

WINTER • 2009



THE NEWSLETTER of THE COUNCIL of ITALIAN RESTAURANTS in AUSTRALIA

news



This wonderful winter warmer is Canederli di speck – giant gnocchi from the snowy mountains in Italy's far north. From George Pompei.

The wonders of winter

There's always something new out of Italy, and more often than not, the something new turns out to be centuries old.

The “novelty” usually emerges from a region with great cooking traditions that have only just been discovered by chefs in other lands. So it is with canederli, the giant gnocchi

from the snowy mountains in Italy's far north. On page 6, George Pompei, best known for his pizza and his gelato, reveals the latest favourite on his menu.

inside this issue

- The president's message: Gillard offers a lifeline to struggling restaurants, but there's disharmony over music
- The Espresso column: hot happenings around town
- Dilemma of the month: Should waiters carry messages between customers?
- Celebrating the season: The fruits and vegies that are at their best in winter, and three warming recipes: two types of dumpling and a chestnut and rosemary cake from Lucio Galletto.
- The CIRA cooking school: top chefs share the secrets of Mediterranean generosity. The full program.
- How to join CIRA and advance Italian fare.

Dilemma of the month

Don't shoot the messenger

This is a hypothetical situation, based on an incident which happened in Buon Ricordo one night recently. A man and a woman come into a restaurant, sit down and order. From then on, the man spends most of the meal either texting or talking on his mobile phone. When he is away in the bathroom, a man at another table calls a waiter and asks him to take a message to the woman. The message says: 'If I were with someone as beautiful as you, I would not waste all night on the phone.'

Several questions arise. First, should a waiter ever agree to take a message from one table to another? Should the waiter insist on reading the message before agreeing to take it? In the case we're discussing, the message was scribbled on the back of a card, able to be read by anybody. But what if the message were sealed?

Given the content of this particular scribble, should the waiter deliver it (while the husband is away from the table) or should he return it to the sender and say he can't deliver it because of the risk of embarrassment or even violence?

In the real situation, the waiter accepted the card from the customer, took it away and read it, then decided against delivery (but did not tell the sender). The sender made no further comment, and may have assumed the message was delivered after he left.

Armando Percuoco thinks a waiter should always check with the owner, who can then take the matter up with the customer. On this particular night, Armando was away, and he thinks the waiter did the right thing. But he believes every restaurant should have a policy on this, and waiters should be prepared for these possibilities. What would you do? Send your solution to the editor of CIRA News at ddale@essentialideas.info

The president's message

My dear colleagues and friends of CIRA

I feel embarrassed to have had no communication with you for quite a while. We have been waiting for the right person to edit our newsletter and it has been worth the wait. A highly respected journalist, David Dale, has now become the editor.

I have two pieces of good news to announce.

First, we have set a date for our annual Gala diner. It is October 26. It will be at Doltone House and will, as usual, benefit from the involvement of the great chefs and hosts who are members of CIRA.

Second, Italian restaurants, along with all the other restaurants in Australia, have won a victory in the battle over what the federal government calls 'Award Modernization'.

Originally the Government planned to amalgamate the Restaurants, Hotel, and Casino awards from January 2010. This would have forced us to pay penalty rates after 7pm every day and even more on Sunday. There would have been no incentive to run a high quality restaurant and we would have been forced to reduce our staff numbers.

I was one of a number of industry members at an impassioned meeting in Noosa recently with The Hon Dr Craig Emerson, Federal Minister for Small Business.



I stressed that we do not have poker machines and huge alcohol sales to counter the predicted 20 per cent increase in costs. I'm pleased to say he listened closely.

Apparently as a result of lobbying by our industry, the Deputy Prime Minister, Julia Gillard, has now written to the Australian Industrial Relations Commission directing them to develop an award that takes into account the special circumstances of restaurant and catering businesses separate from the award governing pubs and casinos. In her letter, she wrote: 'Upon examination, I share the restaurant, café and catering industry's concerns about the potential for the modern award to increase business costs and I am of the view that the issue warrants further examination by the commission.'

