

HERE TO HELP  
KEY INGREDIENT

Ricotta &  
saffron fritters  
with watercress  
& asparagus  
salad, p130

# GOTTA LOVE ricotta

Versatile ricotta comes into its own in summer. Chef **Luca Ciano** shows us why this cheese is so special.

PHOTOGRAPHY BRETT STEVENS | STYLING YAEL GRINHAM

**I**n all my years of cooking, I have found ricotta to be the most versatile of cheeses, and I'm always reaching for it. Usually made from cow's milk and sometimes sheep's milk, ricotta can be baked, smoked, aged and salted, and works well in both sweet and savoury dishes. For desserts such as cannoli, you need very fresh ricotta, and whether aged or fresh, it is excellent in pasta dishes and salads. You've probably used it in lasagne or cheesecake but I want to encourage you to use ricotta more often and in different ways. Here are some of my favourite ricotta recipes to get you going.



FOOD PREPARATION: Sally Courtney



Steamed zucchini flower with ricotta & zucchini pesto

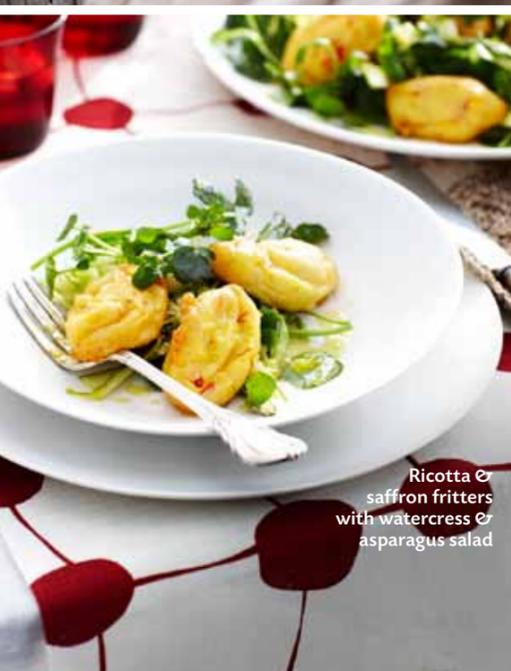
### Steamed zucchini flowers with ricotta & zucchini pesto

**SERVES 4 PREP 20mins COOK 5mins**  
**GLUTEN FREE • IN SEASON NOW**

This is a great way to get the party started! Steaming ricotta-stuffed zucchini flowers is a delicious alternative to crumbing and frying them. The toasted almonds add a lovely crunch.

300g fresh ricotta
4 anchovies in oil, drained, finely chopped
½ cup (125ml) olive oil
12 small zucchini, flowers attached
10 large basil leaves
1 tbsp pine nuts
½ garlic clove
½ cup (40g) grated Grana Padano or other parmesan
juice of ½ lemon
½ cup (25g) flaked almonds, toasted

- Mix together ricotta, anchovies and 1 tbsp of oil until smooth. Season.
  - Remove flowers from zucchini. Split open one side of flowers and, using fingertips, gently remove stamens. Fill flowers with ricotta mixture and gently twist ends to enclose.
  - Chop zucchini and place in a food processor with basil, pine nuts and garlic. Pulse until finely chopped. Add remaining oil and process until smooth. Add Grana Padano and lemon juice and pulse to combine. Season.
  - Lay filled zucchini flowers in a bamboo steamer. Steam, covered, over a pan of gently simmering water for 2-3 mins, until filling is firm.
  - Place 2-3 tbsp of zucchini pesto onto each serving plate. Top with zucchini flowers and scatter with toasted almonds.
- In each serve** 2004 kilojoules, 15g protein, 47g total fat (12g sat fat), 2g carbohydrate (2g sugar), 1g fibre, 513mg sodium.



