



The
Chef's
Secret

A COMPANION
COOKBOOK

Recipes inspired by the novel about the life of the
legendary Renaissance Chef Bartolomeo Scappi

EDITED BY

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THE CHEF'S SECRET

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FEAST OF SORROW: A NOVEL OF ANCIENT ROME
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INTRODUCTION

While gearing up to publish my first novel, *Feast of Sorrow*, I put together a digital cookbook much like this one, with recipes inspired by the culture and cuisine of Ancient Rome and by the cookbook *Apicius*, named for the infamous Roman gourmand and protagonist of my novel. Assembling that cookbook was a joy, but it also gave me a profound understanding of just how difficult it is to develop, transcribe, and compile recipes.

The ancient Roman recipes featured in *Feast of Sorrow* and its companion cookbook were the precursors to many of the foods we enjoy today but little about them resembles modern Italian cuisine. But by the time of Bartolomeo Scappi, one of the protagonists in *The Chef's Secret*, that begins to change. Scappi was the chef to several cardinals and popes and accustomed to cooking for large banquets for the most distinguished people in the world. His meals were made to both delight and astonish his diners.

Perusing the more than one thousand recipes in *L'Opera di Bartolomeo Scappi*, first published in 1570, I was struck by how much of it was familiar. In Scappi's cookbook (which was continually in print for over two hundred years after its publication) we find tortellini, macaroni, fried chicken, fruit pies, pumpkin pie, fritters, napoleons, biscotti, chicken soup, meatballs, mostarda, omelettes, gelatin and zabaglione. There is even a recipe for a pastry called *pizza*, which, during the Renaissance, referred to a flakey layered pastry, and when I was in Urbino in the fall of 2018, I came across *piadina sfogliata*, a delicious layered bread used for sandwiches that seemed to me a cross between a croissant and pita bread, and had surely found its roots in those early Renaissance pizzas.

Interestingly, Scappi also included some of the first recipes for turkey in his book. Early Italian explorers brought them to the country as an exotic pet, not to eat, but by the time Scappi's book was published, that had clearly changed. In this cookbook, you'll find a turkey tortelloni recipe inspired by the flavors in Scappi's dishes.

The recipes in this book feel familiar, but are slightly different for modern food lovers. The basics of these dishes are similar, but in Scappi's era, they were laden with cinnamon, cloves, nutmeg and rosewater—ingredients that were quite costly, enabling noblemen to show off their wealth. Sugar was also an expensive, exciting new ingredient heavily in use in wealthy households. Today we wouldn't dream of loading a savory pasta dough with sugar, but Scappi couldn't have imagined making tortellini without it.

Other dishes will seem foreign to modern palettes. Bear, hedgehog, peacock, turtle, porcupine, guinea pig, dormice and calves' eyes don't appear on menus these days. Scappi's fried eggs and omelettes look the same as ours but he always added sugar and orange juice to them as a finisher, sometimes with cinnamon or rosewater. There are also many dishes for the sick in the cookbook, but they include things we now consider desserts, such as pies and fritters.

The biggest challenge in interpreting the dishes in Scappi's cookbook is that they were intended to serve several dozen people. Many of the cooking techniques are very different, such as the need to wash meat in wine, to boil meat before roasting, and of course, we don't cook all our dishes over an open fire.

This digital companion cookbook to *The Chef's Secret* contains recipes from celebrated chefs, cookbook authors, historians and bloggers who found inspiration in the book. There are many recipes from my own kitchen. Not all of them come from the Scappi cookbook but each one is meant to bring a taste of the Renaissance into your own home.

I'd love to hear from you if you try any of these recipes or want to share your own version of a Renaissance dish. Please tag your social posts with #TheChefsSecret.

And if you are part of a book club, having a Renaissance-themed meal to go with your discussion could be a lot of fun. If my schedule allows, I'd love to join you, whether in person or online, and answer any questions you might have about *The Chef's Secret*. Please contact me at info@crystalking.com.

BUON APPETITO!

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GINGER BISCOTTI

by Beth Fish Reads

Crystal's Note: I have been reading the [Beth Fish Reads blog](#) for the better part of a decade. It combines two of my greatest passions—books and food!—and Beth's site has introduced me to so many authors I might otherwise not have come across. And, oh, the food! There are so many delicious recipes woven throughout Beth's prescient book reviews. I was delighted when she agreed to share a recipe with me.

I adapted my grandmother's biscotti (mandlebrot) recipe to fit Renaissance flavors. The basic recipe has been in my family since the late 1800s, passed along to my grandmother when she was young bride early in the last century and then on to her grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

Makes 28 to 32 cookies

- 1 1/4 cup granulated sugar
- 1 cup unsalted butter, room temperature
- 3 eggs
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1 teaspoon baking powder
- 4 cups all-purpose flour
- 1 cup pine nuts
- 1/2 cup mini diced crystallized ginger (from King Arthur Flour)
- 1 teaspoon ground cinnamon



1. Preheat the oven to 350°F. Grease two large baking sheets or line with parchment.
2. Cream the butter and 1 cup of the sugar until light and fluffy. Add the eggs, one at a time, beating until incorporated. Add the vanilla, and beat until incorporated.
3. Mix the salt, baking powder and flour in a medium bowl. Stir in the pine nuts and ginger. Add gradually to the egg mixture and mix well.
4. Divide the dough into 4 equal parts. Shape each part into a small, flat rectangle, 3/4 to 1 inch high. Take a serrated knife and lightly score the top to make it easier to slice the loaves after the first bake; you'll get 7 to 8 slices per loaf. Bake 30 to 40 minutes or until light brown. Meanwhile, mix the remaining 1/4 cup sugar with the cinnamon and set aside.
5. Remove the baking sheets from the oven and, working quickly, cut the loaves along the score lines and arrange the cookies, cut side up, on the baking sheets. Sprinkle lightly with the cinnamon-sugar mixture (you'll have sugar leftover for another use). Return the baking sheets to the oven and bake another 12 to 15 minutes until brown. Remove cookies to wire racks to cool. Store in an airtight container.

CIAMBELLE

by Crystal King

This recipe comes from Book V.148 of *L'Opera di Bartolomeo Scappi*. A ciambella is essentially a form of what we know as a bagel, dough that is boiled then baked, and, by the 1600s, ciambelle vendors were common on the streets of many Italian cities. Ciambelle are still popular in Italy today and many Italian American households will recognize a version of this recipe or the very similar taralli as a staple at their table. This recipe tries to stay true to Scappi's but, to give it a little oomph, I did include yeast. If you're not a fan or can't find any, you can leave out the rosewater and use plain water, but you'll lose the distinct Renaissance flavor. NB: When buying rosewater, make sure that you are not buying rose essence, which might be labeled as rosewater but comes in a brown bottle. Buy clear tall bottles of rosewater such as Cortas or Al Wadi.



Makes 8 large ciambelle

- 4 c. flour
- 1/2 tsp salt
- 1 packet of active dry yeast
- 1/4 cup and 1 tbsp sugar
- 2 tsp rosewater
- 1 1/4 cup goat milk (or substitute whole milk)
- 2 beaten eggs
- 2 tbsp anise or fennel seeds

1. Warm goat milk to room temperature, add the sugar and yeast and let it sit until bubbly.
2. Mix rosewater and eggs together then add the yeast mixture and combine.
3. Mix fennel seeds and salt into the flour in a large bowl. Add egg and yeast mixture to the center of the flour, then combine with your fingers until a dough is formed.
4. Knead well, cover dough with a clean towel, and allow to rise for 45 minutes.
5. Set a large pot of water on the stove to boil.
6. Divide the dough into 8 even parts. To prevent dough from rising again, complete this step immediately; do not set the dough aside. Roll the 8 dough sections into ropes, twist them and form into large rings, approximately 5-6 inches wide, pinching the ends together. If you like you can divide each section in half, form two ropes and then twist the ropes together before forming a ring, but you'll need to roll the ropes much longer and thinner. Lay the rings on a clean towel or a heavily floured surface to prevent them from sticking while you make additional rings.
7. Put the rings one or two at a time into the pot of boiling water. Make sure they don't stick to the bottom. They will rise to the top right away. Flip them over and let them boil for one minute. Remove them from the water with a slotted spoon and place on an oiled baking sheet.
8. Sprinkle with additional anise or fennel seeds if desired.
9. Bake in a 375 degree oven for 40-50 minutes or until golden brown.

