

1998

simple salmon steaks

This was our first experience with the garlic salmon combo. And the secret ingredient that made it memorable was the sweet red pepper paste, which we had on hand thanks to some of isgouhi's handmade version that we keep in the freezer.

ingredients

fish

2 lbs salmon steaks or filet (about 6 for 6 people)

marinade

1 heaping t sweet red pepper paste

1/4 t cayenne red pepper

1/4 t black pepper

1/4 t salt

5,6 cloves garlic, pressed

2 T olive oil

finisher

1 lemon, sliced crosswise into 6 pieces

instructions

1. Mix up the marinade stuff and coat all the pieces thoroughly in a baking dish and put in the refrigerator for an hour or so.
2. Place one slice of lemon on each piece of fish.
3. Bake at 350° for about 15 to 20 minutes, depending on the thickness of the fish pieces.

notes

1. Later we got an [independent slant](#) on this idea from nora.

baked rigatoni with mushroom, zucchini and leek tomato sauce

We kept forgetting to replace our canned plum tomatoes, so eventually we were bound to need them and be caught without. Fortunately some newly purchased fresh plum tomatoes intended for a then current food mag roasted tomato soup recipe (that we never did anyway) were available for the more immediate objective—baked pasta. We still had zucchini and leeks on our minds from the [previous pasta improvisations](#) (and a fresh supply in the fridge) and ms_ani was still in a baked pasta mood, showing no signs of waning enthusiasm, but this time she decided to go light with a tomato based sauce replacing the cheese (= fat) of those previous baked pasta experiments.

We may have been breaking the cardinal rule of good Italian cooking (keep it simple, stupid) with our multiple billing star ingredients but all of us liked the results. Regular people eating regular food. At home. That's what it's all about. At least in our income bracket. Of course in restaurants we'll take excellence if we can find it.

ingredients

pasta

1 lb rigatoni or similar tube pasta

sauté-ables

3 T olive oil

1 onion

1/2 large leek

3 cloves garlic, pressed

2 zucchini, julienne sliced

5 medium white mushrooms, cleaned and chopped

6 or 7 fresh plum tomatoes, chopped

3 green onions, chopped

1/2 t hot paprika

salt and pepper to taste

1/2 t sugar

1/4 t cayenne red pepper

finishers

1/2 c grated romano cheese

2/3 c freshly grated parmigiano

instructions

1. Start the pasta water boiling and cook the pasta al dente with the usual amount of salt.
2. Meanwhile do the veggie food prep.
3. Sauté the onion and leek in the olive oil, then add in the garlic for a bit.
4. Next stir in the zucchini and cook a bit, then the mushrooms and cook a bit.
5. Finally dump in the tomatoes and cook down for as long as you have patience.

6. At some point before giving up mix in the green onions and spices.
7. Combine the pasta and sauce and cheeses and serve.

notes

1. Does this inspire you to improvise? Or are we just kidding ourselves?

brgmzls.htm: 7-jan-2002 [[what, ME cook?](#) © 1984 [dr bob enterprises](#)]

roasted squash and veggie soup (crema di zucca)

In another moment of weakness (culinary voyeur that he is), bob acquired another photo-filled cookbook. A thick full page photo of cream of squash soup (crema di zucca!) sank the hook this time. Yellow squash. From the summer category of squash. But it was a winter squash season. Our lactose intolerant guest forced some other modifications here as well. Kill the cream. Pass on the parmesan. Ready the lactaid 100 (percent free of lactose presumably). Break open the butternut squash.

We consulted around for ideas. Discovered a great new vegetarian cookbook on our own new book shelf that had escaped our notice since its arrival, in which a pressure cooker recipe suggested that oatmeal might help thicken the soup. Our concoction seems rather thick on its own and so probably does not need this ingredient, but it can't do any harm. More fiber. And bob had read somewhere about roasting veggies to "bring out their flavor." So that idea was also added to the list.

ingredients

roasted veggie group

- 1 medium butternut squash, cut lengthwise in half
- 1 leek, trimmed of the unusable parts
- 1 large carrot, peeled
- 1 large celery stalk
- 1 large whole onion with skin
- 1 small whole head garlic, cut open across top
- olive oil spray
- freshly ground black pepper

broth group

- 2 c boiling water plus 2 t veggie broth paste
- 1/4 c Quaker oats
- 3 c lowfat milk (Lactaid if ...)

spice group

- 1/2 t white pepper
- black pepper to taste, freshly ground
- salt to taste

instructions

1. Place the cleaned whole veggies on a cookie sheet (we lined it with aluminum foil) and spray with olive oil and grind black pepper over them. Roast 1 hour at 350°, then food process with 1 c milk.
2. Meanwhile add the broth paste to 2 c boiling water and then the oats and continue boiling maybe 15, 20 minutes. Puree with a hand blender if oats are not convincingly soft.
3. Combine with pureed veggies and remaining milk and spices and hand blend smooth.

4. Heat through and serve.

notes

1. The day before we had had a bowl of some wonderful thick carrot bisque with red pepper sauce swirled on top. So we found a jar of red pepper paste in supplies and used that as a serving garnish. Good contrast.
2. We were happy campers after this.
3. When we reheated the leftover soup, we added some milk to loosen it up a bit, since it naturally thickens in the fridge. This thickening characteristic makes it a possible candidate for a pasta sauce. Why not?

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fettuccine pepperedo

Not surprisingly our home pasta machines are not overworked, enjoying a leisurely lifestyle packed in the closet under the stairs. The one we never get opened in back under the landing to have more space to organize its contents. So when the rare request for homemade pasta product arrives to force us into action, we must choose wisely to take full advantage of the opportunity. Fettuccine give the biggest payoff in showcasing the freshness of the pasta, and although it's well known as a killer sauce, alfredo is the one that drives home the point, like the wooden stake in the vampire's heart. So the question is: to compromise or not, to compromise?

Well if we're going to splurge, let's check with [Marcella](#). First ingredient: 1 cup heavy whipping cream. Okay, we've got one of those in the fridge. We thought. Except that it was only half and half. However, we still had some 200 ml room temperature precious personally imported cartons of Italian cooking cream (panna per cucinare), just under a cup according to our glass metric-US measuring cup. So we substituted the heavy cream with that plus half a cup of half and half (is that equivalent to a quarter of cup of full fat content?). Since the 200ml seemed more like a half a cup at the time, and we only measured it a few days later, when we discovered that the expiration date was seven months earlier. [Actually the heavy cream was just hiding in the fridge clutter, only to be discovered behind the yogurt days later.] We survived the Italian cream, which seemed perfectly innocent.

