
MASSIMO BOTTURA

TEACHES MODERN ITALIAN COOKING

MASTERCLASS

INTRODUCTION

“Developing a recipe is an intellectual activity, but not only [intellectual];” says Massimo Bottura, head chef at the three-Michelin-star restaurant Osteria Francescana in Modena, Italy. “It takes consciousness, vision, and intuition. It takes faith.”

Massimo tends to look at food—and the world—from a critical point of view, not a nostalgic one. When it comes to Italian cooking, this makes him something of an iconoclast: He garnered attention during Osteria Francescana’s early years because of an inclination for gleefully bucking tradition in favor of experimentation. His time spent working for the renowned chef Alain Ducasse at Le Louis XV in Monte Carlo as well as in a kitchen in New York exposed him to techniques that ruffled feathers when applied to centuries-old Italian recipes. But diners eventually came to appreciate his knack for reengineering the food of the Emilia-Romagna region. This is the skill Massimo sets out to teach you: using your creativity and instincts to evolve classic recipes for yourself, just as he did with the recipes from his youth.

Your palate will be your most important tool as you make your way through recipes like Mediterranean sole baked in a parchment paper packet or a complex ragù for which time is as important an ingredient as the meat or the stock. Don’t rely on the recipes as gospel—instead, do as Massimo does, tasting along the way so you know where you’re headed and how you can improve in the future. Call on your palate constantly to discern the flavors and the feeling of the ingredients in order to stay connected to your tastes and continue to evolve them: Try ingredients in their raw forms as well as when they’re cooked; sample a spoonful of sauce when it first starts cooking and then again an hour later. A cold, bite-size piece of cheese will have different qualities than a cheese that’s finely grated and eaten at room temperature. Myriad factors affect the evolution of an ingredient before it even makes its way onto your plate. In order to coax out the nuance, you must always be tasting. And, as Massimo points out, tasting journeys are nothing if not joyful. “When you’re home, just have fun,” he says. “Go to Eataly. Go to Whole Foods—you have so many places that sell amazing products. Try to evolve your palate...pick a selection of pasta, and taste one or the other or the other. You can make it, with your friends, an amazing evening.”

As you make your way through this cookbook, you'll notice that each recipe falls under one of Massimo's core cooking philosophies: evolving tradition, evoking memories and emotions, zero-waste cooking, drawing inspiration from contemporary art and music, and using ingredients from your own terroir. Bear these approaches in mind as you make each dish, and consider how you might even apply them to the foods you make regularly. Most importantly, remember Massimo's words as you go. "Keep your mental palate in mind," he says. "This is how you can bring creativity into your kitchen and evolve recipes for yourself."

Chef's Table, Courtesy of Netflix

AN EVOLUTION OF PESTO

ZERO-WASTE; EVOLVING TRADITION

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If tradition doesn't respect the ingredients, you must change the recipe.

Adapting and altering dishes based on the quality, seasonality, and freshness of ingredients is one calling card of a great chef. No dish in the Italian culinary canon exemplifies this principle more than pesto. As Massimo points out, pesto is made with very simple ingredients: basil, extra-virgin olive oil, garlic, Parmigiano, and pine nuts. But you don't have to limit yourself to that particular formula. If basil isn't readily available or you don't have any pine nuts, have the confidence to change course, using another herb in place of the basil or replacing the pine nuts with fresh bread crumbs.

For this pesto recipe, Massimo amplifies the herbaceousness of the sauce with mint and thyme (herbs that complement basil) as opposed to rosemary or sage (herbs that can overpower basil). Bread crumbs, used in place of pine nuts, add flavor and body. He urges you to follow your palate, trust your instincts, and, as always, taste. His recipe may not be the most traditional, but you won't miss tradition if you can create a pesto tailor-made to your palate.

PESTO



Fusilli With Basil-Mint Pesto and Toasted Bread Crumbs

Serves 4

This recipe is all about adapting: to the season, to the ingredients, to your tastes. “You already know the technique,” Massimo says, “so add a little bit of each element at a time, taste as you go, and you will find your own flavor.” If you don’t have fusilli, use another pasta like cavatappi or penne rigate—any shape that has lots of surface area for the sauce to cling to.

INGREDIENTS

Kosher salt

14 ounces (400 grams) dried fusilli pasta

1 garlic clove

8¾ ounces (250 grams) extra-virgin olive oil, plus more

3 cups lightly packed basil leaves

1 bunch mint

1 thyme branch

2½ ounces (75 grams) finely grated Parmigiano-Reggiano

3½ ounces (100 grams) freshly ground bread crumbs

1 Cook the pasta. Bring a large pot of water to a boil and season liberally with salt. Add the fusilli to the water and cook, stirring occasionally, until al dente, about eight minutes.

2 Make the pesto. While the pasta is cooking, make the pesto sauce: Halve the garlic clove and rub its cut sides along the inside of your blender. Pour in the olive oil, then add the basil. Strip the mint leaves from the stem, add the leaves to the blender, then add the stem to the boiling pasta water. Remove as many thyme leaves as you can from the branch, add them to the blender, then add the branch to the boiling water as well. Add half the Parmigiano and half the bread crumbs to the blender. With the blender on, slowly stream in ½ cup of ice-cold water, adding more water by the tablespoonful, until the sauce blends smoothly. Add the remaining Parmigiano, season with salt, and blend again until smooth.

3 Toast the rest of the bread crumbs. Heat 1 tablespoon olive oil in a small skillet over medium-high heat. Add the remaining half of the bread crumbs and cook, tossing occasionally, until toasted and crunchy, about four minutes. Transfer the bread crumbs to paper towels to drain and cool.

4 Serve. When the pasta is ready, drain it, reserving at least ½ cup of the cooking water but discarding the herb stems. Return the drained pasta to the pot, and stir in the pesto sauce along with more olive oil (about 1 ounce, or 30 grams) to emulsify the pasta and make it shiny, adding some cooking water by the spoonful to make a creamy, silky sauce. Spoon the pasta into four bowls, and sprinkle the toasted bread crumbs over the top to serve.

Learn More: Reaping What You Sow

When it comes to elevating your cooking, garnishing pasta with a sprig of fresh mint or adding whole leaves of basil to a tomato salad can make all the difference. Instead of buying packaged herbs at the market, consider growing your own indoor or outdoor herb garden at home (which is easier than it sounds). Here are a few tips to get your started:

Decide what you want to grow.

If you rarely use something like cilantro or bay leaves in your cooking, don't bother growing your own supply. Consider which herbs you cook with most often, and grow from there. If this is your first attempt at home growing, you might want to use starter plants (growing plants from seeds can be more cost-effective but also requires an especially green thumb). The herbs below do well indoors and provide bountiful harvests for either a single growing season (annuals), two growing seasons (biennials), or even decades of growing seasons (perennials).



Mint

Perennial

Known for its wild growth rate, mint does best in its own container. The plant grows fine in shade, but it'll grow with more oomph in strong sunlight.



Basil

Annual

Basil thrives in heat and light, so keep it in an especially sunny window or under a grow lamp. When well-tended, basil will keep and grow for several weeks, but a long-term supply will require frequent replanting.



Thyme

Perennial

Plant thyme in fast-draining soil mix and give it a spot on a warm, sunny windowsill. Even though the herb prefers less moisture, you'll still need to keep the surface of the soil moisturized to prevent wilting.



Flat-Leaf Parsley

Biannual

Parsley grows both in full sun and partial shade, but in warmer climates, it does best when shaded in the hot afternoon hours. Be sure to plant it in a deep pot—it can shoot up to two feet tall.



Rosemary

Perennial

If the conditions are right, rosemary grows year-round: Warm temperatures don't deter it in the summer, and it'll thrive in cooler winter temperatures as long as there's access to a strong light source.



Sage

Perennial

Sage grows almost anywhere, but its leaves will be most flavorful if exposed to lots of sun. It's best potted in well-draining soil.



Pick your pots.

Choose your material (clay, fabric, metal, or wood will do the trick), then choose your pot size based on where your garden will be. Smaller pots work best if you're planning to keep your herbs on a windowsill in the kitchen; go a little bigger if you're going to keep them on the porch. Whether your pot fits one plant or three, you'll want to give at least eight inches of space to each plant to avoid overcrowding.



Buy soil.

Be sure to buy potting soil, not garden soil—the former allows for crucial water drainage, while the latter does not. If you're buying blossoming plants from a garden center, check and see if someone will pot them for you, and you may be able to avoid buying soil altogether.



Tend and harvest.

Growing a robust garden requires attention to your bounty. Be cognizant of how much light your plants are getting, and harvest them often to encourage continued growth. Ask the experts at your gardening center if the plants you're planning to grow have any special soil, light, or nutrient needs.

TORTELLINI IN RICH BROTH OR PARMIGIANO CREAM

EVOLVING TRADITION; EVOKING MEMORIES AND EMOTIONS

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This is the essence of Emilia-Romagna. This is tradition.

Pureness, simplicity, and tradition are hallmarks of Massimo’s cooking, and no dish combines these tenets better for him than the traditional pasta of Emilia-Romagna: tortellini. But before the tortellini can be made, you must first learn to make the two kinds of sauces—rich broth and a Parmigiano cream—in which the pasta is most often served. As Massimo notes, the broth is the perfect example of pureness: It should taste cleanly of chicken with accents of charred onion, celery, bay leaves, and Parmigiano-Reggiano in the form of its rind. It is the essence of the savory taste known as umami (a “fifth taste” that encapsulates salty, meaty flavors like steak, mushroom, anchovy, and aged cheese), and Massimo implores you to build flavor this way and not just with salt, which is utilized here in small amounts to tweak the flavor of the broth, not dominate it. In the richer variation, the tortellini is dressed in a simple, velvety sauce made with Parmigiano-Reggiano and heavy cream.

