the polenta evenly in an oiled baking pan using a spatula. Set aside. In a medium-sized frying pan, heat the olive oil over medium heat. Add the garlic and cook until golden. Add the mushrooms and remaining butter and cook, stirring for 3 to 4 minutes or until the mushrooms soften. Add the white wine and salt and pepper to taste and cook for 2 or 3 minutes longer, or until the wine evaporates. Pour the mushrooms and all juice over the polenta and let rest for 5 to 10 minutes. Sprinkle with the rest of the parsley and grated cheese if you like. With a spatula, portion out and serve. Refrigerated leftovers can be served days later by baking at 375 degrees for approximately 20 minutes, or until sizzling.