The next modification was induced by the inertia of our original sauce choice—vodka sauce—which is a creamy smooth pink tomato sauce more appropriate for penne than fettuccine and lots more work. So how to add a pink touch to make the alfredo sauce more interesting? Maybe that jar of sweet red pepper sauce in the fridge? Or maybe pureed [Carlino's](#) roasted red peppers with lots of garlic instead, easily done in the hand blender attachment?

We used our new rounded deep 4qt professional [Calphalon](#) nonstick chef's pan that we got as a free bonus after buying some on-sale Calphalon products for Christmas gifts at [bloomies](#). What a pot! For years we've been lusting after high end kitchen cookware, but only buying it for others as gifts. Finally we broke down and went for it, and were instantly convinced by its first kitchen application that expense doesn't necessarily mean hype. A worthwhile investment if you enjoy being in the kitchen.

ingredients

what she said

sauce

2 T choicest quality butter
1 c heavy whipping cream

what we did

2 T superfat French sweet butter
200 ml panna per cucinare (about 1 c)
1/2 c half and half
1/3 c roasted red peppers and extra garlic, pureed

fettuccine

1 1/4 lb homemade fettuccine 4 egg, 4 c flour pasta load, fettuccine disk

finishing touch

2/3 c freshly grated parmigiano	2/3 c freshly grated parmigiano
salt	salt
black pepper, freshly milled	black pepper, freshly ground
1/8 t grated whole nutmeg	powdered nutmeg dusting

instructions

Check [Marcella's](#) book for her approach ("cream and butter sauce = "al'Alfredo"), easily inferred from ours:

1. Pureé the roasted red peppers with garlic in the hand blender with the half and half.
2. Put the Italian/heavy cream and butter in a large pot that will hold the pasta for tossing later and heat on medium heat, cooking briefly for a minute so that the cream and butter thicken. Stir in the red pepper pureé and heat slightly. Turn off the heat.
3. Meanwhile cook the pasta until just before reaching the al dente stage. Remember fresh fettuccine cook very quickly, and supposedly continue cooking a bit even after leaving the burner.
4. Drain the pasta and dump in the pot with the cream sauce on minimal low heat, and toss it around to coat all the noodles.
5. Stir in the parmigiano, salt, pepper, and nutmeg. Check the salt. Add some if necessary.
6. Serve immediately, with additional parmigiano and black pepper grated over the serving.

notes

1. Since panna per cucinare is a rare commodity, even in our kitchen where expiration dates can present a dilemma when noticed, you can use heavy cream instead, replacing even the half and half for a total of one cup cream if you dare.

fetpprdo.htm: 8-aug-2001 [[what, ME cook?](#) © 1984 [dr bob enterprises](#)]

hazelnut cheesecake revisited: the gianduia variation

When you've got a good foundation, it's easy to elaborate on.

The dr bob cooking school welcomed an aunt-in-law from Lebanon who had never had (or made) cheesecake. Offering us a golden opportunity to try out a few modifications of the tried and true hazelnut recipe and a photo-op as well now that the team was into illustrating its modest accomplishments in the kitchen. dr bob had just picked up a Gourmet magazine with a cover story on Nutella, the Italian chocolate hazelnut spread known far and wide to gluttons, at least those on top of the international food chain fortunate enough to be served by the global marketplace of the 90's. Hazelnuts plus chocolate equals "gianduia" (John, do ya?) in Italy, which achieves its nearly lethal combination in a jar as Nutella, apparently sold in quantities exceeding that of peanut butter worldwide. Hmm... why not add a Nutella touch to the hazelnut recipe?

Lousntag's English was limited to a few words, but many more than bob's nonexistent Armenian. She clearly understood enough to participate, armed with almost a year of American television viewing and obvious kitchen sense to interpret bob's attempts at simple key word and gesture communication. Unfortunately her sister Isgouhi was a winter cold casualty unable to join the class, so the demystification of cheesecake for her would have to be delayed.

A tall crass plastic container of chocolate syrup remained in the fridge from a previous recipe, taking up precious space on the top shelf where it seemed to be more just in the way than awaiting further use. (Apparently its intended consumers don't want the discretely small size.) And a still sealed box of chocolate wafers was in storage, acquired as a possible ingredient for some other recipe that chose an alternative direction. Recipe ready hazelnuts are always in the fridge, so all bases were covered. We figured a chocolate cookie crumb crust plus a discrete hit of syrup in the filling would do the trick.

This being the 90's, the cream cheese fat content combination question had to be decided. Too much fat lightening (as in no fat cream cheese) leads to problems with the final product consistency so we went 50-50: half full fat and half one-third-reduced fat (neuchatfel), thus diluting the fat content reduction to one sixth, hardly significant, eh? And to lighten the slices, we bumped up the 9 inch springform pan to the 11 inch size to reduce the height roughly by a third as well. [Do the math: $1 - (9/11)^2 = 1 - 81/121 = 1 - 80/120 = 1 - 2/3 = 1/3$.]

The result did not disappoint. [Gross understatement.]

We followed through immediately with a half-recipe for a dinner invitation not-arriving-empty-handed offering. Providing independent confirmation of its successful marriage of flavors. Since even we have trouble disposing of a full size cheesecake, we downsized to the more discrete 7 inch pan size for the particular circumstances (5 dinner guests), cutting small slices, and only leaving the hosting couple to deal with the remaining half half-recipe cake. The height actually inflated by about 20 percent. [Do the math: $h_2^2 = h_1^2/2 \rightarrow h_2/h_1 = (11/7)^2/2 = (121/49)/2 =$

$(120/50)/2 = 6/5 = 1.2$.] Which is still about 80 percent of the full-size 9 inch pan recipe height [figure this one out yourself], so a modest slab dimension reduction remains.