With his tortellini, Massimo sticks to tried-and-true techniques: When something is already perfect, he argues, there’s no need to upend tradition. When the ingredients—in this case, real Parmigiano-Reggiano, Prosciutto di Parma, fresh pork—are so good, you don’t want to mask their flavor, so keep it simple and treat each ingredient with care. The filling he uses here is almost more important than the pasta because it embodies all the tastes, complexities, and “ideas” of Emilia-Romagna. As Massimo says, “You can fill the tortellini with Peking duck [or anything else] and have an amazing result. But for us, in Modena, [it] is a reflection of a mixture of [the traditional] flavors from the area.”

TORTELLINI IN RICH BROTH OR PARMIGIANO CREAM



Tortellini in Rich Broth or Parmigiano Cream

Serves 8

You'll need a meat grinder to make the filling for these tortellini. If you have a stand mixer, you can use the meat grinder attachment, or you can use a stand-alone meat grinder. The broth can be made up to a month in advance and frozen until you're ready to use it; if yours is a palate that prefers cream sauces, you'll find the recipe for the Parmigiano cream below.

INGREDIENTS FOR THE TORTELLINI

- 1 pound and 5 ounces (600 grams) all-purpose flour, divided, plus more for rolling**
- 2 whole eggs, plus 2 egg yolks**
- 3½ ounces (100 grams) beef shoulder, ground (you can substitute with veal)**
- 3½ ounces (100 grams) pork shoulder, ground**
- 3½ ounces (100 grams) mortadella, ground**
- 3½ ounces (100 grams) prosciutto, ground**
- 5¼ ounces (150 grams) freshly grated Parmigiano-Reggiano**
- Freshly grated nutmeg to taste (optional)**

INGREDIENTS FOR THE BROTH

- 1 medium yellow onion, halved**
- 1 whole chicken (3 to 4 pounds, or 1¼ to 1¾ kilograms), preferably free-range and organic**
- 1 beef short rib (*la costola* in Italian)**
- 2 medium carrots, peeled**
- 2 medium celery stalks, trimmed**
- 2 fresh bay leaves**
- 1 leftover rind Parmigiano-Reggiano**
- 1 teaspoon whole black peppercorns**
- Flaky sea salt**

INGREDIENTS FOR THE PARMIGIANO CREAM SAUCE

- 10½ ounces (300 grams) heavy cream**
- 3½ ounces (100 grams) Parmigiano-Reggiano**

1 Blacken the onions. Heat a small skillet over high heat. Place the onion halves, cut side down, in the skillet and cook, undisturbed, until blackened on the bottom, about 15 minutes. Remove the skillet from the heat, and place the onion halves in a large stockpot.

2 Prepare the chicken. If using a free-range chicken, cut off its feet and head and discard. Remove the neck, and place it inside the cavity of the chicken. Wave a torch over the skin to remove any leftover feathers. Place the chicken in the stockpot with the onions. Add the beef rib, carrots, celery, bay leaves, and Parmigiano rind. Place half of the peppercorns on your cutting board and crush lightly with the bottom of a can to crack open. Add the cracked and whole peppercorns to the stockpot along with enough cold water to cover all the ingredients well.

3 Make the broth. Place the stockpot over high heat and bring to a boil. Reduce the heat to maintain a gentle simmer, and cook until reduced by a third, up to six hours (or until the vegetables lose their flavor). Every 10 to 15 minutes, use a spoon to skim off and discard any impurities from the surface of the bubbling broth. When the broth is ready, remove it from the heat. Remove and discard the meat and large vegetables with tongs (you can use the chicken meat to make chicken salad, sandwiches, or for chicken noodle soup, etc.). Using a ladle, spoon the broth slowly through a *chinois*, or fine sieve, into another saucepan. Taste the broth, and season lightly with some salt. Serve immediately or pour the broth into storage containers, letting it cool to room temperature before putting it into the freezer. It will keep for up to three months. Any frozen stock that you don't use for this recipe can be used to make soups, as flavorful liquid in a meatloaf, or even to enrich the gravy for your Thanksgiving turkey.

4 Make the tortellini dough. You'll have to do this in two batches. For the first batch, mound about 9 ounces (250 grams) of the flour on a clean work surface, and form a well in the center. Add the eggs and yolks, and use a fork to stir them together. While stirring, slowly start incorporating some flour from the wall of the well, working little by little until you're able to add all the flour and form a dough. Add the remaining 1½ ounces (50 grams) flour, and continue kneading until the dough is firm and smooth, about 10 minutes. Form the dough into a ball, and set it aside on your work surface or on a baking sheet. Drape a kitchen towel or sheet of plastic wrap over the top to keep the surface of the dough from drying out while the dough rests. Let rest for 30 minutes. Make the second batch of dough following these same steps.

5 Make the tortellini filling. While the dough rests, heat a large skillet over medium heat. Add the beef and pork, and cook, stirring to break up any large pieces, until no longer pink. Remove the meat from the skillet, leaving behind as much

fat as possible, and transfer the meat to a paper towel-lined baking sheet to let it drain. Refrigerate the meat on the baking sheet until firm, then add the mortadella and prosciutto, and pass all the meats through a meat grinder (you can use the attachment that comes with your stand mixer or a freestanding meat grinder, or take the meat to your local butcher shop and have them grind it for you). Once ground, stir in the Parmigiano, and season lightly with nutmeg if desired. Use your hands to combine the filling ingredients until smooth.

6 Put the tortellini together. Uncover the dough and place it on a lightly floured work surface. Using a rolling pin, flatten the dough, rolling and stretching it in every direction, until it's $\frac{1}{16}$ -inch thick. Using a pizza cutter or chef's knife (or an expandable cutter, if you have one), cut the dough in one direction into $1\frac{1}{2}$ inches ($3\frac{1}{2}$ centimeters) strips, then turn the cutter 90 degrees and cut again to form squares. Pinch off a marble-sized piece of filling, and place it in the center of 1 dough square. Fold the square in half on the diagonal so that one corner touches its opposite corner. Press lightly to seal all of the edges, forming a triangular pocket with the filling in the center. Place the center of the long side of the triangle on the tip of your finger. Fold the other two corners around your finger, until they meet, then pinch or press to form a tiny loop. Continue this process to make as many tortellini as you can. At this point, you can place the tortellini in a single layer on a rimmed baking sheet and refrigerate for up to one day.

7 Cook the tortellini. When you're ready to cook the tortellini, bring a medium saucepan of broth to a boil. Add enough tortellini as will fit with plenty of room to move around and cook, stirring occasionally, until they float to the surface. As soon as they float to the surface, they're ready. Using a spider or slotted spoon, lift the tortellini from the broth and transfer to serving bowls. Use a ladle to spoon the hot broth over the tortellini, enough to just cover it, and serve.

Parmigiano Cream Variation

In a wide skillet or saucepan, bring the cream to a simmer. Add the Parmigiano-Reggiano and cook, stirring continuously, until the cream reduces slightly and thickens. Add as many cooked tortellini as will fit in the pan and cook, tossing with the sauce, until warmed through. Transfer the tortellini and cream sauce to a bowl to serve.

Dairy-Sensitive Cream Sauce

Place 7 ounces (200 grams) of grated Parmigiano-Reggiano in a blender. Bring $10\frac{1}{2}$ ounces (300 grams) of water to a boil, then pour over the cheese. Blend on high for two minutes. Pour the sauce in a pan and warm gently; do not allow it to come to a boil, otherwise the mixture will separate.

Learn More: A Pound of Cure

Prosciutto di Parma is the gold standard of cured hams, not just in Italy, but in the world. Made through a process of salting, rinsing, and then air-drying hind pork legs for up to 18 months, the resulting meat is sweet-smelling and savory. In Parma, where the production of prosciutto is regulated and given a PDO (Protected Designation of Origin) status, the hams are considered the best because they often feed the pigs the whey from Parmigiano-Reggiano production, which in turn gives their meat a richer taste.

While Prosciutto di Parma can be expensive, it's worth it to seek out the real thing, as other cured hams that are simply labeled "prosciutto" can contain chemicals that speed up the curing process and give the hams an unnatural pink hue.

EMILIA BURGER

USING INGREDIENTS FROM YOUR OWN TERROIR

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I didn't leave this recipe to anyone, I'm just sharing it with you right now because I love you. That's why I'm sharing this recipe with you.

For Massimo, the hamburger is an ideal candidate for culinary experimentation: All of its elements—meat, cheese, bread, condiments—can be easily amended based on what's locally available. In his home region of Emilia-Romagna, he makes the patty out of Italian beef mixed with gelatin from cotechino (a local pork sausage) and Parmigiano-Reggiano. For condiments, he puts an Italian spin on American standards, making a mayonnaise flavored with balsamic vinegar and an herb sauce based on Italian salsa verde.

You can apply Massimo's principles to your own burger no matter where you live—the possibilities are endless if you use the ingredients that are hyper-local or highly representative of your corner of the world. If you live in the Pacific Northwest, you might make a salmon burger topped with red wine sauce and local mushrooms. In the American South, you might make a venison burger topped with local okra relish and sorghum-sweetened mustard. In Japan, you might dress a Kobe beef patty with miso and soy sauce. Or in China, the patty could simply be pork seasoned with a blend of local spices.

Whether it's a burger or another dish, chances are the food you make will turn out differently each time because the quality of the ingredients is in constant flux. Be sure to taste often throughout the cooking process so you know where to go. No matter what quantity you are making, keep your flavorings proportional, so you don't end up with a result that's overseasoned or bland.

