

YIELD

Josie's
Renaissance Mpanatas





Josie's *Renaissance Mpanatas*

What's the dish?

Mpanata Rausana

Why is it important to me?

Nothing does justice to my Italian roots more than the Mpanatas, a dish we serve every year at Christmas Eve with each family member's preferred fillings and distributed based on their choice of filling. But no matter what, and how well they're labelled (with the person's initials on the top), there's always someone who gets the wrong one! It's an ongoing joke in our family. After dinner, we enjoy espresso and dessert, play Tombola (Italian Bingo) and patiently wait until midnight to open Christmas presents. The adults are the worst at waiting!

Ingredients:

- 2 lbs bread flour
- 2 oz fresh active yeast or 2 envelopes of dry yeast
- 3 tablespoons olive oil
- 1 tablespoon baking soda
- Pinch of salt
- 2 bunches broccoli rabe, washed, trimmed, with tough stems removed
- 3 tablespoons olive oil
- 2 garlic cloves, chopped
- 1 lb sausage, casing removed
- ¼ lb Caciocavallo cheese, cut in ¼-inch cubes
- Salt and pepper

Directions

1. The dough (the kneading)

In a bowl, mix ½ cup of warm water and the yeast. Add the sugar and ½ cup of flour and mix until it is well blended and a soft dough is formed. If it is too dry, add some water; if it is too watery, add flour. Set aside, leave covered in a warm place. After 45 minutes to 1 hour, combine risen dough with remaining flour and add some lukewarm water, the oil and a pinch of salt and knead to obtain an elastic dough similar to bread dough. Make a ball, cut across the top to allow it to rise again, cover and put in a warm place until it almost doubles in size, 1 to 2 hours.

2. The Stuffing

In a 4-quart saucepan, bring to a boil about 2 quarts of water with ½ tablespoon of salt. Dip broccoli in the boiling water to blanch for 2 minutes. Drain and set aside. In a 4-quart saucepan, over a medium flame, heat 3 tablespoons of olive oil and the garlic. Add broccoli rabe and sauté for 5 minutes, until tender. Add salt and pepper to taste. Remove from flame and, using a slotted spoon, place in a colander to drain. Set aside. Using the oil and liquid left from the broccoli, cook the sausage meat over medium heat for 15 minutes, stirring occasionally. Remove from flame using a slotted spoon and place in the colander with the broccoli rabe to drain. In a bowl, mix the sausage and the broccoli rabe until they are blended well. Add the cubed cheese last.

3. Assembly of the Mpanata

When dough is ready, split it into 2 pieces. Briefly knead each piece, roll one into a round shape and place in a greased pan. Spoon the filling over it; add the cubed cheese, making sure to leave the edges free of filling. Knead the other piece of dough and roll it into a round shape. Moisten the edges of the mpanata with water and place on the top of the dough with the filling. Seal well, pinching around all edges. Cut 2 or 3 slits on top to allow the vapor to escape.

4. The Baking

Preheat oven to 400 degrees, bake for 15 minutes, remove from oven and brush top of the mpanata with olive oil. Return to oven for an additional 15 to 20 minutes or until light golden brown.



Have a
flavourful
Holiday!

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