ingredients

full size	half size	
11 in = 28 cm	7 in = 18 cm	springform pan
crust		
$2/3$ stick = 5.3 T = $1/6$ lb = 80 g	$1/3$ stick = 2.7 T = $1/12$ lb = 40 g	unsalted butter
1 c	$1/2$ c	finely ground chocolate cookie crumbs
$1/4$ c = 4 T	2 T	ground hazelnut crumbs
$1/4$ c = 4 T	2 T	sugar
filling		
2 lbs = 4 8 oz packages = 900 g	1 lb = 2 8 oz packages = 450 g	cream cheese
$1\ 1/2$ c = 350 g	$3/4$ c = 175 g	sugar
2 T	1 T	Frangelico hazelnut liqueur
$1/2$ c	$1/4$ c	ground hazelnut crumbs
pinch	pinch	salt
4	2	large eggs
2 T	1 T	chocolate syrup
topping		
2 c = 16 oz = 450 g	1 c = 8 oz = 225 g	sour cream
$1/4$ c = 4 T	2 T	sugar
1 t	$1/2$ t	Frangelico hazelnut liqueur
2 T	1 T	ground hazelnut crumbs

instructions

1. Estimate enough chocolate cookies to make a cup of crumbs in the food processor and food process them with the sugar. Meanwhile melt the butter and mix together in a bowl with a fork, or even in the food processor. Dump in the bottom of the pan and shake a bit like a gold prospector in the California gold rush days to even out the thickness of the layer. Then encourage more evening out with a large spoon and finally press evenly on the bottom (not the sides). If you overshoot in your cookie estimate so that it seems too thick before pressing [judgement call], don't use all the crumbs. Set aside.
2. Beat the cream cheese and sugar until smooth with electric hand beaters. Add in the eggs one at a time until just incorporated on low speed, and then the liqueur and pinch of salt, and finally the hazelnut crumbs. Pour into the pan.
3. Bake 50 minutes at 350° F (180° C).
4. Remove from oven for 10 minutes. Mix together by hand the sour cream, sugar, and liqueur until smooth and just before returning the cake to the oven, spread the topping evenly (jiggling it has a finishing leveling effect after spreading approximates this state)

- over the cheesecake and then hand sprinkle the hazelnut crumbs evenly over the topping.
5. Bake another 10 minutes and remove from the oven. Let cool on a rack. Then refrigerate.

notes

1. [Gourmet](#) magazine would never put a jar of [Nutella](#) on the cover. It was a very tempting gianduia mousse cake. The Nutella note was in the cover article [February 1998].
2. Purists among us may object to the kitchen math: using equal signs where "approximately equal" signs should be when we "simplify" the numbers. We are simply following a tradition we have learned from reading the bottoms of our springform pans. Our original hazelnut recipe actually calls for a 10 inch springform pan rather than a 9 inch size, but we don't own one and haven't seen them in the kitchen stores we frequent, where "9 1/2 in = 24 cm" and "11 inch = 28 cm" seem to be the standard sizes, but the actual measurements are 9 inches and 10 1/2 inches (inside diameters), an error dwarfing the approximation error in the simple number unit correspondence. Maybe the measurements refer to the outer diameter for clearance purposes. We have made a cheesecake in a toaster oven once where this was a consideration. Who knows.
3. The first time we made this, we refrigerated it after a very brief cool down period and then ate it only a few hours later. The usual "wait at least overnight" hype was proven false in this case, making this an ideal cheesecake when same day use is required by the circumstances.
4. As we age, we have begun to take the "recipe ready" phrase on our hazelnut package seriously and skip the annoying toasting on a cookie sheet step, which can lead to disaster if the crumbs are not attentively watched, since they easily overbrown, and we are not attentive watchers. Doesn't seem to make much of a difference in spite of what we have read about the merits of toasting.
5. This is really tasty but remember, moderation. Eat too much and the aftertaste will be regret and not satisfaction.
6. A few years later we tried another variation: splitting the batter and adding 1/4 c of Nutella itself to one half, laying it down first and leveling, and then gently putting the other layer on top and leveling, for a three layer cake (counting the sour cream). Not bad, but maybe the original pure hazelnut recipe is still the winner here.
7. [Illustrations](#) are available in the dr bob cooking school series.

piero's sun dried tomato pesto pasta

Instead of populating the world with more resource hogging American babies,¹ part through our peculiar life circumstances and the rest by subsequent choice, and by sharing a single almost sensible traditional passenger car, the ani and bob show realized as it was cruising into/through middle age that it was not entirely (at least financially) insane to take advantage of winter airfare bargains when airlines practically give away transatlantic tickets and do long weekend vacations in Europe. Ani being an American wage slave with precious few annual vacation days, a chunk of which are usually reserved to meeting bob during his academic summer visits to Rome, just never has the time to do real European vacations. [Dare we admit this in public? Okay, we're still guilty of abusing the world with our middle class lifestyle.] So with Philadelphia's direct European destination list growing, our winter flight choices have broadened considerably.

Munich was a logical choice. bob had spent 9 months living in its Schwabing neighborhood at the beginning of the eighties when there was still a "West" Germany officially, and as the millennium was approaching, our Roman astronomer/astrophysicist friend Piero was working at the European Southern Observatory ([ESO](#)) headquarters right next to the [Max-Planck-Institut für Astrophysik](#) in the suburb village of Garching where nonastrophysicist dr bob had been a guest, now connected to the city center by subway. Allowing us to easily buzz on out to Piero's place for our parting Saturday night dinner. The bus driver helped us get off at the right stop in town minutes from the end of the [U6](#) line, and a pizza place person helped us find his apartment building address. All in English. German internationalism.

bob confesses that he was not entirely confident of Piero's ability to deliver on this dinner thing. So when the mascarpone-filled avocado halves came forward followed by the terrific pesto pasta made with the Braun super hand blender system we'd helped him decide to buy earlier that day, bob was really impressed, as were Helene the Dutch-Brit colleague and Gordon the Canadian collaborator from Berkeley, another old stomping ground of dr bob before the prefix got added. (dr.) And of course Ani the Lebanese Armenian cooking team partner. We're apparently hopeless internationalists. The pesto had been an earlier improvisation of Piero in when he was closer to us back in America, perhaps influenced by Annette the Scotch Canadian astrophysicist companion, now in England, an annoying commute. The old dual career couple problem. Anyway, enough of this culture name dropping. This pesto recipe will be the one concrete reminder of our Munich trip that will linger on with us the remainder of our culinary days.

By coincidence Ani's Israeli colleagues Penina and Binyamin had had a bumper crop of tomatoes the preceding summer, the surplus product of which they had had the good sense to convert to sun dried form. A bit of which found its way into our supply cabinet due to their generosity. Waiting for some idea of what to do with it. International kitchen collaboration to the max.

We are regular pesto feeders. We make a big batch and freeze the extra. Comes in handy when a quick supper fix is required. Our recipe guidelines were set by Anne Willan's [Look and Cook Perfect Pasta Sauce](#) from her every recipe step, ingredient and kitchen tool fully photographed cookbook series, modified by [Marcella's](#) 1/3 Romano cheese substitution to give it more bite, supported by our Italian cooking library sources. Piero used linguini but we had not long pasta on hand, so we stuck with our usual fusilli standard initiated by Anne's choice.