These are best eaten right away, but will keep in an airtight container for a week, or you can freeze them and they will keep for a month. Warm them a little in the microwave or oven before eating.

TESTAROLI (Pancake Pasta)

by Francine Segan

Crystal's Note: Francine Segan has long been an inspiration to me with her historical-themed cookbooks, The Philosopher's Kitchen and Shakespeare's Kitchen, and her books on pasta and Italian dolci (sweets). New Yorkers may know her from her popular weekly i-italy TV series "Americans in Love with Italy," where she interviews celebrities about their fondness for Italy. Here she shares a recipe that would have been familiar to Renaissance inhabitants of Liguria and Tuscany. 00 flour is Italian style flour, which is very fine-textured and yields a lighter, airy dough. It's often used for pasta and pizza dough. For more about Francine, visit her [website](#).

I had no clue what to make of the 18-inch giant spongy pancake I spotted in a gourmet shop in Liguria. It was shrink-wrapped, rolled like a diploma, and tied with pretty green ribbon. When the shopkeeper explained that it was "pasta," meant to be boiled, I was dubious. I mean, who would boil a pancake? Turns out, the Italians have been doing it since at least the 1300s, and perhaps even back in ancient Roman times.

The name of this pasta, testaroli, derives from testo, the special terracotta pan these pancakes are cooked in, but, of course, you can make them in a cast iron skillet or other pans as well. The dough is simple to work with, more like crepe pancake batter than pasta dough. In Italy, they combine all kinds of flours with half white flour to make the batter--whole wheat, fine corn flour, buckwheat, farro and chestnut flours---so here's a good chance to try a new flour you've been wanting to experiment with.

This is a great make ahead dish as the pasta pancakes are best after they've rested for at least 24 hours and will stay fresh for a week before boiling. Try it topped with any of the pesto recipes of Italy, like Sicily's Orange-Almond Pesto or Liguria's aromatic Basil and Pine Nut Pesto.

Serves 4

- 1/2 cup 00 or all-purpose flour
- 1/2 cup whole wheat, fine corn flour or other flour
- Olive oil
- Salt
- 1/2 onion
- 3/4 cup pesto or grated pecorino cheese



1. Combine the flours in a large bowl. Add 1 1/2 tablespoons olive oil, a teaspoon of salt, and slowly stir in 2 cups of water to get a thin, smooth batter, like crepe batter. Let rest at room temperature for 10 minutes.
2. Heat a large nonstick frying pan, cast iron skillet, or crepe pan, until hot. Dip the onion half into some olive oil and rub onto the pan, using the onion to grease the pan and flavor the oil a bit. Add just enough batter to the pan to create a thin layer, spreading the batter quickly by tilting the pan, just as you would when making crepes. Cook on medium, until the edges come up a bit and you can easily turn over the pancake, about 7 to 10 minutes. Turn and cook on the other side for about 5 minutes. Repeat, re-moistening the pan with the oil-dipped onion, until all the batter is used. Once the pancakes cool, store in a sealed airtight container in a cool place at least 12 hours before cooking or they will be gummy.
3. To cook the pancakes, cut them into roughly 1 x 3 1/2 inch rectangles or triangles. Bring a pot of salted water to a boil, add the pancake pieces, and immediately turn off the heat. Leave them in the water for 2 to 3 minutes, until tender. Drain and serve topped with pesto or a drizzle of olive oil and grated pecorino.



MEATBALLS WITH PINE NUTS AND ROASTED CIPOLLINI ONIONS WITH A BALSAMIC VINEGAR REDUCTION by Vanessa Baca

Crystal's Note: Vanessa is the author of one of my favorite sites, [Food in Books](#). She digs deep into books and recreates the dishes she loves best. Her love of both cooking and books shines through with every recipe. Of course, I had to ask her if she would make a recipe for my readers.

My inspiration for this dish, *Polpette con pinoli, e cipolla con una riduzione di aceto balsamico*, came from two nicknames by which Giovanni is affectionately referred: “Polpetta,” Italian for “meatballs” and an endearing reference to one of his earliest childhood experiences in the kitchen, and “cipollino,” a small onion. Having lost my mother to cancer as I was reading *The Chef's Secret*, I was particularly touched by the familial love heaped on its protagonist.

For the meatballs:

- 1/2 cup toasted pine nuts
- 1 pound ground beef
- 1 pound ground pork
- 6 cloves garlic, minced
- 1/4 cup finely chopped flat-leaf parsley
- 1/4 cup finely chopped fresh sage
- 1/2 cup grated Asiago cheese
- 1 teaspoon sea salt
- Ground black pepper
- 2 large eggs, room temperature

1. Heat the oven to 400F.
2. In a dry, hot pan, toast the pine nuts until they are golden brown and give off a nutty scent. Don't let them burn. Remove from heat and allow to cool while you mix the other ingredients.
3. With your hands, mix together the beef and the pork. Add the garlic, the parsley and the sage, and mix again.
4. Add the 1/4 cup of Asiago cheese and the cooled pine nuts. Season with salt and pepper.
5. Add the eggs, and mix together again with your hands.
6. Form small balls and lay them on a parchment-lined baking tray. Bake for 30 minutes.

For the cipollini onions:

- 12 cipollini onions
- 3 sprigs fresh rosemary
- 4 tablespoons unsalted butter

1. Lower the oven temperature to 350F.
2. Peel the onions, trim the stems, cut them in half, and rinse them. Pat dry.
3. Finely mince the rosemary.
4. Heat a cast iron pan over medium high heat and add the butter, the onions and sprinkle over the rosemary. Cook for 5-7 minutes on the stove.

Transfer to the oven and bake for 35 minutes, until they brown and soft.

For the balsamic reduction:

- 2 cups good quality balsamic vinegar
- 1 clove of garlic, crushed

1. Pour balsamic vinegar into a metal saucepan and add the crushed garlic clove.
2. Boil on medium for roughly 15-20 minutes, stirring occasionally. It will reduce to a thick, syrupy glaze. Don't leave it because the sugars in the balsamic vinegar can burn.
3. Remove the garlic clove, and let cool slightly. Pour over the meatballs and cipollini onions. Eat immediately, with a glass of good red wine.

PASSATELLI

by Ken Albala

*Crystal's Note: Ken Albala is a food historian and professor at the University of the Pacific. He has written a number of books about food in the Renaissance and is one of the foremost experts on the topic. Ken's insights into the world of Bartolomeo Scappi and the food and banquets of the time have been invaluable to me. This particular recipe was [previously published](#) on the Getty Museum blog, *The Iris*, and it's worth checking out the detailed history of how this dish came to be. Though largely unknown in the US, passatelli, a dish that likely would have been served to convalescents, is still common in the Emilia Romagna region and can be found on menus all over Bologna. As with spaetzle, a grater is used to make the "noodles." This recipe calls for bone marrow made from shins of beef, which you can get easily from a good butcher. Also, be sure to check out Ken's latest book, *Noodle Soup: Recipes, Techniques, Obsession*.*

- Whole chicken
- 1-2 stalks of celery
- 2-3 carrots
- 1 parsnip
- 1 onion
- 2 small marrow bone sections from a shin of beef
- 1 cup of stale breadcrumbs
- Handful (approx ½ cup) of grated parmesan cheese
- One egg
- 3 cups chicken or meat broth



1. Cut up chicken and add to a pot of water with celery, carrots, parsnip, onion, and herbs such as thyme. Late medieval cooks also liked to add dried fruit and sugar. Leave to simmer on a low flame as long as you possibly can. This will be your broth, to be strained or simply later take some liquid leaving the solid parts behind.
2. In a covered pan near, or better yet, in an oven, roast 2 small marrow bone sections from a shin of beef for at least 2 hours. Scrape out the cooked marrow.
3. Mix one cup of stale breadcrumbs with a handful of grated Parmesan cheese and one egg, and then add the cooled marrow. Roll into a tight ball, adding more breadcrumbs until the ball is stiff but not too dry that it crumbles. Let rest for at least an hour or overnight.
4. Take about 3 cups of broth and bring to a boil in a small pan. Take your ball of dough with the heel of your hand and force it through the holes in the grater, making small curved "noodles" or strings on a board.
5. Being careful not to squash them, pour the noodles into the broth and cook 2 minutes. Transfer to a bowl with a large spoon.