EMILIA BURGER



Emilia Burger

Serves 16

This recipe is far more involved than your typical diner-style burger, but it's well worth the effort. Sourcing quality ingredients and taking time to prepare them correctly will set you up for success when it comes time to eat. If you can't find cotechino, buy the best local sausage you can find (ask your butcher for one with high gelatin content). If there is no Lambrusco available in which to steam it, use a local wine, beer, or cider that pairs well with the flavor of the sausage. Prepare the condiments and meat ahead of time so that everything is ready once the patties are cooked.

INGREDIENTS FOR THE COTECHINO GELATIN

Lambrusco wine (or other acidic local wine)

1 cotechino sausage (about 1 pound and 2 ounces, or 500 grams, or other high-gelatin pork sausage)

INGREDIENTS FOR THE BURGERS

2¼ pounds (1 kilogram) dry-aged ground beef

10½ ounces (300 grams) freshly grated Parmigiano-Reggiano, preferably aged 24 months

1 ounce (30 grams) cotechino gelatin

Extra-virgin olive oil

Balsamic mayonnaise (recipe below)

Salsa verde (recipe below)

16 mini brioche buns, split in half

1 Extract the gelatin. Pour the wine into the bottom of a large steamer pot (enough to come 1 inch up the side), then put the sausage in the steaming tray. (You can also use a regular saucepan and steamer basket.) Cover the pot with the lid, and bring the wine to a simmer over medium-low heat. Steam the sausage in the wine until all of its fat and gelatin have separated and melted into the wine, about 30 minutes. Remove the steamer basket and sausage, and pour the liquid into a tall storage container (like a glass jar). Let the liquid cool to room temperature, then refrigerate until well-chilled, at least four hours.

During refrigeration, the liquid will separate into three sections: the fat on the top, the gelatin in the middle, and the liquid (wine) on the bottom. Once chilled, spoon the fat from the top and save it for another use (you can use it like you would chicken fat or duck fat: sauté potatoes, enrich stewed greens, or toss with fresh pasta and lots of Parmigiano-Reggiano). Similarly, spoon off the gelatin and place it in another bowl. Discard the remaining liquid. Refrigerate or freeze the gelatin for up to three months.

2 Make the burger patties. Place the ground beef in a large bowl, pour in the gelatin, and mix the two with your hands until evenly combined. Add the Parmigiano, and continue mixing until evenly combined again. Cover the bowl with plastic wrap, and let the meat rest in the refrigerator for at least one hour.

3 Cook the burgers. Uncover the burger mixture, and form it into $\frac{3}{4}$ inch–thick (2 centimeter–thick) patties that are the same diameter as your brioche buns. Place the patties on a plate as you make them. Heat a medium nonstick skillet over medium-high heat. Pour a little olive oil on a folded piece of paper towel and use it to lightly grease the bottom of the hot skillet. Add two to four patties, and cook on one side until seared and well-browned. Flip the patties over, and cook until well-browned on the opposite side. Then stack the patties together, and using your fingers to keep them together, turn the patty cylinder on its side and sear the patties, turning them every 20 to 30 seconds, so they brown all around their edges. Transfer the patties to a plate and let rest for at least five minutes or while you cook the remaining patties.

4 Toast and build. Once all the patties are cooked (or working as you cook each patty), place the cut sides of the buns in the skillet and cook, undisturbed, until golden brown and toasted on the bottoms. Place a bottom bun, cut side up, on a plate, and top with a dollop of the salsa verde. Place a cooked patty over the salsa, then top the patty with a dollop of the balsamic mayonnaise. Cover with the top bun, and serve immediately. Repeat with the remaining patties, buns, and condiments.

Balsamic Mayonnaise

INGREDIENTS

- 1 whole egg**
- 2½ ounces (75 grams) aged balsamic vinegar**
- 2 cups (500 milliliters) grapeseed oil**
- Flaky sea salt**

Combine the egg and balsamic vinegar in a blender, and process on low speed until smooth. While blending, slowly drizzle in a few drops of grapeseed oil until the mayonnaise begins to emulsify, then continue slowly pouring the oil in a thin stream until it is all added. The mayonnaise should be smooth and shiny. Season the mayonnaise with salt, and add more vinegar if you'd like. (Alternatively, you can blend the mayonnaise with an immersion blender in a tall cup, as Massimo does.) Transfer the mayonnaise to a storage container, and refrigerate until ready to use. It will keep for up to one day.

Salsa Verde

INGREDIENTS

- 2 cups flat-leaf parsley leaves**
- 1¾ ounces (50 grams) dried bread crumbs, preferably homemade**
- ¼ ounce (10 grams) capers, rinsed**
- ⅛ ounce (2 grams) olive oil–packed anchovies, drained**
- 4 teaspoons (20 milliliters) white wine vinegar**
- 1¼ cups (300 milliliters) extra-virgin olive oil**

Combine the parsley, bread crumbs, capers, anchovies, vinegar, and olive oil in a blender. Add ¼ ounce (10 grams) of ice-cold water. Process until smooth and thickened to the same consistency as the mayonnaise. Transfer the salsa verde to a storage container, and refrigerate until ready to use. It will keep for up to one day.

Learn More: Empire of the Bun

Regardless of where you are in the world, chances are that the word *hamburger* is synonymous with *fast food*. The ubiquitous dish originated in the United States in the early 20th century and quickly became not just a classic meal but an iconic representation of American food, fast food, and the food industry around the globe.

Hamburgers are quite literally more American than apple pie (the latter was actually invented in England, in case you were wondering). Popularized by Walter Anderson at his White Castle restaurant, which started in Wichita, Kansas, in 1921, the hamburger—beef patty plus soft bun—is a by-product of the era in which it was born: The industrial cattle industry made beef cheap. Factory-made, shelf-stable condiments found their way into American homes, along with iceberg lettuce, onions, and tomatoes—humble, populist ingredients that typified the industrial-farming boom of the post-World War II era. In 1948, Richard and Maurice McDonald retooled their eponymous San Bernardino-based barbecue restaurant into the quick-service burger concept we all know as McDonald's today, catapulting the hamburger's fame to new heights. McDonald's has since expanded to more than 37,000 restaurants worldwide and is the most valuable fast-food brand in the world.

No matter what part of the world they're cooked up and served in, hamburgers have proved to be irresistible fare, and it's easy to see why: They're flavor-rich sandwiches that everyone can rally behind (and with the advent of the Impossible burger, even vegetarians can experience the hamburger's wonder). From smashburgers to thick cuts, ones served simply with cheddar or dressed up with truffle butter, burgers are a food that's endlessly customizable. So go crazy.

PASSATELLI WITH BROTH OF EVERYTHING (*BRODO DI TUTTO*)

ZERO-WASTE; EVOLVING TRADITION; EVOKING MEMORIES AND EMOTIONS

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Cook what you have in the refrigerator—you're gonna eat seasonal, you're gonna save money, and you're not gonna waste anything.

One of Massimo's passions is educating everyone about the importance of zero-waste cooking, or making use of ingredients that many would simply throw away. Everything, even what most people perceive as useless scraps, can be given a second life: Taking an onion skin and pairing it with other complementary flavors to make a stock is the ultimate in compassionate cooking. This “broth of everything” extracts the “mood” from scraps and vegetables and has many applications; it's the base for this *passatelli*, or pasta made with bread crumbs from stale bread.

In this dish Massimo demonstrates how to draw inspiration from techniques and flavors that have been around for generations and take them in a new direction by using your palate. He makes the broth with vegetable scraps, intensifying its umami characteristics (a “fifth taste” that encapsulates salty, meaty flavors like steak, mushroom, anchovy, and aged cheese), and he uses finely ground stale bread to make the dough for the pasta, also flavored with intense dried and powdered mushrooms and Parmigiano-Reggiano. But you should feel free to experiment, like Massimo's daughter does in her pizza crust version of *passatelli*. Use the flavors that inspire you in the broth and pasta, but be wise: If you don't end up with a harmonious flavor, have the confidence and wisdom to take a step back, reevaluate what went wrong, and try again. By using your palate to constantly tweak what you're making, you'll learn how to use every part of your ingredients to create something wholly your own.

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PASSATELLI WITH BROTH OF EVERYTHING



Passatelli With Broth of Everything (*Brodo di Tutto*)

Serves 8

Homemade bread crumbs work best here, since the dish is meant to give leftover bread new life. Ideally you'd make them from stale bread you have at home (try sourdough or another rustic country bread). If you have to use store-bought crumbs, though, that's okay. For the stock, use vegetable scraps that you have lying around but that complement one another and the dish as a whole. Massimo pairs parsnips and celery root with potato and onion skins for an autumnal broth; for a spring version, try fava bean pods, spring onion scraps, and the stems of soft, grassy herbs like parsley, dill, or basil. And if you want to make the *passatelli* but don't have time to make this broth, you can use the chicken broth from the Tortellini in Rich Broth recipe (see page 9) or store-bought broth.

INGREDIENTS FOR THE VEGETARIAN BROTH

2 large yellow onions, scrubbed clean
6 large russet potatoes, scrubbed clean
4 large parsnips, scrubbed clean
1 celery root, scrubbed clean
6 thyme sprigs
Flaky sea salt

INGREDIENTS FOR THE BREAD CRUMB PASTA

2¼ pounds (1 kilogram) finely ground bread crumbs
5¼ ounces (150 grams) freshly grated Parmigiano-Reggiano
1¾ ounces (50 grams) dried mushroom powder (see below)
Flaky sea salt
3 whole eggs

1 Prepare the vegetables for the broth. Heat the oven to 150°F (65°C). Peel the onion and remove its ends; reserve the peeled onion for another use. Place the onion skins on a rimmed baking sheet. Peel the potatoes and place the peelings on the baking sheet with the onion skins; reserve the peeled potatoes for another use—or to make the roasted potato sauce used in the recipe for “Spin-Painted” Beet With Colorful Sauces (see page 26). Roughly chop the parsnips and celery root and add to the sheet with the skins. Place in the oven and cook at least eight hours or overnight to dehydrate them.