This encourages us to keep lobbying on another issue to affect our already small margin of profit: the changes to the PPCA licensing of the playing of

background music. The plan is to change from a set fee per year to one based on a rate determined by the price of your average main course multiplied by number of seats multiplied by the number of sessions the restaurant is open. This could see fees to play music rise from a few hundred dollars to thousands per year. I, for one, will cease to play music in my restaurant if these changes come into effect. Let us keep campaigning.

I want to reassure all of you in business that you are not alone in this difficult time. We are all in the same boat, and we need to find new ways to keep our heads above water. If anyone wishes to discuss these matters or any other matters that concern your restaurant or as friend of CIRA, even to discuss recipes, please contact me on 93606729.

CIRA's cooking school is running well, though we would love to have more chefs participating. Please consider it a great opportunity to share your love of Italian cooking with Italian food lovers. If you need a little confidence to run your own class, we can do one together. Please talk to me.

We have a great program coming up for the end of this year. I would like to encourage you to show this newsletter to your friends and invite them to become part of CIRA as it is an incentive for us to make a bigger and better newsletter.

Saluti
Armando.



CIRA IN GIRO. Like the Beach Boys, the boys and girls of CIRA get around. In May they were in Noosa, attending its annual food festival. Over a long weekend they flew the Italian flag at various cooking demonstrations, and on the Sunday night banded together to create a nine course degustation at Berardo's restaurant. The master of ceremonies was Matt Preston, judge with the TV series *Masterchef*. The picture above shows him with, from left, James Kidman of Otto restaurant, Giovanni Pilu of Pilu Restaurant, Lucio Galletto of Lucio's and Armando Percuoco of Buon Ricordo. The CIRA gang also faced a forum of food critics. The journalists declared that they expected restaurants in 2009 to become more bargain-conscious and that they were sick of seeing expensive ingredients such as truffles and foie gras on menus. CIRA's treasurer Lucio Galletto pointed out that truffles were now part of Australia's primary industry, being grown in four states and much anticipated in mid winter. The journalists responded that they really meant truffle-flavoured olive oil, which everyone agreed has done its dash. CIRA's President Armando Percuoco lamented that food writers seemed to keep changing their minds. First they tell restaurants to become more stylish, with Riedel glasses and elegant tableware, and as soon as restaurateurs oblige, the writers argue that restaurants must become cheaper. Everyone agreed that what customers expect in 2009 is value for money, which will come at different costs according to quality of ingredients and level of service.

GIOVANNI PILU returned from Noosa and immediately set off for Sardinia, where he was filming a television documentary about the food and wine of the island where he was born. He investigated the crispy bread called pane carafau, the local pecorino cheese, the grapes vermentino di Gallura and cannonau and unique pasta varieties such as fregola (like large cous cous), shell-shaped maloreddus, and twisted maccarones de busa.

LUCIO GALLETTA set off for Orange for the country launch of his book *Lucio's Ligurian Kitchen* (at Lolli Redini restaurant). Next year he'll be travelling even further afield -- leading a tour group to the places that inspired the book. His fellow-travellers will be eating and drinking in Milan, Parma and Modena before hitting the north west coastline near Carrara and gliding along the Italian Riviera through the Cinque Terre to Genoa. For more information on Lucio's Ligurian Adventure, call Carol on 0419489141. **ARMANDO PERCUOCO** will hit the road in November to launch his cookbook, *Buon Ricordo* (which means 'fond memories' and also happens to be the name of his restaurant). The book explains Armando's crusade to get kids into the kitchen. He contrasts the classic Italian image of a family round the table chatting excitedly about a meal they cooked together with the modern image of family members in different rooms gnawing on cardboard pizza in front of the TV set or the computer screen. 'We've become a fragmented society' he says. 'I think we can rebuild community around the table. And I think Italian food is the way to achieve that. It's the most accessible, generous and participatory cooking style in the world.'