TURKEY TORTELLI WITH BURNT CINNAMON BRODETTO, CARAMELIZED SHALLOT AND AROMATIC HERBS

by Chef Michael Pagliarini

Crystal's Note: Chef Michael is the chef-owner of two of my favorite Cambridge restaurants, Giulia and Benedetto. For my first novel, I had the great fortune to work with him on a dinner inspired by the Ancient Roman gourmand, Apicius, and it was truly a dream come true to see those dishes come to light. I was particularly excited to see what he would do with Renaissance fare, as pasta is one of his specialties. Here he plays with some of the flavors and techniques found in Scappi's recipes, to come up with something wholly original and delicious. He suggests using your favorite pasta dough recipe in this dish. I recommend [this one](#).

Serves 4 people

- 200g (1 3/4 cup) turkey leg meat
- 4 shallots
- 1/4 cup white wine
- 100g (1 cup) Parmigiano (Parmesan) cheese, grated
- 100g (2/3 cup) diced prosciutto
- 100g (2/3 cup) mortadella
- cinnamon, 1/2 stick (burned with a torch or stove top flame until slightly charred and aromatic)
- 1/2 tsp freshly grated nutmeg
- bunch of fresh aromatic herbs (e.g. sage, parsley and thyme)
- 2 eggs
- butter, as needed (about 1-2 tablespoons)
- turkey broth (infused with more burnt cinnamon and fresh sage)
- pasta dough

1. Pan-fry the turkey leg meat in butter until well browned. Remove from the pan and deglaze the pan with the white wine. Reduce until almost dry and add the liquid to the turkey.
2. Meanwhile, toss the shallots in olive oil and roast in a 350F oven until completely soft. Snip the root end with a pair of scissors and squeeze the soft flesh out from the skins. Season the flesh with a generous grating of charred cinnamon stick, freshly grated nutmeg, salt, pepper and chopped aromatic herbs (sage, parsley and thyme work well).
3. Combine the turkey meat and shallot mixture with the remaining ingredients and pulse in a food processor until smooth and well blended. Taste and adjust seasoning. Use this mixture to make tortellini with your favorite fresh pasta dough recipe.
4. Cook the stuffed pasta in boiling turkey broth until tender and serve straight away in the same broth with grated cheese and another grating of the charred cinnamon stick for good measure.

*For an extra luxurious touch, add shavings of fresh white Alba truffles!

TAGLIATELLE WITH GREEN SAUCE

by Chefs Joseph and Jenna Cuccia

Crystal's Note: Jenna and Joseph are the brother and sister team behind 17 Summer in Lodi, New Jersey. Their restaurant is in one of the oldest buildings in Lodi, built in the early 1900s by a family who immigrated from Italy. On that site they owned and operated a very successful butcher for 50 years. When I approached Jenna with the idea of creating recipes, she was delighted. The duo actually created many recipes, and within this cookbook there are two—this delicious pasta recipe which pairs two of Scappi's dishes, from Book II.272 and II.173. Look for their interpretation of a strawberry crostata later in the cookbook.

“How have we never heard of Bartolomeo Scappi?” These were the first words that came to mind when diving into this book. How is this book not being taught in culinary school right alongside of Escoffier? Every recipe we read struck us at our roots, our deeply Italian roots. We found ourselves reminiscing, thinking back to the food our grandparents, our parents, and our heritage. We chose these recipes because simplicity at its best will undoubtedly feed your soul and reunite you to your roots. In our research, we found ourselves laughing and saying, “A little of this, a little of that” which were words our grandmother spoke frequently while cooking. We felt a connection with Scappi and relied on our instincts to bring you these humble recipes.

For the tagliatelle:

- 2lbs durum flour
- 3eggs
- 2 Tbsp salt
- Warm water

1. On a clean surface mix flour and salt together and create a well in the center. Crack the eggs in a small bowl and beat until smooth. Put eggs into the well and start to incorporate the flour to create the dough. Slowly add small amounts off warm water to keep dough properly hydrated. Continue to knead dough for 10 minutes. Dough should come together and be slightly dry but firm. It should bounce back to the touch. Wrap in plastic wrap and let stand for 1 hour. You can let stay overnight to hydrate in the refrigerator if needed.
2. Roll out either by hand or with a pasta machine. Cut into ¼ in by 18 in tagliatelle shape. Dust with semolina flour and set aside.

For the green sauce:

- 1 bunch parsley
- 1 bunch mint
- 5oz fresh spinach
- 5oz arugula
- ¼ cup extra virgin olive oil
- Breadcrumbs
- Grana Padano cheese
- Lemon juice to taste
- Salt and pepper to taste

1. Pick all herbs and wash and dry the greens. In a food processor, combine all herbs and greens and blend until it starts to break down.
2. Add in olive oil and salt and pepper to taste. Blend until smooth like a pesto, reserve lemon juice until ready to serve to keep the color of the sauce. Place in large bowl.
3. In a small frying pan toast breadcrumbs with olive oil until golden brown.
4. Cook pasta in a boiling water for about 90 seconds, remove and mix into green sauce. Add lemon juice and toss until coated evenly. Top with Grana Padano cheese and toasted breadcrumbs.

TORTELLINI WITH FRESH PEAS

by Crystal King

L'Opera di Bartolomeo Scappi includes some of the first recipes resembling what we know as pasta today, including stuffed pasta such as tortellini and tortelli. It was a fun challenge trying to figure out how to make this recipe, from Book II.252 of *L'Opera*, work. The dough, which is made with sugar and rosewater but no oil, is a bit softer and more pliable than what is common today. The spices lend themselves well to the peas, however, and this makes a perfect spring dish.



Makes 4 servings

For the filling:

- 1 cup peas (fresh is best but frozen works too)
 - 1 green onion
 - 1/4 tsp nutmeg
 - Pinch of cloves
 - Pinch of pepper
 - Pinch of cinnamon
 - 1/4 tsp sugar
 - 1/2 cup ricotta
1. Boil peas in chicken broth or water. Drain and let cool.
 2. Sauté onion in a little butter, let cool.
 3. Mix all ingredients in a food processor until it forms a paste. Set aside.



For the dough:

- 1 1/2 cups flour (and more as needed for rolling the dough)
 - 2 lightly beaten egg yolks
 - 2 tbsp water
 - 1 tbsp rosewater
 - 1/2 tsp soft butter
 - 1 1/2 tsp sugar
1. Mix all ingredients together, with a mixer and a dough hook, or by hand until it forms a soft dough.
 2. Knead the dough gently with the heels of your hands, adding a little bit of flour as needed if the dough seems sticky. Keep your surface dusted with flour to prevent the dough from sticking. Knead for 8 to 10 minutes until the dough is smooth and elastic.
 3. Wrap the dough in plastic wrap and let it rest at room temperature for 30 minutes.
 4. Unwrap the dough and knead it for a minute. Cut the dough into half; you'll roll each half out separately. Keep remaining dough in plastic wrap until ready for use. In general you will want to work fast so that the pasta doesn't dry out too much.
 5. You can use a pasta machine if you like, or roll by hand into a wide circle or square, paper-thin but not too thin so that it would tear.
 6. Cut the sheet of dough into squares 1 1/2 inches by 1 1/2 inches. Place a pea-sized amount of the pea mixture into the middle of each square. Fold the square into a triangle. Press around the filling to seal (if you are finding the pasta doesn't stick, use a little water on the edges). Bend the triangle around your pinky finger and press the ends together to seal. The tortellino should look like a little crown or hat.
 7. Transfer to a baking sheet sprinkled with flour or covered with a clean kitchen towel (you don't want them to stick to the pan).
 8. Repeat with the remaining pasta dough and filling.

The pasta freezes well so if you make a big batch and want to freeze, make sure to put the tortellini on the baking sheet into the freezer for 15 or 20 minutes, then remove and transfer the frozen tortellini to a plastic bag for easy storage.