Ricotta & saffron fritters with watercress & asparagus salad

### Ricotta & saffron fritters with watercress & asparagus salad

**SERVES 6 PREP 20mins COOK 5mins**  
**VEGETARIAN • 25-MIN RECIPE**

400g fresh ricotta
¾ cup (100g) plain flour
2 truss tomatoes, seeded, finely chopped
2 eggs, lightly beaten
2 tbsp extra virgin olive oil, plus ½ cup (80ml) extra for dressing
1 tsp saffron threads, soaked in 1 tsp water
1 tsp baking powder
pinch of ground nutmeg
2 bunches asparagus, ends trimmed
1 bunch watercress, sprigs picked
finely grated rind and juice of 1 lemon
4 cups (1L) vegetable oil

### Torta salata with ricotta, pancetta & balsamic

**SERVES 6 PREP 15mins COOK 45mins**  
**DOUBLE IT • MAKE IT AHEAD**

This tart is an Italian version of a quiche and nice while warm. But it's actually even better when it reaches room temperature and all the flavours marry together.

2 sheets frozen puff pastry, thawed
150g Italian pancetta, cut into 1cm cubes
6 eggs
⅔ cup (165ml) cream
¼ cup (60ml) milk
½ cup (40g) grated Parmigiano Reggiano
¼ cup chopped flat leaf parsley
200g fresh ricotta
2 spring (salad) onions, thinly sliced
5 cherry tomatoes, halved
½ cup (125ml) balsamic vinegar
3 cups salad greens, to serve

- Preheat oven to 170C or 150C fan. Grease a 28cm, loose-based flan pan. Line base and sides with puff pastry, using second sheet to patch edges, pressing down to seal joins.
  - Heat a small pan on medium. Cook pancetta for 5 mins, until golden. Set aside.
  - Whisk together eggs, cream, milk, Parmigiano Reggiano and parsley. Season.
  - Crumble ricotta over puff pastry. Top with spring onions and pancetta. Pour over egg mixture and top with tomato, cut side up. Bake for 45 mins, until set and golden. Cool.
  - Meanwhile, heat balsamic vinegar in a small pan on low for 5-7 mins, until reduced.
  - Cut tart into wedges. Serve with salad and drizzle with balsamic glaze.
- In each serve** 2101 kilojoules, 21g protein, 36g total fat (20g sat fat), 22g carbohydrate (7g sugar), 2g fibre, 778mg sodium.

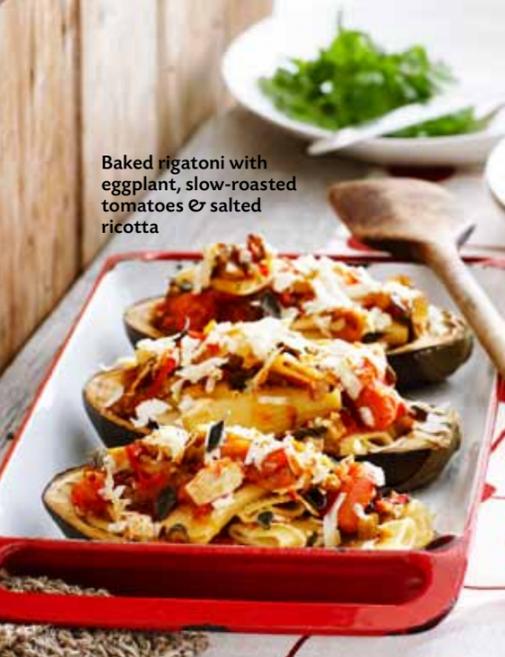
- Mix together ricotta, flour, tomato, egg, olive oil, saffron and water, baking powder and nutmeg. Season. Cover. Chill for 15 mins.
  - Meanwhile, using a vegetable peeler, cut asparagus into ribbons. Place in a bowl with watercress. Whisk together lemon juice and extra olive oil. Season. Add to salad and toss to combine.
  - Heat vegetable oil in a large shallow pan until 180C or until a cube of bread sizzles on contact. Spoon 3 heaped tablespoons of ricotta mixture around edge of pan. Shallow-fry for 3-4 mins, until cooked through. Drain. Repeat to make 18 fritters, reheating oil between batches.
  - Top watercress and asparagus salad with fritters and lemon rind. Serve.
- In each serve** 2005 kilojoules, 14g protein, 40g total fat (9g sat fat), 15g carbohydrate (3g sugar), 3g fibre, 230mg sodium.