2 Make the vegetarian broth. The next morning, increase the oven temperature to 350°F (180°C) and cook the vegetables and skins until caramelized, about 30 minutes. Remove the baking sheet from the oven and transfer all the vegetables and skins to a large saucepan. Fill the pan three-quarters of the way with cold water (about 1½ gallons, or 6 liters), add the thyme sprigs, and bring to a boil over high heat. Reduce the heat to maintain a bare simmer (a bubble should break the surface once every three seconds or so), and cook for six hours. When finished cooking, pour the broth through a *chinois*, or fine sieve, and into another saucepan. Discard the vegetables. Season the broth with salt. Reserve the broth to use now or pour into storage containers. Refrigerate or freeze for up to one month.

4 Make the pasta. In a large bowl, mix together the bread crumbs, Parmigiano, mushroom powder, and a pinch of salt. Add the eggs, and mix with one hand until the dough comes together. Transfer the dough to a work surface and knead until smooth, about three minutes. Shape the dough into a ball, and place it on the corner of your work surface or baking sheet. Drape a kitchen towel or sheet of plastic wrap over the top to keep the dough from drying out while it rests, about 15 to 20 minutes.

5 Cook the pasta. When you're ready to cook the pasta, return the broth to a simmer over medium-high heat. Remove fist-size balls of dough and place in a potato ricer fitted with the plate of the biggest holes. Working over the simmering broth, press the dough through the holes until about 4 inches (10 centimeters) in length, then use a knife to cut flush with the bottom of the ricer, severing the noodles and letting them fall into the broth. (If there is any dough that extrudes up the side of the ricer in a thin sheet, remove it and tear it into rough pieces, then add those bits to the broth as well.) Cook the noodles, stirring gently, until they float to the top. Once they float, they're ready.

6 Serve. Using a spider or slotted spoon, lift the noodles from the broth and transfer to serving bowls. Use a ladle to spoon the warm broth over the noodles, and serve while hot.

Dried Mushroom Powder

You can buy dried mushroom powder in gourmet supermarkets or pulverize store-bought dried mushrooms into a fine powder using a blender or coffee/spice grinder at home. If you want to make your own powder from fresh mushrooms, spread your mushrooms out on a rimmed baking sheet and dehydrate in a 140°F (60°C) oven until dried and brittle, about eight hours. Let the mushrooms cool completely, then pulverize to a fine powder. Transfer the powder to a storage container, and store at room temperature for up to two months.

Learn More: One Plate at a Time

It was during Expo Milan 2015, whose theme was “Feeding the Planet, Energy for Life,” that Massimo first introduced a tangible vision for cooking sustainably and eliminating food waste: He called it Refettorio Ambrosiano, a de facto dining room inside of an abandoned theater in Milan’s low-income Greco neighborhood. (The word *refettorio* comes from the Latin *reficere*, meaning to remake or restore.) Using more than 15 tons of food salvaged from the exposition, Massimo—along with more than 65 internationally renowned chefs, including Eleven Madison Park’s Daniel Humm and El Celler de Can Roca’s Joan Roca—made thousands of meals that went to the city’s poor, homeless, and otherwise underserved. It was nothing short of revolutionary.

Refettorio Ambrosiano led to [Food for Soul](#), the nonprofit Massimo founded with his wife, Lara Gilmore, in 2016. Its mission? Finding a use for the 1.3 billion tons of food wasted worldwide each year, a topic that’s also tackled in Massimo’s cookbook [Bread Is Gold](#). Massimo and Lara have used Food for Soul to front several more refettorios, including Refettorio Gastromotiva (Rio de Janeiro), Refettorio Felix (London), Refettorio Paris (Paris), and two others in Modena and Bologna. Each community kitchen occupies a formerly dilapidated space in its respective city. As he is wont to do, Massimo has brought his love for culture into each of these locations—all have benefitted from the sharp eye of designers and artists who contribute tablescapes and installations. The celebrity-chef concept has carried over from Milan, too: Since Refettorio Ambrosiano’s premiere, more than 130 celebrated chefs have cooked at the various locations, all of whom use their expertise to craft gourmet dishes from proteins nearing their expiration dates and bruised or misshapen (aka “ugly”) produce. When taken as a whole, the elements of each refettorio are meant to revolutionize the idea of a soup kitchen—an idea, Massimo told *T* magazine in 2016, that is “going to change the dignity of the people.”

In 2017, the Rockefeller Foundation awarded Food for Soul a \$500,000 grant to fight food insecurity in American cities (it’s estimated that Americans alone throw out something like \$160 billion worth of that “ugly” food annually). Massimo has set Los Angeles, New York, Detroit, New Orleans, and Miami in his sights, with his goal being to open refettorio projects in two of those locations by the end of 2019. “Everything is possible,” he told NPR about his refettorios in 2016. “If you can dream, you can make it.”

“SPIN-PAINTED” BEET

DRAWING INSPIRATION FROM CONTEMPORARY ART AND MUSIC

“

Cooking is poetry and an act of love, not something that you have to do. You do it if you love it, so make it as pleasurable to make as it is to eat.

Creating a vegetarian meal with all the smoky, caramelized flavors of a meat dish takes a little patience and the right techniques. Massimo brings out the umami flavor (a “fifth taste” that encapsulates salty, meaty flavors like steak, mushroom, anchovy, and aged cheese) of the beets here by adding layer after layer of various sauces, each bringing a slightly different element to the dish: Roasted red and yellow pepper sauces offer up acidity and sweetness as well as vibrant color; a potato-based sauce adds richness and starch (the rosemary and garlic powders lend a roasted flavor despite the potatoes being boiled); a green “chlorophyll” sauce made with parsley and other fresh herbs brings a bright minerality and fresh verdance to the palate.

All these flavors are plated in a manner reminiscent of one of Massimo’s favorite artists, Damien Hirst, famous for his spin table–made paintings. Here you will splash down each of the sauces in whatever way strikes you, creating controlled chaos on the plate with all the right flavors to accent the beet at its center. The sauces in this recipe can be used to enhance the savory quality of virtually any vegetable, particularly other hearty winter roots, or even other meats and fish.

“SPIN-PAINTED” BEET



Beautiful, Psychedelic, Spin-Painted Beet, not Flame-Grilled

Serves 8

In the time it takes for your beets to roast, you can easily make all of the supporting sauces (roast the peppers first so you can make their respective sauces while the beets are monopolizing the oven). If you prefer, you can make all the sauces up to a day ahead of serving and rewarm all but the herb sauce before plating. Should you opt to make the ancillary elements—smoked olive oil, rosemary powder, and garlic powder—rather than buy them, prepare them up to a week in advance, which will make day-of cooking easier.

INGREDIENTS FOR THE RED AND YELLOW PEPPER SAUCES

- 3 red bell peppers**
- 3 yellow bell peppers**
- 2½ cups (600 milliliters) apple cider vinegar, divided in two**
- Pinch of granulated sugar**
- 1 ounce (30 grams) extra-virgin olive oil (for use with the red pepper sauce only), plus more**
- 1 ounce (30 grams) smoked olive oil (see below; for use with the yellow pepper sauce only)**

INGREDIENTS FOR THE BEETS

- 8 large beets, scrubbed clean**
- Flaky sea salt**
- Extra-virgin olive oil**
- Smoked olive oil (recipe below)**
- Aged balsamic vinegar**
- Rosemary blossoms or other small edible flowers**

INGREDIENTS FOR THE “ROASTED” POTATO SAUCE

- 6 medium starchy potatoes**
- Flaky sea salt**
- 4¼ cups (1 liter) whole milk**
- Pinch of finely ground dried rosemary (recipe below)**
- Pinch of homemade garlic powder (recipe below)**
- Extra-virgin olive oil**

INGREDIENTS FOR THE HERB “CHLOROPHYLL” SAUCE

4 cups mixed green herbs (mostly flat-leaf parsley mixed with mint, basil, thyme, or other mild, tender herbs, such as helichrysum and melissa, if available)

Extra-virgin olive oil

Flaky sea salt

1 Roast the red and yellow peppers. Heat the oven to 350°F (180°C). Place the red and yellow peppers on a Silpat- or parchment paper-lined rimmed baking sheet, and roast until their skins are blackened all over, about 40 minutes. Remove the baking sheet from the oven, and increase the oven temperature to 400°F (200°C). Use tongs to transfer the peppers to a large bowl. Cover the bowl with plastic wrap, and let the peppers steam, five to ten minutes.

2 Roast the beets. While the peppers steam, place each beet in a large square of foil, sprinkle with a pinch of salt, and drizzle with some olive oil. Wrap each beet tightly in the foil, then place the beets in the oven, and roast for two hours.

3 Prepare the pepper sauces. Uncover the bowl of peppers. Use your fingers to peel off and discard the skins and the stems. Rinse the peeled peppers in a bowl of water to remove all the seeds. Transfer the red peppers to a cutting board, and set the yellow peppers aside in a bowl. Finely chop the red peppers, and transfer them to a medium skillet. Pour half the vinegar over the peppers, season with a pinch of sugar, and bring to a simmer over medium heat. Cook, stirring and shaking the pan often, until all the vinegar just evaporates. Scrape the peppers into a blender, and process until smooth. Add the olive oil and some cold water until the sauce is thick but still thin enough to pour, like syrup. Pass the sauce through a *chinois*, or fine sieve, and discard the solids. Scrape the red pepper sauce into a storage container, and refrigerate for up to one day. Repeat the process with the yellow peppers, the remaining vinegar, another pinch of sugar, the smoked olive oil, and more cold water.