¹Okay, we admit it, it's a dirty job and somebody has to do it. Just not us.
We like kids though. Are we excused?

ingredients

pesto minus cheese

1 c tightly packed basil leaves (1 large "bunch") [okay, so we never packed them into a cup to check]
2/3 c olive oil
3 T pine nuts
5 cloves garlic [we're garlic lovers]
10 sun dried tomatoes, plus 2-3 T soaking water

add the cheese

2/3 c parmigiano
1/2 c romano

finish with

salt to taste
freshly ground black pepper on servings

don't forget the pasta

1 lb fusilli or linguini

instructions

1. Start the pasta water boiling. Continue with the pesto process but throw in the pasta (and some salt) when the water is actively boiling.
2. Boil up water in a teapot and use it to just cover about 10 sun dried tomatoes in a bowl with boiling water and cover with a plate. Let sit about 15 minutes. Or boil the sun dried tomatoes directly for 5 minutes or so if you're in a hurry. [We started out with 5 tomatoes the slow way, but finding the resulting color factor not sufficiently in the red zone, we hurriedly readied 5 more the fast way.]
3. Wash and dry the basil in a salad spinner and pull off the leaves from the larger stalks.
4. Food process the pine nuts, garlic, and a little oil, then add in the rest oil and basil and process, and then add in the sundried tomatoes and runoff water and process, and then the cheeses and process. Use a spatula to push the pesto down from the sidewalls when necessary.
5. When the pasta is al dente (check), drain it and vigorously mix in about half the pesto sauce. You only want the slightest hint of sauce to coat all of the pasta surfaces, so no globs are left visible. Freeze the rest of the sauce for another pound of pasta another night. Check for salt and add some if necessary. A minimum sprinkling is probably warranted unless serious health issues are at stake.

notes

1. For some reason the sun dried tomatoes really give pesto an extra kick worth the additional

effort. However, if you are in a traditional pesto mood, just double the basil back to the normal amount and skip the sun dried tomatoes. Tomatoes? Tomatos? Looks like there is a little Dan Quale in all of us now, because the extra ``e" there looks funny to me. In fact it looks funny either way now. English!

2. The butter factor. Several other pesto recipes suggested putting 2 T of room temperature softened butter in the hot drained pasta and mixing it up before adding the pesto. Maybe it lubricates the pasta to help spread out the pesto? We were a bit worried with our initial pesto glob in the pasta—it did not want to deglob—so we had to add some more oil and tomato liquid to loosen the rest up a bit.
3. The veggie manual dicer/slicer. bob bought his from a street vendor in 1980 in the central Munich shopping pedestrian mall. Still there in 1998 when another buy took place for the mother-in-law. Useful little device, and ecologically sound. Until it ends up in a landfill.
4. Did we forget Hans and Hortense? German-Portuguese couple we met by chance in Munich's famous Hofbräuhaus (beer hall and low brow restaurant). Talked for hours. They missed out on Piero's gourmet dinner because they thought they might be out of place in a gathering of old friends. Their mistake. [But bob undertook a missing person search for Hortense's dear American Peace Corps friend Janice met in Niger a dozen years before but lost track of in a later relocation back in the states. Small world, but still big enough to get lost in.]
5. About the avocados. [No "e" here! Don't ask why.] Cut the ripe avocado in half lengthwise. De-pit it. Rub a few drops of olive oil on the exposed flesh of the avocado. Fill the pit hole with mascarpone cheese (not!). You can mound it up a bit over the rest of the exposed interior as well, so that you can get a bit of mascarpone with each bite. Don't do this too often but at least once is a must. [Not!, since it is not really cheese.] Thank Piero.

food, friendships (an interlude)

How did we end up at the [Hofbräuhaus in Munich sharing a table with strangers for lunch](#)? Remarkably one can trace it back to sharing a table with strangers for lunch back in the old US of A many years earlier. Sitting down to eat with strangers is not a frequent occurrence in American society. Unfortunately, since chance encounters that bring people together who ordinarily wouldn't meet can make all the difference in life. Like the chance encounter in Castel Gandolfo waiting for the train to Rome that opened up bob to a whole world of wonderful people including rita's mom's daughter's family and the famous lasagna lesson that never was. Or the later chance encounter on a seven minute stretch of [U-bahn](#) in Munich from Marienplatz ([Hofbräuhaus](#) central) with Michele and her case of mineral water from the Army base canteen at work when they were both still twenty-something. Michele lived at the stop after bob's but not wanting to press for a phone number after only a few minutes of conversation, bob got up to step out of her life forever. And she followed with her case of mineral water which bob offered to carry the kilometer to her place (next stop, remember?), starting a lifelong friendship that ended up putting a [Vitamix](#) superblender into the dr bob kitchen many years later following a chance encounter at a home show. (Michele was in her juicing phase, and had dragged her Vitamix there from Kansas. A sort of culinary Toto.) And then there was the chance encounter with Elfriede on the night train back to Munich from Rome at about the same time that has resulted in many wonderfully artistic photos over the years in her annual christmas note (see the [dr bob annual christmas card department](#)). The unsung joys of public transportation, woefully under appreciated here in the states.

We now flash back to about the time of the first edition of this lifelong "What, ME Cook?" project when early thirtysomething dr bob finally became [professor](#) bob and therefore qualified for lunch at the faculty dining lounge, also open to the grad students in the various master's programs at the university. One department, chemistry, had a doctoral program as well, boosting the number of already acquainted grad students who needed to do lunch, and so did it together. They were regulars at one of the big tables, which usually had a few extra places left.

Although memories of those early days are hazy, bob is a people guy and somehow he naturally gravitated towards this big friendly group of slightly younger academics. Sat down at a table with strangers for lunch. Made friends. Attended their occasional evening grad social parties (food, drink, dancing). For some reason once explained to bob but apparently stored in RAM rather than permanent memory, a pipeline had existed from some Turkish university that regularly pumped Turkish students into this chemistry crowd. bob befriended Ediz, an identical twin, whose sister Deniz came for a long visit from Istanbul. Coincidentally at the same time a couple of bob friends and grad students from Rome came visiting for an extended period nearby. Jürgen (German) and Adrian (Swiss-German), oddly studying physics together in Rome, following their sabbatical taking advisor to the states. Turkey and Germany are sort of an odd couple pair of nations, somehow thrown together by history. The twins had attended a German school so it was natural to introduce all these twenty-something German speaking friends. This was bob's "bringing people together" phase of life. Adrian and Deniz stuck and lasted a few years but long distance relationships are hard (see the dedication to this project). Italy being next door, he ended up with an Italian wife instead, as did Jürgen (whose wedding reception dinner in northern Italy is another incredible food tale), both importing their ladies back to their respective German speaking homelands.