To cook and serve:

1. Boil the tortellini in chicken broth or water for 3 to 5 minutes depending on whether they are fresh or frozen.
2. Toss the tortellini in 2 tbsp of melted butter.

Top with grated parmesan or romano cheese. Scappi also adds a little sugar and cinnamon if you want to be more authentic.

RECIPES FROM RINASCIMENTO A TAVOLA by Daniela Storoni

Crystal's Note: In the fall of 2018, I was in Urbino, Italy, researching my third novel, about a meat carver who worked for Cardinal Alessandro Farnese. I stayed in a delightful bed and breakfast, San Polo Urbino 1544, decorated in Renaissance style, and when I told the owners why I was in Urbino, they immediately connected me to Daniela Storoni, who, to my delight, owns a company called [Rinascimento a Tavola](#), which specializes in Renaissance food products! We met in front of the Palazzo Ducale in Urbino and she took me to a shop that carried some of her amazing salame and dolci. She told me that she recreates banquets similar to those that would have taken place at the palazzo and that many of her recipes come directly from Scappi's cookbook. I asked her to share some of her favorites with my readers, which I translated with the help of Graziella Macchetta, my Italian friend, tutor, and a director of Harvard University's Center for Renaissance Studies, Villa i Tatti. The recipes for Winter Herb Tourte, Renaissance Gnocchi and Veal Tomacelle are all from Daniela.



WINTER HERB TOURTE



Desserts like sweet and savory pies and pastry, which have their roots in medieval gastronomy, continue to be important preparations in the cuisine of the Italian Renaissance. In the endless and elegant list of foods of the sumptuous Renaissance banquets, there are many varieties of pies: salted meat, fish, vegetables, legumes, marzipan, and fruit desserts of all kinds. In the chronicles of the time they are most often characterized as “bone e perfette”—good and perfect.

Ingredients for pie dough:

- 2 tsp saffron
- 118g (½ cup) hot water
- 500g (3 ½ cups plus 1 tbsp) flour
- 2 eggs
- 60g (4 tbsp) of butter

Ingredients for filling:

- 750g (3 ¼ cup) swiss chard
- 450g (1 ¾ cups) ricotta cheese
- 150g (1 ½ cups) grated parmesan cheese

- 150g (1 ½ cups) fresh pecorino cheese
- 6 eggs
- 2 tbsp minced fresh herbs (mint, marjoram, parsley)
- ¼ tsp ground pepper
- ¼ tsp cinnamon
- ¼ tsp nutmeg
- 1 tsp of sugar
- 1/2 tsp salt
- 20g (1/2 cup) raisins (reconstituted in water till plump)

Preparation:

1. Dissolve saffron in water for 10-15 minutes, then let rest until room temperature.
2. Mix saffron water, flour, eggs and butter. When the dough is moist enough to hold together, make a big ball, and divide in two. You need one portion to be about twice the size as the other—the bottom crust needs to fill the edges of the pie and needs more dough.
3. Wrap the two pieces in plastic wrap and put in the refrigerator for 30 minutes before rolling them out.
4. Meanwhile, wash, cut and sauté the chard with a little butter, then drain liquid.
5. Combine the chard with the ricotta, parmesan and pecorino cheeses. Add the herbs, the eggs, raisins and spices. Mix well.

To assemble the tourte:

1. Roll out the dough into two disks. Line a springform pan with the largest disk.
2. Fill the pan with the greens and herbs mixture.
3. Cover with the second sheet of dough and seal the edges.
4. With the scraps from the pasta dough, create little decorations such as roses, leaves, grapes, braids and berries. Apply them to the edges of the tourte and as desired in the center.
5. Score the dough in several places to let steam escape.
6. Bake at 200C/400F for 45-60 minutes, until golden brown.



RENAISSANCE GNOCCHI

In the Middle Ages and the Renaissance we could say that “ravioli” and “gnocchi” were synonymous, while pasta stuffed with meat and vegetables, fruit or marzipan, if it was encased in pasta, took the name of “tortello.” The preparation of this dish requires a little patience and maybe a bit of practice, but the result is delicious.

Ingredients:

- 600g (2 1/2 cups) of ricotta
 - Or mixed fresh cheeses:
 - o 200g (7/8 cup) fresh pecorino
 - o 200g (7/8 cup) of mozzarella
 - o 200g (3/4 cup) ricotta cheese
- 300g (3 3/4 cups) of grated Parmesan cheese
- 4/6 eggs (depending on the cheese used - 4 if using ricotta, 6 if using the mixed cheeses)
- 100g (3 1/3 cup) swiss chard
- 100g (3 1/3 cup) spinach
- a bunch of mixed fresh aromatic herbs: parsley, mind marjoram and some sage leaves, chopped
- 1/2 tsp of cinnamon powder
- 2 tsp saffron
- 1/2 tsp salt
- 1-3 tablespoons flour, as needed
- Mixed meat or chicken broth (enough to fill a pot for cooking pasta)
- For the sauce:
 - o 1 tbsp reserved cooking broth
 - o 1 tbsp butter
 - o 6 tsp parmesan
 - o 1 tsp cinnamon
 - o 1 tsp brown sugar

Preparation:

1. Blend cheeses until you get a homogeneous and dry mixture. Put the mixture into cheesecloth and squeeze out the liquid, or press the liquid out with a fine sieve, letting the moisture drain. It may be helpful to prepare this a few hours ahead of time.
2. In the meantime, cut the swiss chard and spinach. Sauté in butter and then drain well and squeeze out any liquid with a fine sieve or between paper towels.
3. Add the Parmesan cheese, some aromatic herbs, eggs, cinnamon, saffron, pepper and salt.
4. When the mixture is firm (note that you can also prepare this in advance and keep in the refrigerator) with the help of a spoon, take a walnut-sized amount of dough and make a gnocchi a finger wide and about 3 cm long. Roll on the back of a fork to create the signature gnocchi design. Lay on a tray and sprinkle a bit of flour over the gnocchi.
5. Cook immediately for a few seconds in a good meat broth, then drain and season with a little melted butter and broth mixed together to form a light cream. Sprinkle with a mixture of parmesan, cinnamon, and brown sugar.

If you like, you can also add ricotta cheese curds over the top.



VEAL TOMACELLE

Crystal's note: This recipe calls for caul fat, which is something a good butcher should be able to procure for you. The use of caul fat for sausages dates back to ancient times. It may seem a little odd to home cooks today, but give it a try! Make sure to rinse the caul fat in a bowl of saffron infused water before using it. For more tips on how to prepare and use caul fat, check out this [instructional video](#).

Tomacelle are commonly found in Renaissance gastronomic records. Today we could compare them to a sort of meatball wrapped in pork or goat caul fat and cooked on the spit or stewed in the oven. Often tomacelle recipes are prepared with liver or animal entrails. Cooks like Scappi suggest that for this preparation you can also use veal, capon, hen or pheasant. In the thirty years that I've been reconstructing Renaissance banquets, this recipe, "Tomacelle di polpa di Vitella," has been my most popular dish! I hope that you will also appreciate the originality and harmony of the flavors!

Ingredients:

- 500 g (17.6 oz) chopped veal
- 500 g (17.6 oz) chopped pork belly
- 200 g (7/8 cup) fresh pecorino cheese cut into cubes
- 150 g (1 3/4 cup) grated Parmesan cheese
- 5 eggs
- 20 g (1/2 cup) raisins (reconstituted in water till plump)
- 1 handful of chopped fresh aromatic herbs (rosemary, marjoram, thyme, mint)
- 20 g (1 1/2 tbsp) cinnamon
- 10 g (2 tsp) nutmeg
- 10 g (2 tsp) ginger
- 5 g (1 tsp) clove
- 2.5 g (1/2 tsp) of brown sugar
- 1.25 g (1/8 tsp) of pepper
- 3 g (1/2 tsp) of salt
- 2 tsp saffron
- For the sauce:
 - o Juice of 2 or 3 oranges
 - o 1 lemon
 - o 2 tbsp sugar
 - o Cinnamon to sprinkle on top

Preparation:

1. Gently wash the caul fat and keep in water infused with the saffron.
2. In a bowl, mix the veal and pork belly, then add the diced pecorino cheese and grated parmesan, herbs, raisins and saffron and the spices. Let the mixture rest in the refrigerator for one night.
3. The following day, prepare the tomacelle by making slightly oval meatballs as big as an egg.
4. Wrap them in the well-drained and dry pork caul fat.
5. Soak skewers in water to prevent them from catching fire, then pierce the tomacelle with skewers.
6. Cook them on the grill, preferably over open coals.
7. Immediately before serving, sprinkle them with orange juice, lemon, cinnamon and lightly heated sugar. They will be very hot! I assure you that their taste is amazing!



