# Sunday at Nonna's

*Five recipes for a long Italian lunch*



*From Lia Vellari*

Lia and her family are AI-generated characters, and the photos are AI-generated too. The recipes follow traditional methods and are still being kitchen-tested, so please use your judgment, and tell us at hello@liavellari.com if something doesn't work.

# Summer Panzanella

*A salad that exists because nobody in Italy throws away bread.*



**Prep** 25 min · **Cook** None · **Serves** 4

## Ingredients

| | |
|---|---|
| **400 g (14 oz)** | Stale country bread, torn into chunks (At least a day old) |
| **800 g (1¾ lb)** | Ripe tomatoes, cut into chunks |
| **1 small** | Cucumber, sliced |
| **½** | Red onion, thinly sliced |
| **80 ml (⅓ cup)** | Extra-virgin olive oil |
| **2–3 tbsp** | Red wine vinegar |
| **A big handful** | Fresh basil, torn |
| | Salt and black pepper |

## Method

1. **Salt the tomatoes.** Put the tomatoes in a large bowl with a good pinch of salt and let them sit until they release their juice.
2. **Soak the onion.** Cover the sliced onion with cold water for 10 minutes to mellow it, then drain.
3. **Dress.** Whisk the oil and vinegar into the tomato juices. Add the bread and toss to coat.
4. **Rest and finish.** Add the cucumber, onion and basil and toss. Rest for 10 minutes, taste for salt and vinegar, and serve the same day.

## Where it goes wrong

- Fresh soft bread falls apart. Use old, sturdy bread, or dry it in a 300°F (150°C) oven until firm.
- Don't let it sit for hours. It's best within about an hour of mixing.

# Pasta e Fagioli

*Mamma's answer to rain, sadness and an empty fridge. It's thick enough to stand a spoon in.*



**Prep** 10 min · **Cook** 35 min · **Serves** 6

## Ingredients

| | |
|---|---|
| **3 tbsp** | Olive oil |
| **1 each** | Onion, carrot and celery stalk, finely chopped |
| **2 cloves** | Garlic, minced |
| **2 tbsp** | Tomato paste |
| **2 cans, 400 g (15 oz) each** | Borlotti or cranberry beans, drained and rinsed |
| **1.2 L (5 cups)** | Vegetable or chicken broth |
| **1 sprig** | Rosemary |
| **1 piece (optional)** | Parmesan rind |
| **200 g (7 oz)** | Ditalini or other small pasta |
| **To serve** | Olive oil, black pepper, grated cheese |

## Method

1. **Soften the vegetables.** Cook the onion, carrot and celery in the oil with a pinch of salt over medium heat until soft. Stir in the garlic and tomato paste and cook for 2 minutes.
2. **Simmer.** Add the beans, broth, rosemary and Parmesan rind. Simmer for 15 minutes, then remove the rosemary.
3. **Mash some beans.** Mash about a third of the beans against the side of the pot, or blend a few ladlefuls and pour them back in.
4. **Cook the pasta in the soup.** Add the pasta and cook, stirring often so it doesn't stick, until tender. Add a splash of water if it gets too thick. Rest for 5 minutes, remove the rind, and serve with oil, pepper and cheese.

## Where it goes wrong

- The starchy soup likes to stick, so keep stirring once the pasta is in.
- The pasta keeps absorbing liquid. Loosen leftovers with a little water or broth.

# Nonna Rosa's Sunday Ragù

*Hours on the stove, almost no effort. The only rule is that it never boils.*



**Prep** 20 min · **Cook** 3 hr 30 min · **Serves** 6

## Ingredients

| | |
|---|---|
| **500 g (1 lb)** | Beef chuck (In 2 or 3 large pieces) |
| **500 g (1 lb)** | Pork shoulder or country ribs (Bone-in adds flavor) |
| **3 tbsp** | Olive oil |
| **1 large** | Yellow onion, finely chopped |
| **2 tbsp** | Tomato paste |
| **120 ml (½ cup)** | Dry red wine |
| **2 cans, 800 g (28 oz) each** | Whole peeled tomatoes (Crushed by hand or passed through a food mill) |
| **A few leaves** | Fresh basil |
| **To taste** | Salt |
| **500 g (1 lb)** | Rigatoni or ziti |
| **To serve** | Grated Parmigiano-Reggiano or Pecorino |