THE GALA DINNER is the highlight of CIRA's year, when members such as Pilu, Galletto, Percuoco and Kidman, plus George Pompei of Pompei's (left, top) and Danny Russo from the Beresford Hotel (left, below) create and serve a banquet to 300 eager Italophiles. This year's dinner will be held on October 26 at Doltone House in Pymont. The hot news is that ALMA, Italy's top cooking school, has agreed to sponsor CIRA's Young Chef of the Year Award. The winner, to be announced at the Gala dinner, will spend two weeks studying the fine details of Italian cooking at ALMA's campus near Parma. For more information and to make your booking, call Dani on 0405286067.





the season

CELEBRATING THE WONDERS OF WINTER

Fruits and vegetables to watch

Here's how to make the most of the ingredients that are at their best between July and September, Italian style.

Avocados (avocado)



Spread avocado on two halves of a bread roll instead of butter, add a slice of prosciutto and two drops of olive oil – you have an excellent pannino.

Artichokes (carciofo).



Bake them, stuffed with garlic, breadcrumbs and parmesan, or finely slice the inner leaves and make a salad with fennel, parmesan, olive oil and lemon.

Beetroot (barbabetola).

Boil and mash them, and stuff them inside ravioli.



Blood Oranges (sanguinella).

Use the segments to decorate a “crudo” (what some call carpaccio) of finely sliced raw fish.

Broccoli (broccoli).



Boil them in chicken stock and puree them into a soup.

Brussels sprouts (cavoletto).

Finely slice them and fry with garlic and bacon.

Cabbage (verza).

Fry it with garlic and chilli and stir it through rice.

Cauliflower (cavolfiori).

Boil, then serve with a sauce of olive oil and anchovy.

Celeriac (radice di sedano).

Boil, slice and serve with a sauce of blended pine nuts, capers, garlic, parsley and bread soaked in vinegar.

Custard apples (graviola).



Serve the flesh with ricotta. But don't eat the seeds.

Fennel (finocchio).

Roast them, or finely slice them and mix with radicchio as a salad



Grapefruit (pompelmo).

Make the segments part of a prawn cocktail, served in the half skin.

Jerusalem artichokes (topinambour).

Roast, peel, and mash with chicken stock for a soup.

Leeks (porro).



Fry in butter then puree with boiled potatoes and vegetable stock for a velvety soup.

Limes (limella).

Make a granita (lime juice, sugar, water, freeze for two hours, but every half hour, open the freezer and break up the mixture into



small pieces with a fork). Or squeeze on custard apple.

Mandarins (mandarino).



Marinate the segments in liqueur (such as cointreau) and serve with mascarpone.

Parsnips (carota bianca).

Roast, or boil with potatoes for a sharper tasting mash. Or finely slice and deep fry in peanut oil for invigorating chips.

Pears (pera).

Slice the brown ones and serve with chunks of parmesan. Or bake them and serve with chocolate sauce.

Pomegranate (melagrana)



Scoop out seeds and flesh and sprinkle over seafood carpaccio. Or use the juice to add energy to a bellini.

Potatoes (patata).



Late winter varieties are King Edward (for mash and chips),

Desiree (wedges and chips), Pink Fir (cubed, then boiled in stock and stirred through pasta) and Kipfler (steamed and sliced for salads).

Pumpkins (zucca).

Boil, mash, add crushed amaretti, and stuff inside ravioli.

Quinces (mela cotogna).

(Above Right) Peel and slice them, then bake them with a sprinkle of brown sugar at 120 degrees for six hours for a bright red treat.

Radicchio



Either the long version from Treviso or the round version from Chioggia. Slice them for salad, or wrap them in prosciutto and barbecue them.

Rhubarb (rabarbaro).

Boil then mix with apple and bake in a tart.

Silverbeets (bietola).

(at right) Boil them and mix with eggs and ricotta to make a filling for a Ligurian easter pie.



Spinach (spinaci).

Mix it with sultanas and pine nuts, as a base for poached fish.



Strawberries (fragola).

Serve them with freshly whipped zabaglione. Or just sprinkle with a little balsamic vinegar.

Turnips (rapa).

Slice and fry them as chips, or bake them with cheese sauce.

Witlof (indivia).

Mix with walnuts and blue cheese in a salad.





the recipes

George Pompei, of Pompei restaurant in Bondi, worked for 20 years in the bars, restaurants and ski chalets of Italy's northern mountains. There he encountered dumplings that seemed to have crossed the border from Austria. The Italians of the Alto Adige region call them canederli. The Austrians call them knerdel. Since they can be made from leftover bread, cheese and speck, they are classic examples of "cucina povera" – hearty fillers for winter.