4 Make the “roasted” potato sauce. Place the potatoes in a large saucepan and cover with cold water by 1 inch, and season the water with a pinch of salt. Bring to a boil over high heat, and cook until soft enough that the potatoes yield when pressed with the underside of a fork (don’t prick the potatoes with the fork). Drain the potatoes, then let cool until easy enough to handle. When cooled, peel the potatoes (save the peels for making the vegetarian broth in the recipe for *Passatelli With Broth of Everything* on page 21). Pass the potatoes through a potato ricer

set over a saucepan, and warm the milk in a separate pan. Add the warm milk to the potatoes, along with the dried rosemary and garlic powder, and stir until smooth. Drizzle in some olive oil to taste. Scrape the potato mixture into a blender, and process until smooth, adding spoonfuls of water to thin the sauce until it's the consistency of syrup. Season with salt and more olive oil and rosemary to taste. Scrape the potato sauce into a storage container, and refrigerate for up to one day.

5 Make the herb “chlorophyll” sauce. Bring a large saucepan of water to a boil. Prepare a bowl of ice-water on the side. Add the herbs to the boiling water, cook for five seconds, then use a spider or slotted spoon to remove the herbs and transfer immediately to the ice water, stirring to chill the herbs thoroughly. Remove the herbs from the ice water, squeezing them lightly to remove excess water, and transfer to a blender. Add the olive oil and a pinch of salt, along with enough ice water to process the sauce until loose and the herbs are finely chopped, but not super smooth. Pass the sauce through a *chinois*, or fine sieve, and discard the solids. Scrape the herb sauce into a storage container and refrigerate for up to one day.

6 Prepare the beets. Remove the beets from the oven, unwrap from the foil, and let cool slightly. Transfer the beets to a cutting board, and cut off each end so you have a roughly 1 inch–thick (3 centimeter–thick) disk from the center. Using a 3 inch–diameter (8 centimeter–diameter) round cutter, cut out the center of the beet disk; reserve all the scraps for salads, snacking, or another use. Drizzle each beet round with some of the smoked olive oil, and rub it evenly over the top with your finger or a pastry brush. Sprinkle each with a pinch of salt.

7 Spin-paint and plate. When you're ready to plate the dish, rewarm both pepper sauces and the potato sauce in separate small saucepans; leave the herb sauce chilled. Splash about 5 small spoonfuls of each the yellow pepper sauce, red pepper sauce, potato sauce, and herb sauce around the plate, making as much of a mess as you'd like. Place the beet round in the center of the plate, then drizzle the balsamic vinegar around and all over the beet. Decorate the plate with 3 to 4 small rosemary blossoms to serve.

Smoked Olive Oil

You can buy smoked olive oils in gourmet grocery stores or you can make your own. Pour as much extra-virgin olive oil as you'd like into a bowl. Your barbecue may have a smoking tray; if not, fashion a tray out of aluminum foil and place it on the grill. Using tongs, place a hot piece of charcoal inside the tray, then place some wood chips directly on top of the charcoal. The wood will begin to smoke without catching fire. Place the bowl of olive oil in the tray next to the smoking wood chips, and close the top of the barbecue. Let the oil sit until it has absorbed your desired level of smoked flavor and aroma (take care to not let it overheat). Once smoked, carefully remove the bowl of oil from the grill and decant it into a glass bottle. Store the oil in a dark place at room temperature for up to three months.

Dried Rosemary Powder

You can buy dried rosemary powder in gourmet grocery stores or you can make your own. Spread fresh rosemary leaves on a parchment paper-lined baking sheet, and cook in a 100°F (40°C) oven until the leaves are dry and brittle, about four hours. Remove the baking sheet from the oven, and let the leaves cool completely. Pulverize the rosemary leaves in a blender or spice/coffee grinder until finely ground. Transfer the powder to an airtight container, and store for up to two months.

Garlic Powder

You can buy high-quality garlic powder in gourmet grocery stores or you can make your own. Place the unpeeled cloves from 3 heads of garlic in a small saucepan, cover with cold milk, then bring to a boil; cook for one minute. Using a spider or slotted spoon, remove the garlic from the milk, and discard the milk. Repeat blanching the garlic cloves in a new batch of milk two more times. After the final blanching, let the garlic cloves cool until easy enough to handle, then peel off and discard the skins. Transfer the garlic to a blender, and process until very smooth. Using a rubber spatula, spread the garlic purée on a Silpat- or parchment paper-lined baking sheet until it's $\frac{1}{16}$ inch thick (2 millimeters thick), and cook in a 140°F (60°C) oven until the purée is dry and brittle, at least eight hours or overnight. Remove the baking sheet from the oven, and let the paste cool completely. Pulverize the paste in a blender or spice/coffee grinder until finely ground. Transfer the powder to an airtight container, and store for up to two months.

SOGLIOLA AL CARTOCCIO (MEDITERRANEAN-STYLE SOLE)

DRAWING INSPIRATION FROM CONTEMPORARY ART AND MUSIC

“

I grew up eating sole...it's a very light fish, but beautiful and with an amazing taste. Very delicate.

Sometimes the most delicious dish can be the simplest one, like Massimo's sole in a parchment paper packet. This particular preparation reminds him of the Mediterranean flavors he grew up with. The key to a recipe that relies on as few elements as this one is using the freshest ingredients possible. You need acidity from lemon to stimulate the whole palate, sweetness from the tomato, and black olives to give the fish weight. It's a classic meal that's best enjoyed in proportion, meaning you get a bit of lemon, tomato, olive, and caper with each bite.

“Because you're using such classic Mediterranean flavors, this dish is exactly what you expect when you are having a vacation in Sorrento or Palermo,” Massimo says. “It's the pure flavor of the most amazing ingredients. The olive that is cooked is the first thing you taste, the caper is the last one. The lemon zest touches your palate, but not in an aggressive way. And the tomato gives a sweet freshness. This is the way you bring tradition into the future.”

This simple, delicious sole *en papillote* is one inspiration behind the Mediterranean Sole dish often served at Osteria Francescana, with the restaurant-style version also paying homage to the Italian artist and abstract painter Alberto Burri. Massimo shares the story behind the preparation on his menu in the bonus chapter (see page 57).

SOGLIOLA AL CARTOCCIO



Sogliola al Cartoccio (Mediterranean-Style Sole)

Serves 1 to 2

Massimo uses lemons from Sorrento and sweet cherry tomatoes from Vesuvia in this dish, which are both very specific to their respective regions. But stateside substitutions abound: If you need an alternative for the citrus, Meyer lemons work well, but so do organic traditional lemons; just be sure to cut them paper-thin so the pith doesn't overpower the fish. As for the tomatoes, any small cherry tomato from your local farmers' market or grocery store will work; these varieties always have the requisite sweetness needed for this dish. Gaeta olives packed in brine are quite common in most grocery stores, although if you come across fresh ones in your grocery store's olive bar, opt for those instead. (In a pinch, any other small, briny black olive should suffice.) You can prepare the fish packets up to an hour in advance and keep them refrigerated until ready to bake off in the oven.

INGREDIENTS

1 whole fillet sole or other thin, firm-fleshed white fish, such as turbot, sea bass, or snapper

Flaky sea salt

5 paper-thin slices of lemon, preferably organic, seeds removed

6 cherry or grape tomatoes, halved

1¾ ounces (50 grams) Gaeta olives, or other small black Italian olives, pitted

⅛ ounce (5 grams) capers, rinsed

1 tablespoon minced flat-leaf parsley

Extra-virgin olive oil

1 whole egg, lightly beaten, for egg wash

1 Season and prepare the sole. Heat the oven to 350°F (180°C). On a cutting board, cut the sole fillet in half crosswise. Season the flesh-side of the fillet with salt, then stack the smaller half on top of the large half.

2 Create and fill the paper packets. Line a rimmed baking sheet with parchment paper, and place the stacked fillets in the center. Arrange the lemon slices evenly over the top of the fillet, then scatter the tomato halves, olives, capers, and parsley evenly over the fish. Drizzle everything lightly with olive oil.

3 Seal the paper packets. Brush the edge of the parchment paper lightly with the egg wash, then place another sheet of parchment paper over the fish so that it lines up with the first sheet. Starting at one corner, fold the edge of the sheets of paper up and over a few times to form a folded barrier, then continue moving along the edge and folding in the same way until the fish is fully encapsulated.

4 Bake the fish. Place the baking sheet in the oven, and bake until the fish is cooked through, about 25 to 30 minutes. Remove the baking sheet from the oven, and use scissors to carefully cut a slit in the top of the packet. Peel back the paper (be mindful of the hot steam that will escape). Using a flat metal spatula, transfer the fillets to a plate. Spoon all of the aromatics and sauce left in the bag over the fish to serve.

TAGLIATELLE WITH HAND-CHOPPED RAGÙ (MEAT SAUCE)

EVOLVING TRADITION; EVOKING MEMORIES AND EMOTIONS

“

When I started serving [this dish] at Osteria Francescana, people finally started coming to the restaurant. This was the moment when we showed the locals that we can cook better than their grandmothers.

Few dishes are as deeply woven into the fabric of Italian culture as pasta. And in Emilia-Romagna, where Massimo lives, pasta is often synonymous with ragù, also called Bolognese sauce. For Massimo, a good ragù is born out of the freshest ingredients—local beef or pork, tomatoes, vegetables—and various techniques that improve the flavor and texture of the sauce: Choose meats that have high percentages of gelatin and fat to get the most flavor, and learn to combine high-heat searing (which creates caramelized crusts on the meat) with low-heat simmering (which deepens the flavors of all the ingredients over a long period of time).