Well, another odd couple of nations are Turkey and Armenia. Whose peoples share some bad blood that still lingers in their collective relationships. Fortunately individuals can be stronger than history. Ironically it was Ediz who introduced bob to ms_ani in her ms_degree chemistry days. Just the two of them at lunch sitting at a small table alone. Who knows where the gang was. And bob came along and sat down and the rest is history. It took a while for the relationship to reach the cooking partner stage, but it was worth the wait. Which included lots of Armenian and middle eastern food as a bonus, some of which we can share with you.

Postscript.

Well, with modern communication starting from the last known academic employer, a combination of voice mail, fax, and e-mail sending took place over a three week period. Since searching for a woman in the United States is a tricky business, considering the not insignificant numbers of women who are tracked down and murdered by former significant others (men), the dr bob detective department was not sure about what kind of cooperation would result. Privacy issues must be weighed first against any possible unforeseen circumstances. He did not press, but let the system grind along. In fact the system worked correctly by finding Janice and putting her into contact with dr bob through her husband (the family technogeek) by e-mail, and bob provided the final connection with e-mail/fax/tel/cellular contact info for Hortense, who again cried with happiness. dr bob felt pretty good too.

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lentil bulgur pilaf

bob loves barley, but never seems to work it into the menu. Big bulgur, which is size number four on the [bulgur wheat grain scale](#) (1 smallest, 4 biggest), looks remarkably like barley when cooked in pilaf or soup. So when this pilaf dish appeared on his plate at the in-law dinner table, he was sure it was barley and had to be convinced otherwise. Lack of certainty about identification, however, did not interfere with the enjoyment or prevent him from (over) stuffing his face with the stuff, a frequent occurrence when tempted by tasty middle eastern/armenian mom home cooking.

ingredients

phase 1

- 1 c dry lentils
- 2 c water
- 1 onion, chopped
- 1/4 t black pepper
- 2 t salt
- 1/2 t cumin
- 1/2 t red pepper (Middle Eastern!)

phase 2

- 1 c boiling water, from a tea kettle
- 1 c bulgur wheat, number 4

phase 3

- 1/4 c olive oil
- 1 onion, chopped

instructions

1. Boil together the phase 1 ingredients covered for about 10 minutes.
2. Add 1 c water and bring to a boil covered again (or add already boiling water to speed this up) and then add the bulgur and simmer on low heat until the water is absorbed (about 30 minutes).
3. Sauté the second onion in olive oil until crisp.
4. Then add the onion oil to the pilaf.
5. Serve with the crisp onion on top (garnish).

notes

1. bulgur is available in Armenian or middle eastern food specialty stores and now even in the national [whole foods](#) chain we often visit.
2. Variations of this recipe are easy. For weekday supper, we skipped the dry lentil part and started directly with the onion, seasonings, and bulgur, then dumped in a 15 oz can of cooked lentils, and a 7.75 oz can of cooked chick peas during the bulgur cooking phase. Terrific.

3. But before ani could stop him, bob, reading this recipe, started shaking in cayenne red pepper, but in fact in all of Isgouhi's recipes, when she says red pepper she really means Middle Eastern red pepper, alias Turkish pepper, sometimes called Aintab pepper after the formerly Armenian city Aintab, now Gaziantep, Turkey, as an [article](#) by famous cookbook writer Paula Wolfert describes at her website (adapted from a [Saveur](#) magazine article) turned up by a search on the keywords "Aintab pepper". Two new Armenian cookbook acquisitions from [Alice Antreassian](#) indicate that this can be reasonably substituted by 3 parts paprika to 1 part cayenne red pepper. And Isgouhi's teaspoon measure really means a heaping teaspoon from the silverware drawer and not a level measuring teaspoon. [This unit misunderstanding doesn't help in trying to reproduce a mother-in-law's cooking...]
4. It turned out so tasty that bob nearly ate [the whole thing](#) with some help from ani. With a [cucumber mint yogurt sauce](#) on the side, and a cucumber tomato salad. Yes!
5. [Illustrations](#) available.

Intlblgr.htm: 17-jan-2005 [[what, ME cook?](#) © 1984 [dr bob enterprises](#)]

lentil soup

The lentil soup recipe came soon after the lentil bulgur pilaf incident. bob had already had eaten a Saturday breakfast/lunch/whatever by the time he dropped by the in-laws for a little family shopping spree at [Bitar's](#), south Philly's Lebanese middle eastern food store, just across the block from the two most famous cheesesteak vendors: [Pat's](#) and Gino's. [Our personal favorite, [Jim's](#) at 4th and South St, is farther north.] Barkev tempts bob with an offer to heat up some homemade lentil soup, which bob tries to resist but quickly gives in to. And even goes for seconds. Good stuff. bob took the rest home for later.

ingredients

phase 1

1 c lentils
5(?) c water

phase 2

1 lb spinach, washed, chopped small
2 medium potatoes, chopped small (1/2 in)
1/2 head garlic, cleaned and pressed

phase 3

1 T tomato paste
1 lemon, juice of
1/2 t black pepper
1/2 t allspice
1/2 t red pepper ([Middle Eastern](#))
1/2 mint
salt (to taste)

phase 4

1/4 c olive oil
12 big onion, chopped

instructions

1. Boil the lentils in water for about 5 to 10 minutes.
2. Then add the spinach, potatoes, and garlic and continue boiling until lentils and potatoes are tender.
3. Then add the tomato paste and spices and boil another 5 to 10 minutes.
4. Sauté the onion until golden brown and then stir in the soup. Boil 5 to 10 minutes longer.
5. Serve.

notes

1. This is a bit imprecise. 5 to 10 minutes? 5 cups of water? Needs some experimentation. Let us know.
2. [Illustrations](#) available.

lntlsp.htm: 17-jan-2005 [[what, ME cook?](#) © 1984 [dr bob enterprises](#)]

pizzoccheri?

Pizzoccheri are a well kept secret of northern Italian cuisine, from the part of Italy at the northern border where they speak Italian with a German accent and make smelly fontina cheese. But a secret that has not escaped [Marcella](#) or the pasta cookbook author whose [book](#) we grabbed in Pier I Imports when we spotted the authentic looking recipe.

