

SLHL
CHEERS



Approaching the Harvest With *Italian Essentials*

A HEARTY FAMILY MEAL IS WELCOME AFTER A LONG DAY IN THE VINEYARD

BY LORRAINE RAGUSEO PHOTOGRAPHY PROVIDED BY QUINTESSENTIAL WINES

Come September, the vines covering much of the verdant, gently rolling hills of the Piedmont region of Tuscany are heavy with ripening grapes. By mid-month, the region is swarming with workers picking the precious "fruits of the vine" that make some of Italy's finest red wines – Barolos and Barberas. The roads are also crowded with wine tourists coming to witness the harvest of nature's yearly grape bounty and to enjoy the foods for which these wines have been lovingly created.

Gian Paolo Manzone is the sixth generation of his family involved in the wine industry in the heart of this legendary region. Before Gian Paolo's father, Armando, started making Barolo, Barbaresco, Barbara d'Alba, Nebbiola d'Alba and Dolcetto d'Alba in 1970 in the village of Sinio, the family was well-known farmers and grape-growers.

As such, they understand that a hearty family meal is most welcome after a long day of toiling in the vineyards. Armando's wife and Gian Paolo's mother, Angela, has been making from scratch the pastas that

have sustained Italians in the Piedmont for many centuries. A typical meal in the Manzone's ancestral fieldstone home among the vineyards always includes two pasta dishes – perhaps "Tajarin al Ragu' di Carne" (long ribbons of hand-cut pasta in a red sauce of chopped beef) and "Agnolotti al Plin" (tiny, hand-made ravioli stuffed with meat and spinach that are "pinched" – al Plin, in Italian).

While fish is certainly part of the Italian diet, given the long Mediterranean and Adriatic coastlines that flank both sides of the country, the traditional dishes of land-locked Tuscany favor meat. Therefore, it's not surprising that nearly every dish features some kind of beef, veal or pork.

Cold veal with tuna sauce, widely known as "Vitello Tonnato," and "Carne Cruda all'Albese," raw chopped meat, prepared much like the French Steak Tartar, are staple appetizers on the Piedmont table. And no sustaining meal is complete without a roast. Gianpaolo's wife Luisella



Gian Paolo Manzone, Winemaker and owner, his father, Armando Manzone, his wife, Luisella, and his mother, Angela.

favors "Arrosto di Carne al Vino," roast beef, onions and celery braised in the winery's rich Serralunga Barolo.

As this Italian feast might take a while to arrive at the dining table, it is common practice for dried Piedmont pork sausage, such as Salami Cacciatori Barbera, and home-baked Italian bread be at the ready to tide over hungry winemakers, vineyard workers and cooks. It is accompanied by a Nebbiolo d'Alba or even a slightly sweet Dolectto d'Alba, which is a perfect match for Gorgonzola or other pungent Italian cheeses that usually find their way to the table.

For Piedmont wine families like the Manzones, "vino and cibo" (wine and food) are the essentials, especially at harvest time.

■ See www.stlouisohomesmag.com for resources.

Tajarin al Ragù di Carne

Sugo di arrosto, the drippings from a roast, are one of the classic Piedmontese condiments for both flat pasta and stuffed pasta, in particular agnolotti. It's a simple preparation that provides the sauce necessary to season the pasta, and also the meat for the second course.

To serve 6 you'll need:

Prep Time: 40 minutes

Cook Time: 3 hours, 5 minutes

Total Time: 3 hours, 45 minutes

Ingredients:

** For the Pasta **

Either 1/14 pounds commercially made tajlierini, or:

5 cups flour

8 Yolks and 3 egg whites

** For the Sauce **

2 1/4 pounds (1 k) rump roast of veal

1 clove garlic, sliced

A 6-inch (15 cm) sprig of rosemary

1/4 cup unsalted butter

2 ounces (50 g) pancetta or seasoned lard, minced

A ladle of broth

1 cup tomato sauce

Freshly grated Parmigiano Reggiano

Salt and freshly ground pepper

Preparation:

Make a mound of the flour, scoop a well into it, and add the yolks and the salt. Knead the dough well for at least 15 minutes, until it is smooth and elastic. Then roll it out dime-thin with a rolling pin, dust it lightly with fine cornmeal, and roll it up. Using a long-bladed, sharp knife, cut the roll into tajarin; the strips of pasta should be about 1/16 of an inch (2 mm) wide. Flour your work surface and shake the tajarin out onto it to dry.

Stick the meat with the garlic and rosemary leaves, and tie it so it keeps its shape. Melt the butter and briefly sauté the minced pancetta in it, then add the meat and brown it on all sides. Sprinkle the tomato sauce over it, then the broth. Season to taste with salt and pepper, cover, and simmer for about 2 hours.

Towards the end of this period bring a pot of water to boil. When the meat is done, remove it to a platter and keep it warm. Strain the pot juices into a small pot and keep them hot by setting them over a very low flame.

Salt the boiling water and cook the tajarin for a couple of minutes. Drain them well, transfer them to a bowl, season them with the sauce, and serve. Serve the meat, thinly sliced, as a second course with the vegetable of choice.