Massimo also chooses to hand-chop rather than pre-grind the meat in his ragù, not only because that's the way his grandmother did it but because it allows the meat to really cling to the fresh tagliatelle. Taking the time to hand-prepare each ingredient, while more laborious, allows you to become intimately familiar with each ingredient in the sauce and understand its contribution to the whole dish. “When you touch each ingredient,” Massimo says, “you learn how to combine them to create the perfect harmony of flavors.”

This ragù is also a key component in one of Osteria Francescana's signature dishes, known as The Crunchy Part of the Lasagna. Massimo explains how his famed deconstructed casserole comes together in the bonus chapter (see page 57).

TAGLIATELLE WITH HAND-CHOPPED RAGÙ



Tagliatelle With Hand-Chopped Ragù (Meat Sauce)

Serves 8

Massimo's recipe for ragù is quite labor intensive, so plan to dedicate the better part of a day to preparing it. If you're crunched for time, you can swap fresh tagliatelle for store-bought tagliatelle or fettuccine, or make the pasta and the beef tongue up to two days ahead of time.

INGREDIENTS FOR THE RAGÙ

- 1¾ ounces (50 grams) beef bone marrow (see below)
- About 8 tablespoons (100 grams) extra-virgin olive oil, plus more
- 8¾ ounces (250 grams) carrots, diced (¼ inch)
- 5¾ ounces (150 grams) yellow onion, diced (¼ inch)
- 8¾ ounces (250 grams) celery, diced (¼ inch)
- 1 pound and 2 ounces (500 grams) mild sweet Italian sausage, preferably without spices like fennel
- Flaky sea salt
- Freshly ground black pepper
- 1 pound and 2 ounces (500 grams) beef cheeks
- 1 pound and 2 ounces (500 grams) beef oxtails, bone in
- 17 ounces (500 milliliters) dry white wine, divided
- 1 beef tongue (recipe below)
- 2 rosemary sprigs
- 2 thyme sprigs
- 8¾ ounces (250 grams) tomato concentrate (*passata*) or tomato paste
- 2 fresh bay leaves
- 8 cups (2 kilograms) chicken broth (see the recipe for Tortellini in Rich Broth or Parmigiano Cream, page 9)
- Crusty bread for serving (optional)

INGREDIENTS FOR THE TAGLIATELLE

- 1 pound and 5 ounces (600 grams) all-purpose flour, divided, plus more for rolling
- 2 whole eggs, plus 2 egg yolks

INGREDIENTS FOR THE BEEF TONGUE

- 1 small onion, cut into wedges
- 1 celery rib, roughly chopped
- 1 teaspoon whole black peppercorns
- ½ cup white wine
- 1 fresh bay leaf
- 1 beef tongue

1 Cook the beef tongue. Make a court bouillon by filling a large saucepan with cold water and adding the onion, celery rib, black peppercorns, white wine, and bay leaf. Add the tongue, and bring the water to a boil over high heat. Reduce the heat to maintain a gentle simmer, and cook until the tongue is cooked through, about one hour. Remove the tongue from the liquid with tongs and transfer to a cutting board. Let the tongue cool for five minutes. Discard the court bouillon, or strain and freeze for another use. While the tongue is still hot, peel off its outer membrane or “skin,” and discard it (you can wear gloves to do so if you’d like). Trim off any gristly bits and edges. Working at the thicker end, cut the tongue into two 1 inch–thick slices. Wrap the leftover piece of tongue in plastic wrap, then foil, and freeze for up to one month.

2 Make the tagliatelle dough. You’ll have to do this in two batches. For the first batch, mound about 9 ounces (250 grams) of the flour on a clean work surface, and form a well in the center. Add the eggs and yolks, and use a fork to stir them together. While stirring, slowly start incorporating some flour from the wall of the well, working little by little until you’re able to add all the flour and form a dough. Add the remaining 1 ½ ounces (50 grams) flour, and continue kneading until the dough is firm and smooth, about 10 minutes. Form the dough into a ball, and set it aside on your work surface or on a baking sheet. Drape a kitchen towel or sheet of plastic wrap over the top to keep the surface of the dough from drying out while the dough rests. Let rest for 30 minutes. Make the second batch of dough following these same steps.

3 Form the tagliatelle. Uncover the dough, cut it into four equal pieces, and place one piece on a lightly floured work surface. Using a rolling pin, flatten the dough, rolling and stretching it in every direction, until it’s 1/16-inch thick. Dust the pasta sheet with a generous amount of flour, then roll the sheet up like a cinnamon roll. Using a chef’s knife, cut the log crosswise into ¾ inch–thick ribbons. Use your fingers to toss and unfurl the ribbons (toss with more flour to keep them from

sticking together, if necessary). Hang the tagliatelle to dry for at least 30 minutes before arranging the ribbons on a floured baking tray. Repeat with the remaining three dough pieces. Wrap the baking tray with plastic wrap, and refrigerate for up to two days.

4 Melt the bone marrow. Heat the bone marrow and olive oil in a large saucepan or Dutch oven over medium-low heat. Once the marrow melts, add the carrots and cook, stirring, until half-cooked, about five minutes. Add the onions and celery and cook, stirring, until starting to soften, about five minutes more.

5 Cook the sausage. Meanwhile, heat a large nonstick skillet over high heat. Add the sausage, season with salt and pepper, and cook just until the sausage is no longer pink and has rendered most of its fat. While cooking, stir to break up the pieces as much as possible. Remove the skillet from the heat and, grasping a large piece of paper towel with tongs, wipe the bottom and sides of the skillet, moving it in and around the sausage, to absorb all the excess fat in the pan. Pour the sausage into the pot with the vegetables, and reduce the heat under the saucepan to the lowest setting.

6 Cook the beef cheeks and oxtails. Return the skillet to high heat, and add the beef cheeks and oxtails. Cook, flipping as needed, until golden brown all over. Add half of the wine to the skillet, and cook until it's reduced. Transfer the cheeks, oxtails, and pan juices to the pot. Return the skillet to high heat once more, lightly grease with olive oil, then add the tongue pieces and cook, flipping once, until golden brown on both sides. Add the remaining wine, stirring to deglaze the pan. Once the wine has reduced, pour the tongue and pan juices into the pot.

7 Cook the meat and sauce together. Tie together the rosemary and thyme sprigs with a piece of kitchen twine, then add to the pot along with the tomato concentrate or paste and bay leaves. Pour in the chicken broth until the meat is covered, and increase the heat, if necessary, so it comes to a bare simmer. Cover the meat with a round of parchment paper cut to the same diameter as the pot. Cook the meat and sauce until the meat is very tender, about two hours.

8 Chill the meat. Remove the pot from the heat, and discard the parchment paper, herb bundle, and bay leaves. Using tongs and a spider or slotted spoon, transfer all of the meat to a rimmed baking sheet, and refrigerate to firm the meat, about 30 minutes.

9 Purée the sauce and add the chopped meat. Meanwhile, pass the sauce through a food mill set over another saucepan, making sure to scrape the bottom of the mill once finished (if you don't have a food mill, you can use a blender or food processor). Place the chilled meat on a cutting board. Separate the oxtail meat from the bones and discard the bones. Dice all the meat into ¼ inch–thick pieces. To help chop the irregular pieces of oxtail meat, flatten them with the side of your knife first, then chop. Add all the chopped meat back to the sauce, and stir to combine. Keep the sauce warm over low heat, or transfer to a storage container and refrigerate for up to one week.

10 Cook the pasta. To serve, bring a large saucepan of chicken broth to a boil (see the recipe for Tortellini in Rich Broth or Parmigiano Cream, page 9). Add the pasta, and cook until it starts to float to the top and is al dente. While the pasta cooks, rewarm the ragù in a pan over medium heat. Ladle in some of the broth to loosen the sauce if needed. Add a bit of Parmigiano and a tablespoon of olive oil to create an emulsion. Once the pasta is ready, use tongs to transfer it from the broth to the ragù. Finish cooking the pasta in the ragù, tossing it constantly and adding more broth, if necessary, to create a velvety sauce.

11 Serve. Remove the pan from the heat, and let the pasta and sauce rest or “relax” together for one minute. Using a large serving fork, stab some of the pasta, rest the ends of the tines on the bowl of a spoon, and rotate the fork to spin the pasta into a “nest.” Transfer the nest of pasta to a bowl, and spoon more of the ragù sauce on top. Serve the pasta and ragù with crusty bread, if you'd like, and use the bread, what the Italians call the *scarpetta*, to collect all the leftover sauce.

Beef Bone Marrow

Ask your butcher if they have bone marrow available to purchase. If not, ask for marrow bones. If they have them only cut crosswise, like disks, use a long, thin knife or ice-pick to scrape out the marrow until you have enough to use. If they have bones and will cut them lengthwise for you, ask for that, as it will make the marrow easier to access.

“BETTER THAN PANETTONE” SOUFFLÉ

ZERO-WASTE; EVOKING MEMORIES AND EMOTIONS

“

Think about your gingerbread muffin, [or] the carrot that you have there, tired, sweaty, sad, on the side of your counter. Revitalize [them] and create something... mind-blowing.

Reimagining and improving upon old recipes is part and parcel of Massimo's methodology. Coming up with something new that's even better than the original is central to what he wants you to learn as you create dishes for yourself. Use your curiosity and creativity to refreshen old flavors as Massimo has done with his brilliant reinvention of the traditional holiday sweet loaf known as panettone.

With this soufflé, Massimo takes the familiar flavors of the popular Italian bread—dried fruit, candied orange, buttery dough—and transforms them into an elegant dessert. The same can be done with your favorite gingerbread, banana bread, cinnamon-raisin bread, carrot cake, or chocolate muffins—any muffin-style quick bread, where the liquid ingredients are stirred into the dry ones with no butter and sugar “creaming” step, will work perfectly here. Take your most nostalgic sweet, pinpoint your favorite flavors in it, and highlight them. You can manipulate them into something novel and create a tradition all your own.