The dr bob team had been introduced to pizzoccheri, long buckwheat pasta noodles about fettuccine size but shorter, by [Piero](#), who brought them to us from Italy and showed us how to make the traditional recipe. We forgot to take notes at the time. Years later we had one box left and managed to find a one time buy of another box at our local authentic Italian products store. But we were saving them for a special occasion which never seemed to come. When we discovered them in our local supermarket, we finally decided to buy the smelly cheese and do up a box for no special occasion at all. But the Savoy cabbage took some time to locate. It finally showed up at the same supermarket and the dish was immediately green-lighted. By this time the smelly cheese was also seriously moldy, so it had to be trimmed down a bit. To our chagrin, the expiration dates were respectively 2 and 3 years earlier than the current year. Although we had a brand new box in our hands and several more boxes in stock waiting in the supermarket (not moving fast, as you might imagine), it seemed a shame to waste such a great product. We went with the two year expired box to see what would happen.

Without Piero nearby, we went with the cookbooks and our better judgment. One said half a pound of Savoy cabbage, the other 3 1/2 cups. The cabbage head we had seemed like it was heavier but we didn't stop to weigh it. Once cut up it seemed like more than 3 1/2 cups too but what the hey. We through it all in anyway. The recipes weren't very clear about how the potatoes should be cut up either. Between the two cookbooks and the 3 different brand box abbreviated recipes, we went with the "small cubes" suggestion on one. About 1 cm or 3/8 in on a side, on the average. [Note that since potatoes are not rectangular, this is only a rule of thumb.]

ingredients

boilables

- 1 lb pizzoccheri della [Valtellina](#)
- 1 T salt
- 3 - 4 medium potatoes, cut into small cubes
- 1 small head Savoy cabbage (1/2 lb?, 3 1/2 c?), cut roughly into strips 1/2 in by 2 1/2 in

sauté-ee's

- 2 T unsalted butter
- 2 T olive oil
- 1 garlic clove, sliced
- 6 fresh sage leaves, chopped [or 1/2 t dried]
- 1 leek, chopped [optional, if unavailable]

finishers

- 1/4 t salt
- freshly ground pepper to taste
- 1/2 - 2/3 c grated parmigiano

1/4 -1/3 lb fontina valle d'aosta

instructions

1. Start the pasta water boiling.
2. Ready the potatoes. Peel if you must, then cube.
3. Wash the cabbage and cut into strips.
4. Cut the cheese into thin slivers.
5. When the water is boiling seriously, dump in the potatoes and salt, cover, return to a boil, and continue uncovered for about 4 minutes.
6. Add the cabbage, cover and bring to a boil again, then continue uncovered for 5 minutes.
7. Add the noodles, cover and bring to a boil yet again and cook 8 - 12 minutes until the pasta is not quite al dente.
8. Meanwhile sauté the garlic, sage and leek in butter and oil until softened up a bit.
9. When the pasta is ready, drain briefly but don't shake out the liquid.
10. Return the pasta to its pot and mix in the sauté mixture, parmigiano, salt and pepper.
11. Put half the mixture in a large enough casserole dish (or a large one and a small one) and cover with half the fontina slivers. Repeat.
12. Put on the top rack of a 400° F preheated oven for 5 minutes to melt the cheese.
13. Then remove and let sit a couple minutes and serve. This is a hearty meal.

notes

1. [Marcella](#) actually prefers Swiss chard stalks (leafy parts removed) to savoy cabbage, but if necessary, one can use whole Swiss chard or even under desperate circumstances spinach according to the more flexible alternatives. However, we don't think it will be the same.
2. If the stinky fontina valle d'aosta is out of the question, regular Italian fontina or even Bel Paese may be substituted perhaps. We've never betrayed our valle d'aosta. [Although its from the Valle d'Aosta region and not the Valtellina region to the east, where they may use caseri cheese instead.]
3. Not only did we survive the 2 year outdated box, but the 3 year one as well.
4. If pizzoccheri are just a pipe dream where you live, both our cookbook references have slightly differing recipes for the fresh pasta, one with eggs, one without. But without trying it first, you'll never be curious enough to go to all that trouble, will you?
5. [Illustrations](#) available.
6. After trying the [new pizzoccheri recipe](#) with sausage a few times, we have been adding 4 links of sweet fennel Italian sausage, skins removed, diced, sautéed with the garlic and sage to add an extra kick to this dish. Increasing the comfort food index a few notches.
7. **2002 update.** This recipe is bullet proof. We find ourselves stretching it a lot each time we do it. Besides the sausage. Extra garlic, pressed into the leek sage butter oil mixture instead of just sliced. Extra sage which we always keep in the freezer ready for this dish. Maybe 12 leaves chopped. Oops, we found ourselves out of leeks when we tried this with some buckwheat gnocchetti della Valtellina we found next to the pizzoccheri on the supermarket shelf in Rome this summer. (Bosco brand from Cepina Valdisotto, usual pizzoccheri recipe on the 500g package.) So two yellow onions finely chopped stood in for them (minus the sausage, which turned out not to be left waiting in the freezer as we had thought). And instead of the broiling routine, we put the whole thing in the oven at 350°

for a while waiting for some in-laws who then did not even show up. Still great for just the two of us. With lots of leftovers. Refrigerates well. Freezes well.

pizzocri.htm: 3-sep-2002 [[what, ME cook?](#)] © 1984 [dr bob enterprises](#)]

leek etc tart/quiche

Okay, we admit it. French cookbooks are glaringly absent from our cooking library, the efforts of Julia Child notwithstanding. But let's face it. French cuisine in America has always been associated with the upper crust. The most expensive, most exclusive restaurants have usually been French. [Like the one in Philly where Ira Einhorn used to hang out before they discovered Holly in a trunk in his apartment, and like the country where he turned up decades later and which tried to save him from his just reward at the hands of the barbaric American justice system.] And the low end? A cheap French restaurant in the USA seems like a contradiction of terms. Unlike Italian which cuts across all economic classes from terrible takeout pizza joints through family style pasta with "gravy" places to the snooty elite ristorante, with everything in between, good and bad.

Still almost everybody here knows that quiche is French, and although we seem to have adopted it on a scale clearly falling short of the universal appeal of pizza (how many takeout quiche businesses have you seen recently?), nonetheless it has a significant following, supposedly avoided only by the stereotypical "real (American) man". After eating a leek tartlet in a rare expensive French restaurant visit, ms_ani was inspired to try this leek tart recipe from our only French cookbook, stretching it a bit more in the quiche direction, though we make no claim to know the difference, if there is one. The original only has egg yolks, naturally the part of the egg with all the cholesterol, so she used the whites too, bypassing the separation step and the wasted whites, and she doubled the liquid dairy component when only one cup seemed a bit inadequate. Once she even made the homemade crust, but it was clearly not worth the effort, since frozen crusts seem to do the job just as well with no fuss, making it possible to do this in much less time.