SCAPPI'S FRIED CHICKEN by Crystal King

This recipe comes from Book II.126 of *L'Opera di Bartolomeo Scappi*. Ok, I know what you are thinking: fried chicken originated in the American South, didn't it? Sorry to tell you—it didn't. The Ancient Romans fried up all manner of food, including chicken. However, this Renaissance recipe, where the chicken is dredged in flour first, is most akin to the fried chicken of today, though the spices are not at all what we might be used to. You should be able to find must, a reduced grape syrup, online. If not, substitute grape juice that has been cooked down to a syrup. You could also substitute vincotto.

Chicken parts - 3 legs, 3 thighs

Marinade

- 1 1/4 cup dry white wine
- 2 tbsp grape must
- 1/2 cup white wine vinegar
- 1 tsp pepper
- 1 tsp cinnamon
- 1/2 tsp ground cloves
- 1 tsp ground coriander
- 1 tsp nutmeg
- 2 cloves garlic, crushed

Frying the chicken

- 1 1/2 cups flour
- 1/2 tsp salt
- 1/2 tsp pepper
- 3 cups peanut, canola or vegetable oil for frying

1. Mix all marinade ingredients together and marinate the chicken for at least 8 hours, preferably overnight.
2. Remove chicken from marinade.
3. Mix together flour, salt and pepper.
4. Heat oil in a large cast iron skillet over medium-high heat until it reaches 350 degrees.
5. Dredge chicken pieces in flour mixture (a paper bag is ideal for this). Shake off excess flour.
6. Add pieces of chicken with skin side down first. Cook with lid on for 10 minutes depending on size and thickness of the chicken (e.g. thighs need more time than legs). Remove the lid and turn pieces over, cooking uncovered for another 15-20 minutes, without turning, until they are cooked through (use a meat thermometer to test if it is ready, at 165 degrees). You want the chicken pieces to be golden brown, not too brown.
7. Drain the chicken on a wire rack, letting it rest for several minutes before serving, to help the crust set so it won't fall apart.



SCAPPI'S RIBS by Crystal King

This recipe, from Book II.99 of *L'Opera di Bartolomeo Scappi*, is a fairly simple one, and would be even better on the grill. You could also use a rack of ribs, as long as you adjust the cooking time. Scappi's recipe didn't include sugar, but the marinade is so vinegar forward that the sugar balances it out for a modern palate. See the previous recipe for details about must.

- 2 1/2 lb country style ribs
- 3/4 cup vinegar
- 2 tbsp must
- 2 tsp coriander
- 2 tbsp sugar
- 4 garlic cloves

-
1. Mix vinegar, must, coriander, sugar and garlic together. Add ribs and marinate for at least 8 hours, preferably overnight.
 2. Remove meat from marinade, wrap in tin foil and cook in the oven at 250 degrees for 2.5 hours.
 3. Take meat out of oven, turn on broiler.
 4. Remove tin foil, place ribs on a baking sheet and place under broiler. Broil for 5 minutes on each side, watching carefully, just until ends of ribs crisp up.



SCAPPI'S BRAISED BEEF by Crystal King

This recipe, which comes from Book II.11 of L'Opera di Bartolomeo Scappi, is one of the first that I tried, and to learn more about that process, you can check out [the blog post](#) I did about recreating the recipe. It's a perfect dish for a cold winter's night.

Serves 4-6 people

- 2 lb beef short rib
- 1 teaspoon pepper
- 1/2 teaspoon cloves
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1 teaspoon cinnamon
- 1 teaspoon chopped fresh ginger
- 1/2 teaspoon coriander or 1/2 teaspoon fennel pollen
- 3/4 cup Madeira malmsey wine
- 1/4 cup vincotto
- 1/4 cup rose vinegar (or 1/4 cup white wine vinegar with 2 tbsp rosewater)
- 2 strips of thick-cut bacon
- 2 strips of prosciutto
- 1/2 cup of prunes, or pitted plums, cut in half
- 1/2 cup dried cherries or pitted fresh cherries

1. Blend spices together and rub into the meat.
2. Place the meat in a gallon zip lock bag with the Madeira, vincotto and rose vinegar. Remove as much air as possible before sealing. Keep in the refrigerator for four hours, turning several times to marinate (If you like, you could weight it down as Scappi did, by putting a heavy iron skillet or a brick on top, but it's not crucial to do so—the flavors will still penetrate the meat because of the vinegar).
3. Chop bacon in small pieces and cook briefly on the stovetop in an ovenproof dutch oven, just enough to release the bacon fat. Remove bacon and set aside.
4. Remove meat from marinade (reserve marinade), then briefly sear the meat in the dutch oven, a minute or so on each side, just enough to brown it.
5. Slice the prosciutto into small pieces and add to the pot. Add bacon back into the pot. Pour the marinade over the top.
6. Put the lid on the dutch oven (very important) and place in a pre-heated 295° oven. Cook for four hours.
7. At the three hour mark, chop prunes and add with cherries to the sauce. Continue to cook.
8. After it has cooked for about four hours, remove dutch oven and place on stovetop. Continue to cook down the sauce, about 30 minutes. If needed, add 1 tbsp of flour to thicken.
9. Serve the meat with the sauce.



TURNIP SOUP

by Chefs Kevin O'Donnell and Michael Lombardi

Crystal's note: Chefs Kevin and Michael are the wizards behind the Venetian inspired Boston restaurant, SRV. My husband and I first went to their restaurant right after we visited the watery city for the first time. Snacking on the tasty cicchetti that the duo makes is a wonderful way to get a taste of Italy here in the States. Because Bartolomeo Scappi and his nephew Giovanni spend time in Venice, I knew that I had to find out what they would come up with if they had Scappi's book in hand. They did not disappoint!

This recipe comes from Book II.212 of *L'Opera di Bartolomeo Scappi*.

“To prepare a Venetian-style thick soup of turnips in meat broth”

Recipe yields 4 portions

Cooking time: 2 hours

- 2 lbs Hakurei turnips
- 1 qt roasted beef broth
- 2 shallots
- 2 cloves garlic, sliced
- 1 oz quality white wine vinegar
- 8 threads saffron
- 2 tbsp bone marrow fat
- dried rose petals to garnish

1. Preheat oven to 300F.
2. Clean the turnips and season with salt.
3. Light 1 quart of charcoal in an outdoor grill.
4. Once hot place in a roasting pan and bury the turnips in the coals then bake for 1 hour or until very tender.
5. While the turnips are roasting sauté the shallots and the garlic in a sauce pot on low heat in the bone marrow fat until soft and translucent. When the turnips are tender, remove them from the coals and brush off any ash.
6. Transfer the turnips to the sauce pot along with the beef broth and saffron. Continue to cook together until flavors marry and all vegetables are tender.
7. Puree in a blender with the vinegar until smooth. Adjust seasoning with salt if needed and pour into serving bowls.
8. Garnish with the dried rose petals and fresh cracked pepper.



DUCK LIVER CROSTATA

by Chefs Kevin O'Donnell and Michael Lombardi

This recipe comes from Book II.212 of *L'Opera di Bartolomeo Scappi*.

Crystal's note: There are a number of meat pies in the Scappi cookbook—pheasant, veal, prosciutto, guinea pig, ortolan—and a whole range of fish pies, too. This version of a duck liver crostata is rich and best taken in small, luxurious doses.

