

RECIPES FROM OUR TABLE

' Le orecchiette con le cime di rape '

This is a variation on perhaps the most famous Pugliese recipe of all. The variation is, in fact, the one of the Salento, the beautiful stretch of land that makes up Italy's heel. It should be noted that Semolina in English is mistranslated, as it is actually semola in Italian. You may find this product also labelled as simply, Hard Durum Wheat flour. The Salentine variation comes is nothing more than a percentage of either barely (orzo) flour or emmer wheat (farro) flour, giving the pasta a pleasing toothy quality. And that it often lacks anchovies.

You'll need:

Semola (semolina)

A bottle of Salice Salentino, plus another for dinner

Good quality olive oil (preferably not labelled as "Tuscan")

A few bunches of strongly flavoured greens

Salt

Breadcrumbs (zap oven-dried bread in processor)

Some form of chilli peppers

Open the wine and announce that you'll pour a glass for everyone that helps. With an open hand, scoop up as much semola as you can hold without losing any, one per person, plus another, placed off to the side. Make a yellow mound in the centre of a clean work surface, the rougher textured the better. With an eyeball, add roughly another 25% of either barley or emmer flour, incorporating them. Form an atoll (or a really wide-mouthed volcano). Slowly pour tepid water into your atoll, a little more than you'd think. Slowly, begin to move the sides of the atoll in towards the centre, careful to avoid any of the mini-torrents that make for the edge of your work surface. Work this into a dough, adding flour from your reserved pile if need be. A good gauge is that an inserted thumb should come away cleanly. Knead this for ten minutes, or two glasses of wine. Form a ball. Take a break.

Meanwhile, having bought the best, strong-flavoured greens that your market offers- collard, mustard, Broccoli leaves- cut them into pieces as small as you are inclined (the finer the texture, the better the pasta coverage, a point contested in much of the Salento). Wash these very, very well, soaking them if need by.

Return to your ball. With clean hands begin by squashing your ball on one side until you form a point, applying your body's weight while rolling it. Continue rolling the point until it becomes a dowel. Roll the dowel until a long strain of dough- pinkie-thin- extends out from the side of the ball, perhaps an arm's length long. Using a non-serrated butter knife, cut the tip of the pinkie-dowel into a first-pinkie-knuckle sized piece. With the knife parallel to your torso, squash this little ball towards your body, nearly smearing it into the tabletop. It should form almost half a peanut shell shape. Put the knife down. Invert the little shape by turning it inside out, until the form is exactly that of an un-extended condom (circular, thicker towards the edges, thinnest in the centre). The degree of your

smear, the water to flour content, and to a lesser degree, the surface of the table, should work together to form a textured surface across the top of your orrechiette. This surface holds the sauce. Don't be discouraged. It's trickiest shape to make, and a skill you'll treasure for as long you eat pasta. And be certain to keep your first few each batch, which will dry perfectly, keeping for years. Track your progress. Make them three times and these first ones will seem made by someone else, such is the curve of learning fresh pasta.

Place completed orrechiette on a clean dish down, either in an unmolested corner, or on a board that can be moved. When you've completed all of your dough, wash up and wait at least a few hours.

Place a large pot of water to boil, the same person salting it that will drop the pasta (a really good habit). In a large, heavy skillet heat a small glass of good and green olive oil, adding three to five garlic cloves, cut in half. When these begin to take on colour, add your greens by the handfuls, careful not to burn yourself when the rinsing water spatters. Salt them and cook for ten minutes. Add chilli flakes or a small torn chilli pepper (wash your hands before going to the bathroom, especially if you're male). When the water rolls, have the salter drop the pasta. After 60 seconds begin tasting. When still a bit under, drain the 'little ears' and toss them in on top of the greens, coating them as best as possible. Add another slug of oil, the breadcrumbs and then pour everything into a big bowl. Open the second bottle. Perhaps most Pugliese of all, make a point of enjoying the company of those around the table.

This recipe is an example of the recipes offered at our cooking school. If you would like to learn more, please visit our [Cooking School](#) page. Or, [register now](#) to join us at the Awaiting Table.

Please let us know what you think of the recipes we provide on our web site by emailing us at: info@awaitingtable.com.