“BETTER THAN PANETTONE” SOUFFLÉ



“Better Than Panettone” Soufflé

Serves 3 or more

Massimo uses panettone here because it's the traditional Christmas bread of his native Emilia-Romagna. The vanilla salt and candied orange peel that garnish these soufflés pair well with the candied orange in the bread itself, but if your base bread has a different flavor profile, you may want to garnish it with another kind of zest or spiced salt.

INGREDIENTS

8½ ounces (250 grams) leftover panettone
¼ ounce (7 grams) cornstarch
7 whole eggs, divided
5¼ ounces (150 grams) granulated sugar, divided
1¾ ounces (50 grams) white chocolate
¾ ounce (25 grams) unsalted butter
Kosher salt
Vanilla salt (recipe below)
Candied orange peel (recipe below)
Toasted hazelnuts, chopped

1 Dry out the panettone. Heat the oven to 215°F (100°C). Tear the panettone into bite-size pieces, and spread them out in a single layer on a rimmed baking sheet. Bake the panettone until it is dried and brittle, about one hour. Remove the panettone from the oven, and let cool completely; increase the oven temperature to 350°F (180°C). Transfer the dried panettone to a blender, and process until finely ground. Stir the corn starch into the bread crumbs.

2 Whip the egg yolks. In the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with a whisk, add the egg yolks and begin mixing on low speed. Slowly pour in 75 grams of sugar, then increase the speed to medium-high and whip until the yolk mixture triples in volume and falls back on itself in a wide ribbon when lifted with the whisk.

3 Melt the chocolate. Meanwhile, combine the white chocolate and butter in a small saucepan over low heat and cook, stirring constantly, until warmed through and just melted. When the yolk mixture is ready, reduce the mixer speed to low, and slowly pour in the white chocolate mixture until smooth. Using a rubber spatula, transfer the yolk mixture to a large bowl, and stir in the panettone bread crumbs.

4 Whip the egg whites into soft peaks. Clean the mixer bowl and whisk thoroughly, making sure there is not a trace of fat left behind, then return them to the mixer. Add the egg whites and a pinch of salt to the bowl, and begin mixing on medium speed. While the mixer is running, slowly pour in the remaining 75 grams of sugar, and continue whipping until the whites form soft peaks.

5 Combine the whites with the yolk mixture. Add $\frac{1}{3}$ of the whipped egg whites to the yolk-bread crumb mixture, and stir vigorously to combine (the egg whites here are being used to simply loosen the thick texture of the yolk mixture). Add half of the remaining whites, folding them in gently until almost smooth, then add the remaining whites and fold gently until completely smooth and the color is homogenous.

6 Divide the mixture into ramekins and bake. Set three 6-ounce ramekins on a baking sheet. Divide the soufflé mixture among the ramekins, then immediately bake until puffed and risen but still soft-set in the middle, nine to ten minutes.

7 Serve. While hot, transfer the ramekins to serving plates, and sprinkle each with a pinch of vanilla salt. Arrange some strands of candied orange peel over the top, and then sprinkle with a pinch of chopped hazelnuts to serve.

Vanilla Salt

INGREDIENTS

1 vanilla bean

1 cup flaky sea salt, such as Maldon, Fior de Sale, or Fleur de Sel

Place the vanilla bean on a cutting board. Using the tip of a paring knife, split the bean in half lengthwise. Use the dull side of the tip of the knife to scrape out the inside of each half, removing the vanilla seeds. Place the seeds in a small bowl. Add the flaky sea salt, and rub the beans into the salt with your fingers until the salt is well-coated. Transfer the salt to a storage container, and store at room temperature for up to three months.

Candied Orange Peel

INGREDIENTS

- 2 oranges**
- 1 cup granulated sugar**
- 1 cup water**

Using a vegetable peeler, remove wide strips of zest from the oranges. Place the strips on a cutting board, and thinly slice lengthwise to form matchstick-size pieces. Place the zest strips in a small saucepan with the granulated sugar and water, and stir to combine. Place the pan over medium-high heat, and bring to a boil, stirring until the sugar dissolves. As soon as the syrup comes to a full boil, remove the pan from the heat, pour the syrup and zest into a glass jar, and cover with the lid. Let the syrup and zest cool to room temperature, then refrigerate overnight. The zest will keep in the refrigerator for up to one month (or up to one year if unopened).

Learn More: A Slice of Life

The Italian Christmastime treat known as panettone may seem ubiquitous these days, but it has a rich history that predates even the formation of Italy as an independent country. Made from ingredients that, during Medieval times, were a rarity—wheat flour, candied citrus, and spices imported from far beyond Italy's borders—the celebration bread has always enjoyed a certain cachet that only the best brands today retain. Real panettone, a brioche-like bread with lots of fat from butter and egg yolks to keep it tender, is baked in tall cans and left to cool upside down so the weight of the fat and candied fruits doesn't collapse the delicate bread. Akin to fruitcake here in America, it's a love-it-or-hate-it kind of treat but one that is a hallmark of its time and place in history.

PUMPKIN RISOTTO

EVOLVING TRADITION

“

[It] gets...deeper and deeper to the concept of breaking the border between sweet and savory.

In this lesson, savory risotto gets a sweet makeover. Massimo takes the traditional risotto technique and uses it to make an Italian version of rice pudding, eschewing white wine and cheese for the pure flavor of roasted, puréed pumpkin sweetened with orange juice, ground with toasted almonds, and brightened with small pieces of sweet-and-spicy *mostarda* (preserved candied fruit). The idea is to get to the soul of the rice and extract its purest flavor.

Historically, Italian pumpkins are grown in the north, while oranges typically hail from the southern region of Sicily. While they come from different parts of the country, these two ingredients actually pair perfectly in Massimo's opinion. "As you travel and eat around the world, your palate will become attuned to this type of nuance, so you can have the confidence to 'break the rules' like this when you create your own dishes," he says. Go in a different direction if that's where your palate is taking you: In the summertime, try grapefruit. In winter, experiment with pomegranate juice and Turkish spices. Or even use this same application with peaches instead of pumpkin. Imagine everything you want to make and anywhere you want to go, then experiment and see what works.

PUMPKIN RISOTTO



Pumpkin Risotto

Serves 6

The beauty of this recipe is that any type of winter squash can be used: butternut squash, acorn squash, sugar pumpkins, or another variety you might prefer. Try different combinations until you find what you like the best. Similarly, try different orange-like citruses until you find one whose balance of sweetness and acidity complements the pumpkin you chose as well as your palate. Once you've mastered Massimo's classic pumpkin risotto accented with orange, try making his chocolate-orange version, which focuses on bringing the fruit to the forefront of your palate. A final drizzle of dark chocolate puts a twist on the classic flavor combination.

INGREDIENTS FOR THE PUMPKIN PURÉE

- 1 medium pumpkin or winter squash
- 3½ ounces (100 grams) apple *mostarda*
- 1¾ ounces (50 grams) crushed amaretti

INGREDIENTS FOR THE TRADITIONAL VARIATION

- Extra-virgin olive oil
- 1 pound and 2 ounces (500 grams) risotto rice, preferably Vialone Nano
- 4¼ cups (1 liter) freshly squeezed orange juice
- 7 ounces (200 grams) pumpkin purée
- Sliced, toasted almonds, crushed amaretti, and apple *mostarda* (see below), to garnish

ADDITIONAL INGREDIENTS FOR THE CHOCOLATE-ORANGE VARIATION

- Candied orange purée (see below), to taste
- Melted dark chocolate, to taste
- Sliced, toasted almonds, to garnish
- Blackened orange (see below), to garnish

1 Make the pumpkin purée. Heat the oven to 175°F (80°C). Split the pumpkin in half, and scrape out the seeds and strings from the center (your yield should be about 2¼ pounds or 1 kilogram of flesh). Peel the pumpkin halves, then cut into rough 1-inch (3-centimeter) cubes. Spread the pumpkin cubes on a rimmed baking sheet, and place in the oven. Bake at least eight hours or overnight, until

the pumpkin is as smooth as custard. Transfer the flesh to a blender, add the apple *mostarda* and the crushed amaretti, and process until very smooth. Transfer the purée to an airtight container, and refrigerate for up to four days.

2 Make the risotto. Heat a small splash of olive oil in a medium-high skillet over medium heat. Add the rice and cook, stirring until lightly toasted and fragrant. Reduce the heat to medium-low, and pour in a splash of water to cool down the pan quickly. Stir until the water is almost evaporated, then pour in 7 tablespoons (100 milliliters) of the orange juice, stirring until the orange juice is almost evaporated. Continue adding orange juice in 7-tablespoon (100-milliliter) increments, cooking and stirring constantly. Wait until each batch is almost evaporated before adding the next. Continue until all the juice is added and the rice is al dente. Stir in the pumpkin purée, then remove the skillet from the heat. Drizzle in some olive oil and a splash of water to help create a smooth sauce.

3 Plate the traditional variation. For the traditional variation, spoon the risotto onto a warm plate to form a thin layer. Sprinkle the almonds, amaretti crumbs, and pieces of apple *mostarda* over the rice to serve.

Or

3 Plate the chocolate-orange variation. Pipe or spoon small dollops of candied orange purée on the bottom of a serving plate. Spoon the risotto over the dollops (enough to cover them). Drizzle the risotto with the chocolate and sprinkle with almonds. Using a Microplane grater, lightly grate the blackened orange over the risotto to serve.