For the the pasta frolla:

- 7 1/2 oz all purpose flour
- 2 1/2 oz 10x powdered sugar
- 2 ounce cold unsalted butter, small dice
- 1 egg yolk
- pinch of salt

1. Add all dry ingredients into a kitchen aid mixer. Paddle them to incorporate. Add the butter to mix into the flour. Scrape down the sides of the bowl. Add the eggs and incorporate slightly, being careful not to over mix. The dough should still be a touch crumbly.
2. Dump out onto the workstation and bring the rest of the dough together by hand. Let rest for about 30 minutes or overnight in the fridge.
3. Roll out onto 8 inch pie pan and blind bake at 350 degrees for about 8 minutes or until golden brown.

For the duck liver mousse:

- 1 lb duck livers, salt to taste
- 1/3 lb butter
- 1/4 lb sliced onions
- 1 tbsp aged balsamic
- 1 sheet gelatin, bloomed in cold water

1. Season the duck livers with salt and let cure overnight in the fridge. The next day, dry with a paper towel and sear until golden brown in a sauté pan.
2. Once golden brown and cooked halfway, remove from the pan and reserve on a plate.
3. Lightly caramelize the onions in the same sauté pan and then puree the duck livers, caramelized onions, gelatin, balsamic and butter in a blender until very smooth. Season with salt to taste and pour directly into the baked crostata. Let cool in the fridge.
4. When the mousse sets, top with your favorite jam. (*I used a homemade concord grape and gooseberry jelly*). Cut into desired portions and top with nice olive oil, sea salt and chopped rosemary.



FRICASSEE OF RABBIT by Crystal King

This recipe, from Book II.94 of *L'Opera di Bartolomeo Scappi*, is a simple one for cooking rabbit. Scappi called for boiling the rabbit in salted water, as did many meat recipes of that time. Today we know that boiling meat can render out a lot of the flavor, so I recommend brining instead. He also called for spring onions, which, if you can get in season, you should definitely try! Scappi suggested dressing the rabbit with a mustard sauce of your choosing or a sauce called “black broth.” I have included a recipe for black broth following this one.

- *Whole rabbit, approximately 2.5 lbs*
- *Pork fat (we used a prosciutto stump) or lard for cooking*
- *1 chopped onion*

-
1. Brine rabbit in 2 gallons of water, mixed with 2 cups of salt, for at least 6-8 hours. Overnight is fine.
 2. Cut rabbit into pieces, cut meat off carcass but leave bones in the legs.
 3. Render down the fat in a skillet, then cook pieces with bones first and then fry up the rest of the meat until brown, adding in onions during the last minute or two of cooking.
 4. Serve with a mustard sauce of your choice, or with black broth (see following recipe).



BLACK BROTH by Crystal King

Scappi recommends this sauce, found in Book II.252 of *L'Opera di Bartolomeo Scappi*, for use with fowl and various quadrupeds. I pair this with his recipe for Fricassee of Hare (though I use rabbit), but it would also be delicious with duck, chicken or pork.

Scappi suggested adding some sugar if you don't find the mixture sweet enough, but I have found that it is plenty sweet from the fruit. He also suggests sprinkling cinnamon and sugar on top but, again, the recipe is plenty sweet without this.

The recipe calls for grape must, but you could use sapa, vincotto, mosto cotto or balsamic vinegar as a substitute.

- 1 quince (you can substitute a very crisp apple)
- 1 cup raisins
- 1 cup prunes
- 1 cup dried or fresh (pitted) cherries
- 3 1/2 tbsp grape must
- 1/2 cup red wine
- 2 tbsp sweet white wine or white grape juice
- 1/2 tsp pepper
- 1/2 tsp cinnamon
- 1/4 tsp ground cloves
- 1/2 tsp nutmeg
- 1 tbsp flour
- 1 tbsp fresh squeezed orange juice

Put all ingredients into a saucepan except the orange juice. Cook this mixture down on medium heat, stirring frequently, until the fruit is soft, the mixture is slightly thick and the juices are bubbling. Strain and add the orange juice into the mixture. Pour over meat.

If you like, you can keep the fruit in the mixture and serve as a compote, or reserve the fruit for use in a pastry dish, or as a topping for ice cream.

CHICKEN AND LEMON SOUP

by Chef
Joshua Lewin

This recipe comes from Book II.180 of *L'Opera di Bartolomeo Scappi*.

Crystal's note: Chef Lewin owns the renowned Somerville restaurant Juliet, and is founder of the food and cultural magazine, Of Juliet. He found inspiration in Scappi's section of L'Opera titled "Dishes for the Sick." He tells us:

It is interesting, and enlightening to me, that this sixth chapter of Scappi's work comes only after such opulent lavishness such as that which precedes it, but introduces itself as essential; so essential that without this chapter Scappi claims he "would have done nothing."

The healing of the sick, true, is even the origin of my work in restaurants. The word coming from the roots of restore, referring to the act of nourishing weary travelers or sick patrons...usually, or at least most traditionally, with soup.

To make the stock: :

- 2 whole chickens, taken off the bone
- 3 gallons water
- 2 spanish onions, large dice
- 2 carrots, large dice
- 3 celery ribs, large dice
- 3 sprigs thyme
- 1 bay leaf (fresh preferred)
- 6 peppercorn
- 3 whole coriander seeds
- 1 pinch kosher salt

1. Roast the bones of the chickens until well browned.
2. In a mixing bowl, coat the onions, carrots, and celery very lightly in olive oil, and transfer to baking sheet. Roast at 350 degrees, until vegetables are well browned and beginning to caramelize, about 30 minutes.
3. Combine chicken bones with water and bring to boil. Skim any foamy impurities that rise to the surface.
4. Add all remaining ingredients, including roasted vegetables, and return to boil, then lower the heat, and simmer at least 6 hours careful not to boil.

To braise chicken legs:

- drumsticks and thighs of two chickens (save the breasts for another purpose)
- 1 onion, quartered
- 2 ribs celery, roughly chopped
- 1 carrot, roughly chopped
- 1 rind of parmesan cheese (when in Rome), if available (ask your cheesemonger)
- 6 peppercorns
- 3 coriander seeds
- 2 sprigs thyme
- 1 bay leaf (fresh preferred)
- chicken stock, from step one, enough to cover according to instructions below

1. Salt and pepper the drumsticks and thighs liberally the evening before cooking.
2. Sear the chicken pieces, on both sides, in a heavy pan (cast iron preferred) until well browned, and remove to braising pan or dutch oven.
3. Add onions, carrots, and celery to the same pan that seared the chicken and cook over medium heat, turning occasionally, until well browned. Add to the pan with the chicken.
4. Add parmesan cheese rind (if using), as well as herbs and spices, and add chicken stock to just barely cover the ingredients. Reserve any additional stock, refrigerated.
5. Cover tightly and cook, in the oven, at 325 degrees, until chicken can be pulled easily with a fork.
6. Strain cooking liquid and cool overnight, as well as the cooked chicken, stored separately.
7. The next day, remove the resulting cap of fat from the top of the chicken cooking liquid (I suggest that you cook an omelette in it!), as well as any fat that has settled on the top of the remaining chicken stock.

To make the Chicken and Lemon Soup:

- 3 carrots, cut into a uniform small dice
- 3 ribs celery, cut into a uniform small dice
- 2 onions, cut into a uniform small dice
- Butter for cooking
- 2 lemons, zested and segmented
- Chicken cooking liquid, reserved from above
- Plus chicken stock, in equal amount to the reserved cooking liquid
- Reserved, cooked chicken, diced

1. Melt the butter over medium heat in a heavy bottomed pot with a tight fitting lid.
2. Add the carrots, celery, and onion, with a pinch of salt and cover tightly.
3. Cook until vegetables are soft and cooked through, but avoid browning.
4. Combine the reserved chicken cooking liquid and stock in equal parts and add to pot with the lemon segments and cooked chicken.
5. Bring to boil and taste for seasoning before serving, adding additional salt and pepper only if desired.

SPARRING HOT CHERRY SOPS

by Crystal King and Kate Quinn

This recipe comes from Book VI.135 of *L'Opera di Bartolomeo Scappi*.

Scappi's cookbook has 218 recipes for the sick, including "prepared potions, broths, concentrates, pastes, barley dishes and many other preparations needed by the sick and convalescent." Interestingly, some of the most delicious—and sweetest—recipes appear in this section of *L'Opera*.

