



Italian Recipes

Italian recipes are different from American recipes.

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A plate of Arrugula from our garden, tomatoes from Sicily, chunks of Parmesan cheese, balsamic vinegar, and underneath, Bresaola, a thinly sliced preserved lunch meat from Piedmont, sort of like salami-lite. It was a yummy lunch! Italian recipes are different from American recipes.

American recipes might typically describe how one can make a delicious casserole from ground beef and a can of soup.

Authentic Italian recipes will always describe how to make a dish in the same way that it was commonly made a few hundred years ago, and still is today.

American culinary icons in many cases could be described as the staples such as Tater Tots and ground beef and cans of mushroom soup.

Italian culinary icons are the heritage home-made staples, such as how to make a nice dish of pasta with gnocchi made from the local potato variety, basil from Pra, and not some other place, and Parmesan cheese, which is never sold grated, but always in big chunks carved from the huge wheels one sees in the cheese stores.

Pesto Debates

In Liguria, there is actually a heated debate between advocates of two different pesto recipes.

Everybody agrees that the basil should certainly come from Pra, or at least be grown from plants that were first sold as seedlings from Pra, and most everybody agrees that pine nuts from the north are preferred to those mass-produced in the south of Italy.

Don't even mention Spanish pine nuts, which are less expensive, but still hard to find in the Italian markets, because nobody wants them.

The taste difference isn't noticeable to an average American, to whom Spanish and Italian pine nuts are indistinguishable.

The heat of the pesto recipe debate concerns whether one should use of Parmesan (Parmigiano) cheese, or Sardinian sheep cheese (Pecorino Sardo), again not even considering Tuscan sheep cheese, which is less expensive and indistinguishable.

The advocates of the Sardinian sheep cheese point out that pesto was first made with Sardinian sheep cheese, because the Ligurians traded actively with the Sardinian island residents back in the Dark Ages, but the Ligurians had little to do with the inland Italians who were making proto-Parmigiano.

The advocates of using Parmesan cheese mention the fact that Ligurians have been using Parmesan cheese for about five hundred years now, so using Parmesan in making pesto is not exactly a recent change in the recipe.

I'm not really trying to be funny here, merely describing as accurately as I can an issue that some Italians in my neighborhood take extremely seriously.

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