## Method

1. **Brown the meat.** Season the meat with salt. Heat the oil in a heavy pot over medium-high heat and brown the pieces well on all sides. Move them to a plate.
2. **Soften the onion.** Lower the heat to medium and cook the onion in the same pot until soft and golden.
3. **Fry the paste, add the wine.** Stir in the tomato paste and cook for 2 minutes until it darkens. Pour in the wine and scrape up the browned bits until it has mostly cooked off.
4. **Simmer.** Add the tomatoes, basil and the meat with its juices. Bring just to a simmer, then cover with the lid slightly open and keep it on the lowest heat. You want a slow bubble now and then. Stir occasionally and add a splash of water if it gets too thick.
5. **Finish.** The ragù is ready when the sauce is dark and the meat is fork-tender. Take the meat out and season the sauce with salt. Boil the pasta until just al dente and toss it with plenty of sauce and a splash of pasta water.
6. **Serve.** Plate the pasta with cheese on top. Serve the meat as a second course, or shred it back into the sauce.

## Where it goes wrong

• A hard boil makes the meat tough and the sauce sharp. If it's bubbling steadily, turn it down.

• If your burner runs hot, use a heat diffuser or put the covered pot in a 300°F (150°C) oven.

It tastes even better the next day. Cool it quickly, refrigerate for up to 3 days, or freeze for up to 3 months.

# Fish in Acqua Pazza

*"Crazy water": fish gently poached in a quick tomato broth. It's elegant, and it's done in one pan.*



**Prep** 10 min · **Cook** 20 min · **Serves** 4

## Ingredients

| | |
|---|---|
| **4 fillets, about 170 g (6 oz) each** | Sea bass, snapper or other firm white fish (Skin on if you can) |
| **3 tbsp** | Extra-virgin olive oil |
| **3 cloves** | Garlic, sliced |
| **300 g (10 oz)** | Cherry tomatoes, halved |
| **Pinch** | Chili flakes |
| **180 ml (¾ cup)** | Dry white wine |
| **240 ml (1 cup)** | Water |
| **A handful** | Parsley, chopped |
| **To serve** | Crusty bread |

## Method

1. **Build the broth.** Cook the oil, garlic and chili gently in a wide, deep skillet until fragrant. Add the tomatoes and a pinch of salt and cook until they start to soften. Add the wine and water and simmer for 5 minutes.
2. **Poach the fish.** Salt the fish and lower it into the broth, skin side down. Cover and keep at a gentle simmer until the fish is opaque and flakes easily, or reaches 145°F (63°C).
3. **Serve.** Lift the fish into shallow bowls and spoon the broth and tomatoes around it. Finish with parsley, a thread of olive oil and bread.

## Where it goes wrong

- Keep the liquid at a lazy simmer, and move the fillets only once, with a wide spatula.
- Thin fillets finish fast, so start checking early.

# Classic Tiramisù

*Espresso, mascarpone and patience. It's better tomorrow than it is today.*



**Prep** 30 min · **Cook** None · **Serves** 8

## Ingredients

| | |
|---|---|
| **4 large** | Eggs, separated (Use pasteurized eggs, as they aren't cooked) |
| **100 g (½ cup)** | Sugar |
| **500 g (1 lb)** | Mascarpone, cold |
| **300 ml (1¼ cups)** | Strong espresso or moka coffee, cooled |
| **2 tbsp (optional)** | Marsala or dark rum |
| **About 30** | Savoiardi (ladyfingers) |
| **To dust** | Unsweetened cocoa powder |

## Method

1. **Make the cream.** Whisk the yolks and sugar until pale and thick. Mix in the mascarpone until smooth. Don't overmix, or it can turn grainy.
2. **Fold in the whites.** In a clean bowl, whip the whites to firm peaks. Fold them gently into the mascarpone mixture.
3. **Layer.** Mix the coffee and Marsala. Dip each ladyfinger for about a second per side and line a 9×13-inch (23×33 cm) dish. Spread with half the cream, then repeat with one more layer.
4. **Chill.** Cover and refrigerate. Dust with cocoa just before serving.

## Where it goes wrong

• A slow soak turns the ladyfingers to mush. A quick dip is enough.

• Use cooled coffee, because hot coffee can melt the cream.

This recipe contains uncooked eggs. Use pasteurized eggs, and consider skipping it for anyone pregnant, very young, older or with a weakened immune system. Keep it refrigerated and eat it within 2 days.