This basic recipe is easily varied with ingredients on hand. We list three variations created in the dr bob kitchen to give you the general idea. ms_ani gets all the credit, but is disinclined to write up the details.

ingredients

	original	variation 1	variation 2	variation 3	variation 4
flavor stuff					
butter	1/4 c	2-3 T	2-3 T	2-3 T	2-3 T
large leeks¹	4	1	1	1	1
etc¹		4 white mushrooms	1 shallot	1/4 red pepper	1 8.5oz can artichoke hearts
			2 scallions	1/4 yellow pepper	
			1lb fresh asparagus ²	1 small turnip	

dairy

liquid	1 c milk or half&half	1 c milk	1 c milk	2 c heavy cream	2c light cream
		1 c half&half	1 c half&half		
eggs	4 yolks	3 eggs	3 eggs	3 eggs	3 eggs
parmesan cheese	3 T	3T	3T	3T	3T
spices					
salt and pepper³	to taste	to taste	to taste	to taste	to taste
fresh tarragon¹	4 sprigs	4 sprigs	4 sprigs	4 sprigs	4 sprigs
pastry		9 in frozen pie crust	9 in frozen pie crust	9 in frozen pie crust	9 in frozen pie crust
tart/quiche pan	8 in	9 in (24cm)	9 in (24cm)	9 in (24cm)	9 in (24cm)
	¹ chopped				
	² cooked, chopped, tips reserved and arranged on top at end				
	³ freshly ground pepper, of course				

instructions

1. Melt butter in large nonstick pan and saute the leeks.
2. Add the etc items and saute them a bit and let sit.
3. Spray quiche pan with veggie spray and fit the pie crust into the pan.
4. Spread the leek etc saute mixture around the bottom evenly.
5. Mix together the eggs, milk/cream/half&half, tarragon, salt and pepper, and parmesan cheese and pour over leek etc mixture.
6. Bake 35 to 45 minutes or until lightly set and golden at 350° F (180° C).
7. Serve warm.

notes

1. We like the artichoke hearts variation the best, and have also done it with broccoli, and with asparagus and mushrooms simultaneously. Use your imagination.

stazione termini fennel

They say nobody works in Rome, but this is clearly not true. Lately when dr bob hits town, time is too short and there always seems to be too many things to get done at the university, although the ultimate meaning of these academic goings on is anything but obvious. With time pressure pushing bob's mental schedule, it is difficult to make the daytime telephone connections to commit to evening socializing. Perhaps the growing inflexibility of an aging temporary American in Rome, faced with a shortening annual summer visit that can no longer accommodate all the people from his accumulated past friendships. Who to call? When to commit to an evening? The more time goes by, the harder it gets. How to explain all those skipped years?

The day draws to a close. Darkness falls. The computer session terminates. dr bob is alone. The central train station beckons. The cafeteria La Piastra run by the [Ferrovie dello Stato](#) (Italian state train company) is conveniently located at the main train station and city public transportation hub a few blocks away, so one can eat and run, busing or metro-ing off to bed in any direction. The food is not great but it is Italian, immediate, reasonably priced, and maybe even healthy, depending on the choices. No need to wait around endlessly to be served or for the next dish to arrive, alone. And an interesting mix of other customers to study. Many tourists, some Italians, of widely different origin and social status.

So one of these frequent evening dinners offered bob baked/broiled finocchio as a side dish to the meat and chicken dishes he so religiously avoids. bob usually does vegetarian in Italian restaurants. Choosing from pasta, risotto, soup, veggies, fresh mozzarella, etc. The fennel was simple. It seemed to have been baked with butter and parmigiano. bob gave it a try. Liked it. And so back in the states baked fennel was on the agenda for experimentation.

The first attempt was a baked potato and fennel gratin loosely based on a Williams-Sonoma junk mail catalog recipe that just happened along upon bob's return. heavy on cream, and apparently the baking time was too short to tenderize the fennel. The second attempt jettisoned the complications. Steaming the fennel first for about 20 minutes and then broiling it with some butter and parmigiano until browned. Tender. Tasty. We see more fennel in our future.

ingredients

- 1 fennel bulb, trimmed and coarsely chopped
- 2 T melted butter (heavy) or olive oil (lighter) or just olive oil cooking spray (lightest)
- 2 T freshly grated parmigiano

instructions

1. Wash the fennel and trim away the celery like stuff at the top. Cut off the hard bottom and peel the layers off the bulb, cutting the pieces roughly into 2 in by 3/4 in strips.
2. Steam for about 20 minutes until tender when tested with a fork.
3. Spread them out in an oven dish, like a small quiche dish, and drizzle or spray with the melted butter or olive oil and then sprinkle with the grated parmigiano.

4. Broil for about 10 minutes until browned but not burned. (Watch frequently.)

notes

1. Feeds about 2 hungry people as a generous veggie side.
2. Rita's mom apparently does it this way layering the fennel with butter and parmigiano, but **BAKES** it, since according to rita, broiling is an American cooking technique, not Italian. Eliana's mom says you can add some béchamel sauce and finish with a layer of bread crumbs, and that in the final baking phase one can put it in the "grill position" to make a "crosticino" (crust) by browning the bread crumb topping, which sounds like broiling to me. Milvia's mom confirms the béchamel option.
3. In case you are unfamiliar with fennel, it looks like celery from Chernobyl: a big white onion like layered base of celery textured material with little green celery stalk like protrusions shooting out the top.
4. Fennel is the origin of the flavor anise and also of the national alcoholic beverage of Lebanon called Arak. The latter served on the rocks (with ice) in small glasses with equal parts water. Often offered to dr bob before dinner at the in-laws. Where it usually has more of an effect than such a small glass would lead you to believe. And then induces sleep. Fortunately dr bob travels with a designated driver. [*Oops, nevermind... anise and fennel are not from the same plant.*]
5. bob's stazioni termini dining was later raised to a new level by the Jubilee Year 2000 renovations in Rome that brought the [Autogrill](#) Ciao' cafeteria style restaurant to the train station. Fast slow food of remarkable quality.

fennelst.htm: 7-aug-2001 [what, ME cook? © 1984 dr bob enterprises]

bowties with fennel and leeks

Fennel is another one of those veggies that are not exactly exotic but which most ordinary Americans have never themselves consumed as a vegetable. And don't know anyone who has, if asked. Yet supermarkets seem to sell it to someone. And cooking magazines acknowledge it as a legitimate ingredient. And now that our fennel radar is up, we are beginning to notice it more and more.