Canederli di speck

150 g stale bread
100 g speck or pancetta
1 small onion
4 tablespoons chopped parsley
2 small eggs
100 ml milk
3 tablespoons flour
1 tablespoon softened butter
salt
marjoram

Cut the bread into 1cm cubes and place in a mixing bowl.

Dice the speck or the pancetta and saute over a medium heat.

Add the chopped onion and continue to saute until a light golden colour and then place in the mixing bowl with the bread.

Add the chopped parsley, flour, butter, salt and marjoram.

Lightly whisk the eggs with the milk and pour over the bread mixture.

Mix very thoroughly and leave to rest for at least 1 hour in a cool place.

With wet hands, roll 8 dumplings (golf ball size) and simmer in salted water for 15 minutes. Serve in meat broth (with a sprinkle of parmesan if you like).

Canederli di formaggio

225 g stale bread
150 ml warm milk
1 small onion
1 tablespoon butter
175 cheese Asiago, Piave, Taleggio or Montasio
5 tablespoons chopped parsley
3 eggs
Salt and black pepper
nutmeg
4 tablespoons of flour

Cut the bread into 1 cm cubes and place in a mixing bowl.

Pour the milk over the bread and leave to rest for 15 minutes

Saute the chopped onion in butter and set aside.

Cut the cheese into very small cubes and add to bread mixture.

Add the parsley, onion, eggs, salt, pepper and nutmeg and mix very thoroughly.

Add enough flour to bind the mixture.

Proceed as for the canederli di speck



Lucio Galletto, of Lucio's restaurant in Paddington, grew up in the north west of Italy, where 2000 years ago the Romans covered the hills with chestnut trees to feed future generations of centurions marching through the area to conquer Europe. Ever since then, chestnuts cooked in a multitude of ways have helped the peasants of Liguria survive the harshest winters. This chestnut cake manages to be both sweet and savoury.

Chestnut Cake

½ litre milk
400g chestnut flour
salt
100g sugar
50g sultanas
50g pine nuts
1 tbsp butter
(for greasing the cake tin)
3tbsp olive oil
3 sprigs rosemary
300 g fresh ricotta
or 200g mascarpone

Preheat oven to 200C.

Put the milk in a bowl and slowly add the chestnut flour, whisking all the time to avoid lumps. Mix well, add a pinch of salt and the sugar, sultanas,

pine nuts and 1 tbsp olive oil. Stir and mix well again.

Grease a 30 cm cake tin with butter. Pour in the mixture. Sprinkle 2 tbsp of olive oil over the surface. Arrange the 3 sprigs of rosemary on top. Bake for 50 minutes.

When ready, the surface should be crispy and cracked, and an intense brown colour.

Serve warm with spoonfuls of fresh ricotta or mascarpone.



HOW TO BE ITALIAN IN AUSTRALIA

CIRA's cooking classes have started again, and this year, a new attraction has been added...special sessions for kids.

In demonstrations and hands-on activities, some of Australia's top chefs show you how easy it is to make classic regional dishes and imaginative new creations built upon Italian tradition. The two and three hour classes are held on Saturday mornings and Monday or Tuesday nights in the fully equipped kitchens at Casa Barilla, 4 Annandale Street, Annandale.

Demonstrations cost \$75 (or \$60 if you're a CIRA member) while hands-on classes cost \$115 (or \$95 for members) and include a sit down meal at the end. To enroll, phone Dani at CIRA on 0405286067. For more information, go to www.cira.com.au.

When you can join the classes:

Tuesday 14 July, 10:00am, 11.30am and 1pm: 'Bambini in Cucina' (Kids in the kitchen)

Kate Connor, from Omerta Wine Bar, Darlinghurst, will show how kids can have fun cooking for the whole family. Class 1 will make ricotta gnocchi; class 2 will make pizza and dessert; and class 3 will make pasta.

Tuesday 28 July, 6:30pm: 'Lucio's Ligurian Kitchen'.