I was immediately drawn to Scappi's recipe for cherry sops, which is extraordinarily simple and hearty, and, if I were sick and someone served it to me, I'd probably down every last bit of it. But it's even more delicious if you are healthy and want a bit of dessert.

And I'm not the only historical novelist to interpret this recipe. Kate Quinn, bestselling author of *The Huntress* and *The Alice Network*, offers her own wildly different yet wonderful take on Scappi in her fantastic series, *The Borgia Chronicles*, and when *The Serpent and the Pearl* came out, she developed her own version of his cherry sops. I was delighted to discover that our recipes were just as different as the characters we created in our novels. Try them both and let us know which one you like best! Tag @crystallyn (Twitter) @crystallyn14 (Instagram) and @KateQuinnAuthor (Twitter) and share your photos!



CRYSTAL'S HOT CHERRY SOPS by Crystal King

Serves 4

- *1 lb fresh cherries, pitted*
- *1 1/4 cups of white wine*
- *8 tbsp butter*
- *1/4 cup sugar*
- *4 large slices of crusty, white artisan bread*

-
1. Melt butter in a saucepan. Add cherries, wine and sugar. Bring to a boil (until wine has colored). Lower heat and cook to a thick syrup, about 20-30 minutes. Keep an eye on the mixture so it doesn't boil over.
 2. Fry bread in butter in a skillet, flipping once, cooking until toasted.
 3. Pour cherries on top and sprinkle with sugar.



KATE'S HOT SOPS WITH CHERRIES

Serves 2

- 1 can cherries in water (*NOT* cherry pie filling)
- 4 slices good fresh-baked artisan bread
- 1 cup red wine
- Butter
- 4 tsp sugar
- 1 tsp cinnamon
- 1 tsp nutmeg

-
1. Butter the bread slices on both sides, and fry in a skillet over medium heat, flipping once. Set aside.
 2. Reduce heat to medium. Drain the cherries and add to a medium saucepan (we improvised with a wok) and add the wine plus 4 tsp sugar, and 1 tsp each cinnamon and nutmeg.
 3. Cook over medium heat, stirring frequently until liquid reduces down to thick syrupy texture, adding more sugar or spices to taste.
 4. Serve in a bowl with fried bread for dipping. Messy in the best possible way!



SOUR CHERRY CORIANDER ICE CREAM WITH HONEYED PINE NUTS

by Hannah Spiegelman

Crystal's Note: Of course, they didn't have ice cream in the Renaissance, but when I ran across an article on [NPR's The Salt](#) about how Hannah's recipes are inspired by the flavors of history, I knew I had to reach out to her. She combines two of my loves—history and ice cream. Her website [A Sweet History](#) catalogs all her delicious creations. I like to think that Scappi would swoon just as much as I did if he saw this recipe.

Cherry Puree:

- 1 lb. sour cherries

1. Rinse and pit cherries.
2. Place the fruit in a medium saucepan. Cover and cook over medium heat, stirring occasionally with a spoon to help mash the fruit. When the fruit is bubbling

uncover the pot, reduce the heat to low, and simmer for 5 to 10 minutes, until the fruit has released its juices. Continue mashing the fruit with a spoon as necessary.

3. Transfer the fruit to a blender and let it cool for 10 minutes. Blend until smooth.
4. Pass the puree through a fine-mesh sieve.

Honeyed Pine Nuts:

- ½ cup pine nuts
- 2 tbsp. honey
- ¼ tsp. sea salt

1. Combine pine nuts, honey, and salt in a small pot over medium-high heat. Cook until nuts are golden, about 3-5 minutes.

Spread out on a parchment-lined baking sheet. Cool completely before breaking up the nuts.

Base:

- 1 1/4 cups sour cherry puree
- 1/2 cup buttermilk
- 1 teaspoon lemon juice
- 1 1/2 cups milk
- 1/2 cup cream
- 3/4 cups sugar
- 1/2 cup corn syrup or glucose
- 1 tbsp plus 1 tbsp cornstarch mixed with 2 tbsp of water
- 1 tbsp coriander
- 1/2 cup honeyed pine nuts (see recipe below)

1. Whisk the cherry puree with the buttermilk in a small bowl and set aside in the fridge.
2. Put the cream, milk, corn syrup, sugar, and coriander in a medium saucepan, and place it over medium-high heat. Cook, whisking occasionally until the mixture

come to a full rolling boil. Once the mixture has reached a boil, reduce the heat to a simmer.

3. After a minute, add the cornstarch slurry and cook for another minute and then remove from the heat.
4. Immediately pour the dairy mixture into a metal or glass bowl. Nest the hot bowl in an ice bath, stirring occasionally until it cools down.
5. When the base is cool to the touch, mix in the cherry mixture and whisk until it is combined. Strain it through a fine mesh sieve to remove any bits of fruit.
6. Chill the base in the refrigerator for 4 hours to overnight.
7. Churn the base according to your ice cream maker's instructions.
8. Layer with honeyed pine nuts as you put the ice cream in a freezer-safe container. Harden in the freezer for at least 6 hours.



PUMPKIN TOURTE by Crystal King

This recipe comes from Book V.106 of *L'Opera di Bartolomeo Scappi*.

A cursory dive into the history of pumpkin pie suggests that the first written recipe for this quintessential American dessert surfaced in North America around 1675. But this recipe from *L'Opera* was certainly a precursor of some sort—even if it wasn't exactly pumpkin pie. The word “pumpkin” or its translated equivalent, was used through the centuries to mean all types of gourds but it is entirely possible that the pumpkin used in this recipe was similar to the pumpkin we know and love today. Scappi was a trendsetter, introducing the nobility to all kinds of new and novel foods from all over the world, including turkey, and since explorers had been bringing back North American gourds for half a century by the time that *L'Opera* was published in 1570, my thought is that this might indeed be the first pumpkin pie recipe ever printed.

The original recipe calls for this pie to be crustless but I think it's better with a crust. If making the shell, I recommend King Arthur Flour's [classic single pie crust recipe](#). To be more authentic, use rosewater instead of water to bind the dough together.

Makes two 9" pies

- 2 tbsp whole milk
- 3/4 cup sugar
- 3 eggs
- 4 oz butter, room temperature
- 8 oz cream cheese, softened
- 1/4 cups ricotta cheese
- 3 tsp cinnamon
- 2-3 tbsp fresh ginger* grated on finest grate or a microplane
- 15 oz of canned pumpkin
- Two 9" pie shells, either purchased or your own recipe*

*Note that fresh ginger is better as dried ginger lacks the punch needed to spice this pie.

1. Preheat oven to 375°. Cream together milk, sugar, eggs and butter. Blend well.
2. Add in cream cheese, ricotta, pumpkin, ginger and cinnamon. Blend until smooth. The mixture will be very liquid.
3. Pour into two 9" pie shells, either purchased or your own recipe.
4. Cook for 45-50 minutes or until a knife inserted into the center of the pies pulls clear.



CROSTATA DI CILIEGIE

by Camilla M. Mann

Crystal's Note: Camilla regularly shares original, mouthwatering recipes on her fabulous blog, [Culinary Adventures with Camilla](#). She also participates in Foodie Reads, a monthly blogging challenge to create recipes from books, and created a delicious version of Parthian Chicken inspired by my first novel, Feast of Sorrow. Needless to say, I was really excited to see what she would come up with for The Chef's Secret! And she wowed me again, this time by creating an entire Thanksgiving dinner based on The Chef's Secret! Here's her interpretation of a cherry pie featured in the novel.

On the Page

"I began the day I was to dine at casa di Palone in the Vaticano kitchen, helping Antonio prepare the pope's meals.... I suspected the pope would not touch the custardy dessert, but I felt compelled to take a chance. The worst that might happen was that he would order me to go back to his regular menu. At best, he would recognize the joy of food God gifted to us.... Antonio helped me bake a crostata to take the Palone house that evening. ... The fragrance was magnificent. I hoped the famiglia Palone would find the pie tasted as good as it looked" (Chapter 11).