The e-mail call went out for help on the baked fennel recipe from real Italians who are more fennel aware. [It's a global food world these days.] And a copy went out to dr bob 's mom for light reading. And with her fennel radar up, she found this one in a women's magazine while waiting in a doctor's office. It took a week to find the right moment to give it a try. But when the right moment came, the team was slightly unprepared. No tomatoes. So dr bob made an emergency quick supply run to the nearest supermarket while ms_ani got started. And finished by his return except for the chopped tomato topping. But she assured him that she followed the recipe almost exactly apart from the agreed upon substitution of the missing light cream by a little Italian cooking cream package newly expired and remaining from the summer pre-return flight food shopping spree in Rome a few months before. And except for the standard animal to veggie broth substitution. And except for, well, we'll get to that. So into the oven it went, and out it came, and it was. Terrific. bob wolfed down two big platefuls. So did ani, but slower. With plenty left over for another dinner later in the week. Thanks, mom.

ingredients

the official list

4 medium leeks [1 1/2 lbs]
 2 medium fennel bulbs [1 lb each]
 2 garlic cloves, minced
 1 T sugar
 1 lb bowtie (or gemelli) pasta
 salt
 1 c chicken broth
 1/4 c heavy or whipping cream
 1/4 t fresh ground pepper
 1/2 c grated parmesan cheese
 1 ripe medium tomato, diced 1/4 in

our list

1 big leek
 1 big? bulb fennel
 2 garlic cloves, minced
 1 T sugar
 1 lb bowtie (or gemelli) pasta
 salt
 1 c veggie broth
 1/4 c Italian cooking cream
 1/4 t fresh ground pepper
 1/2 c grated parmesan cheese
 1 ripe medium tomato, diced 1/4 in

instructions

1. Start the pasta water boiling. Preheat the oven to 400°.
2. Clean the leek(s): get rid of the hard green ends, the root end and any tough outer layers, then slice part way down the stalk along the "seems" at the green end down past where the sand/dirt is hiding and rinse well, and drain. Then slice thin cross-sections and finally

chop. [The original recipe called for cutting each leek lengthwise and then crosswise into 1/4 in wide slices, but we like it chopped finer.]

3. Heat 1 T of the oil in a 12 in nonstick skillet over medium heat and then cook the leeks about 15 min until tender and golden, stirring often.
4. Meanwhile (in between stirring leeks?), trim the top and bottom of each fennel bulb and slice lengthwise in half, removing and discarding the hard core (an unfortunate meeting of words that will probably choke web chaperones accessing this page). Slice the half bulbs crosswise into thin slices.
5. After about 15 min add the fennel, garlic, sugar and remaining 1 T oil to the leeks and cook about 20 min until the fennel is tender and golden, stirring often.
6. Meanwhile, cook the pasta when the water comes to a boil (add salt, follow package instructions). Then drain and return to the pot.
7. When the leek-fennel mixture is tender, add the broth, cream, pepper, 1/2 t salt and all but 2 T parmesan and boil 2 min.
8. Spoon pasta into 4 qt casserole, add the leek-fennel mixture and mix well. Sprinkle the top with the diced tomato and the rest of the parmesan. Bake covered 20 min till hot and bubbly. Garnish with fennel fronds if you like. [Useless final step.]

notes

1. [Good Housekeeping](#), October, 98. [Mom went to the public library to find the magazine again, and after this was finished, we found the [original recipe](#) on their website. Clarifying a couple points from the hastily scribbled down notes converted to e-mail.]
2. Yields 6 main dish servings. Each serving: About 460 calories, 15 g protein, 77 g carbohydrate, 11 g total fat (4 g saturated), 2 g fiber, 17 mg cholesterol, 560 mg sodium.
3. Excellent choice for real pasta lovers.

lkfnlpsta.htm: 17-apr-1998 [what, ME cook? © 1984 dr bob enterprises]

capepperonata calda?

Another veggie dish was needed to round out yet another traditional thanksgiving dinner. Turkey breast, our first bird compromise but one which maximized what the crowd wanted without leaving excessive leftovers, then chestnut stuffing, garlic leek mashed red potatoes and porcini turkey gravy. Baked fennel but not enough. Stuffed grape leaves from the mother-in-law. Clearly a bit more color was in order and something substantial to fill out the menu without encouraging excessive consumption, always a problem for this meal. Caponata, the Sicilian eggplant dish, suggested itself from bob's memory of some variation he vaguely remembered having once, maybe in Naples, perhaps confused with pepperonata, the sweet pepper analog. As an American unconstrained by Italian food rules, merging these memories in a new improvisation was no problem. Checking out two traditional Italian recipes by Americans who'd lived in Florence provided the outline for a cold dish one referred to as a "relish". But both had wine vinegar in them, the first ingredient to be vetoed by bob for the warm version. One even had roasted red peppers in it, but not enough for bob's taste. The spices were adjusted by the mother-in-law specialist. The result was not only a hit at thanksgiving, but was quickly repeated soon after with equal enthusiasm.

ingredients

3	small diameter eggplants (for fewer dark seeds)
	olive oil for frying
2 - 3	large stalks celery, chopped coarsely
1	large onion, chopped coarsely
3 T	olive oil
6 - 7	plum tomatoes, chopped
2 T	(heaping) tomato paste
0.4 lb	garlic saturated roasted red peppers, chopped (about 3/4 c)
4 1/4 oz (119 g)	chopped ripe olives
3 T	capers
1 T	sugar
	salt (to taste)
	freshly ground black pepper (to taste)
1 T	lemon juice
	optional hint of cayenne red pepper

instructions

1. Peel the eggplants and slice crosswise into 1/2 - 5/8 inch thick sections. Put them in a colander salting each layer and put a weighted plate on top to press them for 20 minutes or so. Then rinse, dry, and cut roughly into cubes.
2. Sauté the eggplant cubes all together in a large pot.

3. Meanwhile sauté the onion and celery in olive oil about 10 minutes.
4. Then add the tomatoes, tomato paste, red peppers, olives, capers, and sugar and cook on medium heat for about 20 minutes.
5. Add the eggplant cubes, salt, pepper, lemon juice, stir well and heat through if the eggplant was done earlier, then remove from heat.

notes

1. Serve warm.
2. You can substitute real fresh green Italian (or otherwise gourmet) olives (maybe a third of a cup of de-pitted chopped product) for the canned olives we had on hand the first time we tried this, as we did the second time.

capepper.htm: 18-apr-1999 [[what, ME cook?](#)] © 1984 [dr bob enterprises](#)]