Lucio Galletto, host at Lucio's, Paddington, will go back to his roots and demonstrate typical dishes of the Italian Riviera, including

cuculli (potato and pine nut dumplings); muscoli ripieni (mussels stuffed with a prawn sauce); pesce con pesto di porcini (pan fried whiting with a 'pesto' of capers and porcini mushrooms); and Torta di ricotta e nociole (flourless hazelnut and ricotta cake).

Saturday 1 August, 10:00am: 'Una faccia una razza' (one face, one race).

Janni Kyritsis, formerly of Berowra Waters Inn and MG Garage and Jonathan Barthelmess of Coast at Cockle Bay demonstrate the similarities and differences between the cooking styles of two Mediterranean neighbours Greece and Italy.

This is a hands on activity, in which you'll make (and eat) the dishes, so wear your kitchen clothes.

Saturday, 8 August, 10:00am: 'Modern Italian Food from the South'

Danny Russo, chef and host at the dining room of The Beresford Hotel demonstrates dishes from his region of origin Calabria. His dishes will

include Baby globe artichoke, pecorino and asparagus salad and Snapper fillet in fennel and pancetta.

This is a hands on activity, so wear your kitchen clothes.

Monday, 24 August, 6:30pm: 'Hands on Pizza'.

George Pompei of Pompei's at Bondi Beach will demonstrate how to mix, knead, rest, roll, bake and decorate the lightest of pizzas.

This is a hands on activity, so wear your kitchen clothes.

Monday, 31 August, 6:30pm: 'Neapolitan Flavours'

Darren Taylor, classically trained in French method but now chef at Buon Ricordo, Paddington, will demonstrate three specialties of Naples: rigatoni con salsa di scorfano (tube pasta with rock cod sauce); Galletto con frittata (spatchcock stuffed with bacon and mushroom frittata); and crostata di mele con crema pasticciera (apple tart with vanilla cream).

There will be more CIRA classes in the spring.



Time-tested traditions are the basis of all successful innovation, and cooking is no exception.

Italian food has taken Australia by storm. The variety and adaptability of Italy's regional cooking allowed it to flourish when transplanted, so in a new country it has become simultaneously an Australian and an Italian experience.

CIRA was formed to help this gastronomic culture to prosper and be passed on to the next generations of cooks and food lovers. Learn more by going to CIRA's website www.cira.com.au – and join our crusade to advance Italian fare.



How to join CIRA

AIMS

- Safeguard the culinary cultures of Italy's regions
- Increase public knowledge of traditional and evolving values in Italian cooking
- Encourage informed experimentation in the industry
- Encourage members to strive for excellence in their individual market niches -whether trattoria, pizzeria, café, catering, restaurant or providore
- Provide support and advice to members in relevant aspects of restaurant operation

STRATEGIES

- Promoting partnerships with educational and training institutions to transmit a

practical understanding of the methods and philosophies of Italian food, to a new generation of chefs and restaurateurs

- Create links with cultural institutions
- Promote research and publications on Italian food
- Conduct workshops, master classes, and symposiums on specific aspects of Italian gastronomy -- wines, cheeses, pasta, olives, etc

FROM HERE

- CIRA further aims at facilitating training 'on the ground' by
- Training students and apprentices on the job in member restaurants
 - 'Training the Trainers' on the job

- Establishing 'internships' within prestigious restaurants both in Australia and Italy.
- Through symposia on specific items, eg: olives and oils, sponsored by producers
- Providing a resource for food writers to help them evaluate dishes in their regional and historical context.

TO JOIN CIRA

If you are professionally involved in producing Italian food in Australia, you can become a member of CIRA. The annual membership fee is \$90.

If you are a lover of Italian food who shares our aims, you can become an associate member of CIRA for \$90 annually. If you are a student, apprentice or senior the annual fee is \$25.

2009

Annual Fee \$90.00

Concessions \$25.00
(Students, apprentices, Seniors)

Name First Second

Restaurant

Address

State Postcode

Email

Phone

Method of Payment (Please tick one)

Cheque – Please make payable to CIRA

Money Order

EFT Transfer BSB 012 362 - Acc No 498 980 981

Signature Date

Please return completed form and payment to: CIRA PO Box 285 • Harbord NSW 2096

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