On the Plate

After I read that passage, I was daydreaming about cherry crostata, and I decided to create a version with frangipane and Amarena cherries with the top crust brushed with a hint of rosewater. The Amarena cherries, a variety of the *Prunus cerasus* developed by Gennaro Fabbri who was born in Bologna in the late 19th century, small, dark cherries grown near Bologna and Modena. Though Giovanni's version is made with the *Visciola*—an indigenous, wild cherry—Amarenas were what I could find here in California! Because the cherries were bottled in syrup, I used very little sugar in the crust and added lemon juice to the frangipane to cut the sweetness. Rosewater, I've found, is a very polarizing ingredient; some people love it, others abhor it. So, I used it very sparingly.

Crust:

- 2 1/2 cups flour + more for rolling
- 1/2 cups ground almonds
- 1/4 cups powdered sugar
- pinch of salt
- 1 cup butter
- 3 tbsp water
- 3 tbsp grappa (use whatever alcohol you want – vodka and gin work well – or more water.)
- Also needed: a tart pan with a removable bottom, silicone brush

1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees F.
2. Mix the flour, ground almonds, powdered sugar, and salt together; rub in the butter until the mixture resembles coarse breadcrumbs.
3. Alternatively stir in water and grappa, if using, until the mixture forms a ball. Divide the ball into thirds, then combine two of the balls so you end up with 1/3 of the dough for the top and 2/3 of the dough for the bottom. Wrap the smaller ball in plastic wrap and chill. Roll out the larger ball between two pieces of parchment paper. Press gently into a tart pan. Prick crust with a fork to prevent bubbling. Bake for 20 minutes at 350, or until a light golden brown. In the meantime, make the frangipane.

Frangipane:

- 1 cup ground almonds
- 1/4 cup dark brown sugar
- 1/2 cup melted butter
- 2 large eggs
- 2 tsp freshly squeezed lemon juice
(I used Meyer lemons because I have a tree in my yard. Use whatever lemons you have.)

1. Mix everything together to form a paste. Once the tart crust is cooked, spread a layer of frangipane over the bottom. Bake for 20 minutes.

To Finish:

- Amarena cherries (I used two 7.4 oz jars from Trader Joe's which are pitted but still have stems.)
- 1/2 tsp rosewater
- 1 tbsp water
- Unsweetened whipped cream, for serving

1. Drain the Amarena cherries and remove their stems. Rinse briefly under cold water and let drain again while the frangipane bakes.
2. Press the cherries into the partially baked frangipane. Roll the second crust out between two pieces of parchment paper. Slice into 3/4" wide strips. You can weave the lattice if you like. I simply overlap them to create a grid and press gently at the intersections. Trim any excess dough and press gently at the edge of the pan to attach the strips to the crostata base. Dilute the rosewater in 1 tbsp water and brush a light coating over dough strips.
3. Return to the oven for 30 to 35 minutes. Let cool for 15 to 20 minutes before removing the crostata from the tart pan.
4. Slice and serve with a dollop of unsweetened whipped cream.



STRAWBERRY CROSTATATA

by Chefs Joseph and Jenna Cuccia

This recipe comes from Book VI.129 of *L'Opera di Bartolomeo Scappi*.

For the dough:

- 12 oz cake flour
- 8 oz unsalted butter
- 1 tsp salt
- 1/2 cup ice water

1. In a food processor, combine flour and salt and pulse together.
2. Cut butter into small cubes about 1/8in thick. Place butter in food process with the flour. Pulse on high until it has a fine mealy texture. Slowly add the water into the mixture until it forms a ball of dough.
3. Remove and split into two pieces. Wrap in plastic wrap. Let set for 1 hour or overnight.

For the filling:

- 2 quarts strawberries
- 1/2 cup sugar
- 4 egg yolks
- 1/4 cup heavy whipping cream
- 1/2 tsp cinnamon
- 1/2 cup Sweet vermouth (red)
- Juice from 1 large lemon
- Plain breadcrumbs to cover
- Pinch of salt

1. Hull and cut strawberries in 1/4 in rings. Split the strawberries into two bowls.
2. In one bowl, mix the strawberries with vermouth, sugar, cinnamon and lemon juice. Allow to marinate.
3. In a large mixing bowl, combine egg yolks with sugar and salt; beat until light in color.
4. Add cream and mix until it forms a homogenous mixture. Add the strawberries to this mixture and set aside.

To assemble:

1. Take one half of the dough and roll it out to about 1/8 in thick or to cover a 9in tart pan.
2. Form dough into the pan and add the strawberries with the vermouth, draining the excess liquid.
3. Toss a light layer of breadcrumbs on top of the strawberries to absorb extra moisture when cooking.
4. Roll out the second piece of dough and place on top of the strawberries.
5. Add second mixture of strawberries with eggs on top of dough.
6. Sprinkle an extra layer of cinnamon and sugar on top of the tart and bake at 400 degrees for 35 minutes or until dough is cooked through and custard has set.
7. Cool and serve with fresh whip cream.

*for strawberry elderflower – replace vermouth with St. Germain liquor and add elderflowers to top of tart when in season.



APPLE RAISIN CROSTATATA

by Chef Louise Miller

This recipe comes from Book V.61 of *L'Opera di Bartolomeo Scappi*.

*Crystal's note: Novelist Louise Miller is a friend whose first book debuted the year before mine did. Her novels, *The Late Bloomers' Club* and *The City Baker's Guide to Country Living*, are full of cakes and pies and are every bit as delicious as you can imagine. That's because Louise is also a pastry chef. Her [Instagram feed](#) is one of the most mouthwatering you can follow. I was so excited when she agreed to interpret a pie recipe for this collection because everything she makes is magic.*

For the crust:

- 1 1/2 cups (204 grams) all-purpose flour
- 2 tablespoons sugar
- 1/2 teaspoon fine sea salt
- 1 stick (4 ounces) very cold unsalted butter, cut into 16 pieces
- 1/4 cup ice water

1. Place the flour, salt, sugar and butter into the bowl of a food processor.
2. Pulse until the butter is cut in, and the color of the flour turns slightly golden.
3. Pulse in the water a little at a time, and then pulse until the dough begins to clump.
4. Place the dough on the table, and using the heel of your hand, smooch the dough away from you a little at a time—you are basically mushing it together, making sure all of the flour is incorporated—it's a French technique called *friasage*. Flatten the dough into a disc, cover with plastic wrap, and let rest in the refrigerator for 15 minutes.
5. Roll the dough into a 12" circle. Don't worry if it isn't a perfect circle—a crostata is a rustic pastry—no perfection needed! Slide the circle onto a parchment-lined cookie sheet and place in the refrigerator until you are ready to assemble.

For the filling:

- 3-4 apples—I like Cortlands, but any firm apple will do
- 5 ounces of Mascarpone cheese
- 1/2 cup of sugar
- 2 teaspoons ground cinnamon

- 2 tablespoons raisins
- 2 tablespoons brandy
- 2 tablespoons (very) hot water
- 4 cookies, ground into crumbs. I like a gingersnap here, but vanilla wafers, or mostaccioli (there's a recipe in the Scappi book!) would be delicious.

1. Preheat the oven to 400F.
2. Mix together the hot water and brandy, and pour it over the raisins to soften. Set aside.
3. Peel, core, and slice the apples in thin slices.
4. In a small bowl, mix together the sugar and cinnamon. Set aside.
5. In a separate bowl, beat the mascarpone cheese until smooth. This can be done with a wooden spoon or a plastic spatula. Stir in 1/4 cup of the cinnamon sugar. Set aside.
6. Drain the raisins. Now you are ready to assemble!
7. Take out the rolled-out crust. Spread the cinnamon-sugar/mascarpone mixture on the bottom of the crust, leaving an 2-inch border.
8. Next, sprinkle the mascarpone with the ground cookies.
9. Now come the apples—arrange them in the crust, on top of the cheese and cookie layers, in a pattern that looks appealing—I like concentric circles—again, leaving that 2" border free of filling.
10. Sprinkle the apples with the remaining cinnamon sugar. Sprinkle the raisins on top.
11. Gently lift the border crust and fold it over the filling, pinching the places where the dough folds together, so you are left with an open-faced crostata.
12. Bake for 40-45 minutes. Take a peek every so often after the 30 minute mark—if your raisins are in danger of burning, just cover the filling with a circle of aluminum foil. When finished, the crust should be a golden brown, and the apples should be tender.
13. Let cool to room temperature before slicing.