Apple Mostarda

You can buy apple *mostarda* in gourmet Italian grocery stores or online on Amazon.com.

Candied Orange Purée

Make the candied orange peel according to the recipe for “Better Than Panettone” Soufflé (see page 42). Place the orange strips in a blender and process, pouring in just enough syrup as needed, until the purée is smooth and thick. Transfer the purée to an airtight container, and refrigerate for up to one week.

Blackened Orange

Heat the oven to 350°F (180°C). Wash 1 large navel orange clean with warm water, then dry it thoroughly. Place it on a parchment paper-lined baking sheet, and bake in the oven until blackened all over, about one hour. Reduce the oven temperature to 160°F (70°C), and continue cooking the orange until it is dehydrated and brittle, at least eight hours or overnight. Remove the baking sheet from the oven, and let the orange cool completely. Store the orange in an airtight container at room temperature for up to one month.

TASTING DEMONSTRATION: DEVELOPING YOUR PALATE

Chefs aren't born with perfect palates. They learn, just like everyone else, how to parse out the nuances of different ingredients as they continue to taste and experiment with them. Your adult palate can be greatly influenced by what you ate as a child, but it's never too late to reeducate your palate by pinpointing the particular qualities of various ingredients so that you can best utilize them in your cooking.

Massimo takes us through the education of his palate with three essential Italian ingredients: tomatoes, Parmigiano-Reggiano, and balsamic vinegar. But you needn't stop there. Head to your local farmers' market, Eataly, or grocery store, buy a few different varieties of any ingredient (squash, pasta, whitefish, olives, cheese—anything you'd like to train your palate on), and run an at-home taste test. Constantly sampling food in its many forms—ripe versus unripe, spring harvest versus winter harvest, aged versus unaged—will enhance your ability to balance the flavors in dishes you've been making for years or create entirely new recipes.

To get a sense of how to do this on your own, pay close attention to the tasting notes Massimo calls attention to as he tries different tomatoes, Parmigianos, and balsamics, then apply those principles to any ingredient you'd like.

Tomato

Tomatoes vary wildly in variety and seasonality depending on where you live in the world. In Massimo's demonstration, he uses tomatoes specific to Italy; if you can't find the tomatoes used here, visit your local farmers' market or grocery store and pick up a few varieties of tomatoes, then use Massimo's pointers to taste the difference between them.

The first tomato Massimo tastes is a classic San Marzano tomato from Sicily (if you can't find San Marzanos and are looking for a pretty close one-to-one comparison, see if you can buy Roma tomatoes—both are of the plum variety). Make sure to try one that's unripe, or green, so you can taste its tannins and astringency on your palate. If you can't find fresh, green San Marzanos or Romas, regular green tomatoes of any sort will work just fine—the point is to taste any tomato in its “green” stage to understand its flavor in comparison to a ripe one.

Remember, as Massimo says, the second bite is almost more important than the first because you'll know what to expect, and your palate can be more open to the flavors you experience.

The second tomato Massimo tastes here is the ripe red version of the San Marzano. At home, this is where you'd taste the ripe red version of whatever tomatoes you were able to find, be it a vine-ripe or a peak-of-summer beefsteak. You should be able to taste the difference between the ripe version and the green version. Where there used to be bitterness, there should now be fruity sweetness.

The third tomato Massimo tries is called Fondanello, which, compared with even the ripe San Marzano tomatoes, is super fruity and sweet. A great substitute would be a slightly larger, greenhouse-grown tomato (which you can probably find at your grocery store and which are often just as sweet as those grown in the earth).

The fourth tomato is from Vesuvio. Due to the volcanic soil it grows in, it's very acidic with a lasting finish of bitterness. This is a specific type of tomato grown in a specific area; ask your nearest local Italian food importer for them, or see if the grocer can stock the tomatoes once they're in season. If you live in a city or country that has an Eataly, you can also stop in and see if the emporium carries this particular variety.

The last tomato is the Datterino Giallo, which is a yellow cherry tomato with barely any acidity. It's as sweet as an actual cherry. These are also site-specific, so try to find sweet cherry tomatoes at your local farmers' market to get a sense of how sweet tomatoes can be.

Once you've tasted each tomato, use your palate to connect the dots—a little Vesuvio tomato for acidity, maybe a lot of Datterino Giallo tomatoes for sweetness—and determine the ideal combination for something like tomato sauce or a caprese salad.

Parmigiano-Reggiano

Parmigiano-Reggiano is perhaps the most important ingredient in Italian cuisine—according to Massimo, at least. The cheese is made with raw, unpasteurized milk and is aged for a minimum of two years. As Parmigiano-Reggiano cheese ages, it locks in more moisture and becomes denser and richer in flavor. The aging process transforms the lactose in the cheese into pure protein, so even those who are lactose-intolerant can eat it. Most Italian grocery stores will carry the youngest cheese Massimo tastes here, but you'll likely have to ask for the more aged varieties.

If Parmigiano-Reggiano isn't readily available near you, try this experiment with any cheese that you can find in a variety of ages, like cheddar (whose age is usually measured in "sharpness"), Grana Padano, Asiago, or Pecorino-Romano. That said, applying Massimo's lessons to any kind of cheese (hard, soft, etc.) will only benefit you in terms of sharpening your palate.

The first Parmigiano-Reggiano Massimo tries is the youngest, at 24 months old. Young cheeses typically pair well with drinks like spumante, champagne, or prosecco, striking a balance among the bitter, sweet, and acidic flavors.

The second Parmigiano-Reggiano is aged for 36 months. Older cheeses are typically more intense in flavor due to a lack of moisture. When you try this second cheese at home, see if you can suss out that shift in "sharpness."

The last Parmigiano-Reggiano Massimo tries is aged for 42 months. Cheeses this old are so intense that they should be served on their own rather than used as part of a recipe. You may even notice tiny crystallized grains of protein in the cheese, which give it a crunchy texture.

All aged cheeses are different, but here's a good rule of thumb: The more intense the cheese, the better it is eaten on its own or as part of a cheese plate; the milder types are wonderful grated over fresh pasta. Let your palate be your guide when it comes to which cheese you want to use.

Aceto Balsamico

Fine-tuning your palate to discern the differences between various balsamic vinegars is crucial to Italian cooking. The types often found in the United States are caramel-colored with a one-note sweetness. Real balsamic vinegar from Modena is far more complex. To re-create this taste test, look for high-quality balsamics from Modena in an Italian grocery store or order a few bottles online through Eataly.com, making sure to get at least one *tradizionale* vinegar (old), one *affinato* vinegar (older), and one *extravecchio* vinegar (oldest).

The first vinegar you'll taste is the *tradizionale*. It's an everyday vinegar with a thin viscosity, dark brown color, and faint acidity that tastes of red fruit, plums, and figs. This vinegar is particularly great when brushed over grilled meats, as it mimics the caramelization you get on the meat with high-heat roasting.

The second vinegar is called *affinato* and is aged for up to 12 years. You'll notice the color of the vinegar is very dark, with a texture akin to simple syrup. The flavor might remind you of chestnuts, with a finish of caramelized apple pie, as Massimo notes. Because of this flavor profile, this vinegar would be wonderful drizzled over ice cream.

The last vinegar you'll taste is the *extravecchio* vinegar, which is aged for at least 25 years. It's much thicker and sweeter than the *affinato*, with a dark intensity that tastes of oak and dark mulberries. You shouldn't cook with a vinegar like this; instead use it as a garnish on the plate, like in the recipe for "Spin-Painted" Beet With Colorful Sauces (see page 26).

TASTING DEMONSTRATION: DEVELOPING YOUR PALATE



THE STORY BEHIND TWO DISHES AT OSTERIA FRANCESCANA

MASSIMO BOTTURA | BONUS CHAPTER

Most restaurants that refer to themselves or something on their menu as the “world’s best” are exaggerating. Osteria Francescana is not one of those restaurants.

Massimo’s flagship Modenese establishment has sat in the top five of the World’s 50 Best Restaurants list since 2011 and was ranked number one in 2016 and 2018—the only Italian restaurant ever to win first prize. It also carries three Michelin stars, the Michelin guide’s highest honor and a distinction that encourages travelers to make a special trip to a city or country just to visit a restaurant. But Osteria Francescana wasn’t always thought of as the temple of gastronomy it is today.

When it opened in Modena in 1995, neither customers nor critics had much of an appetite for Massimo’s methodology: taking beloved, traditional recipes of the region and retooling them into dishes that are equal parts respectful and contemporary. It wasn’t until he began serving his tagliatelle with hand-chopped ragù that Massimo got a buy-in from locals; in 2001, one of Italy’s most celebrated food writers stopped in on a whim, wrote a glowing review, and helped the restaurant win its first Michelin star. From there, word of Massimo’s virtuosic improvisation in the kitchen spread, and curious eaters began making their way to Via Stella for a taste of his idiosyncratic genius.

Every dish on Osteria Francescana’s menu has its own unique backstory. (A dessert known as Oops! I Dropped the Lemon Tart was born when sous chef Taka Kondo, seen assisting Massimo throughout the class, accidentally dropped one of the pastries in question. Now the dessert is always served upside down and smashed.) Here Massimo walks you through the origin stories of two of the restaurant’s most iconic plates: The Crunchy Part of the Lasagna, an ode to the corner pieces of the casserole and a love letter to the Italian flag, and Mediterranean Sole, an entirely unique creation that manages to encapsulate four different Italian preparations of the fish. Both are a canvas for a number of Massimo’s cooking philosophies—evolving tradition, evoking memories and emotions, drawing inspiration from contemporary art and music—and both showcase how an imaginative refresh can give tried-and-true recipes new life.

THE CRUNCHY PART OF THE LASAGNA



MEDITERRANEAN SOLE