Torta salata with ricotta, pancetta & balsamic

**MAKE IT AHEAD**

“Take this tart to a barbecue and everyone will love you for it!” Luca



Baked rigatoni with eggplant, slow-roasted tomatoes & salted ricotta



Sicilian cannoli with ricotta & dark chocolate

### Baked rigatoni with eggplant, slow-roasted tomatoes & salted ricotta

**SERVES 4 PREP 30mins COOK 30mins**  
**LOWER GI • 3½ OF 5-A-DAY • VEGETARIAN**

250g rigatoni
8 roma tomatoes, halved
⅓ cup (80ml) extra virgin olive oil, plus 1 tbsp extra to serve
½ cup chopped oregano
2 eggplant
4 spring (salad) onions, thinly sliced
2 garlic cloves, crushed
1 long red chilli, seeded, thinly sliced
100g salted ricotta, grated
1 bunch rocket, leaves torn

**1** Preheat oven to 190C or 170C fan. Cook pasta in a pan of salted boiling water according to packet directions. Drain, reserving ½ cup of cooking water.

**2** Place tomato, cut-side up, on a baking tray. Drizzle with 1 tsp of olive oil and scatter over half of oregano. Season. Bake for 45 mins, until soft.

**3** Cut eggplant in half, lengthways. Using a spoon, scoop out flesh. Set aside. Place eggplant shells in a baking dish and drizzle with 1 tsp of olive oil. Season. Bake for 10 mins, until partially cooked.

**4** Chop eggplant flesh into 1cm squares. Heat remaining oil in a large frying pan on medium. Cook onion, garlic and chilli for 2-3 mins, until fragrant. Add eggplant and cook for 5 mins, stirring, until soft. Add tomato and remaining oregano. Stir to combine. Add pasta, reserved water and half of ricotta. Stir to combine.

**5** Spoon pasta mixture into eggplant shells and sprinkle over remaining ricotta. Bake for 10-15 mins, until cheese melts. Serve with rocket drizzled with extra olive oil.

**In each serve 2581 kilojoules, 22g protein, 33g total fat (8g sat fat), 54g carbohydrate (11g sugar), 10g fibre, 400mg sodium.**

### Sicilian cannoli with ricotta & dark chocolate

**MAKES 12 PREP 45mins COOK 5mins**  
**MAKE IT AHEAD • EAT OUT AT HOME**

You need only half the quantity of dough to make 12 cannoli. Freeze the rest in plastic wrap for up to 1 month and you can make more cannoli later.

250g fresh ricotta
¼ cup (55g) caster sugar
finely grated rind of 1 lemon
finely grated rind of 1 orange
50g dark chocolate (70% cocoa), finely chopped
icing sugar, for dusting
<b>cannoli</b>
1½ cups (250g) "00" or bread flour
1 tbsp instant coffee powder
1 tsp cocoa powder
30g unsalted butter, diced, very soft
1 egg, lightly beaten, plus 1 extra for sealing
⅓ cup (80ml) white wine vinegar
4 cups (1L) vegetable oil

**1** To make cannoli, sift flour, coffee and cocoa into a bowl. Scatter over butter. Form a well in centre. Stir in egg and enough vinegar to form a dough. Wrap in plastic wrap and chill for 20 mins.

**2** Divide dough in half. Freeze half (see note above). Roll remainder on a lightly floured surface until 2mm thick. Alternatively, roll dough through a pasta machine. Using a round 10cm cutter, cut 12 rounds from dough. Working in batches, wrap one round of dough around a metal cannoli tube. Brush edge with extra egg and press to seal.

**3** Heat oil in a large pan or deep-fryer to 170C or until a cube of bread sizzles on contact. Using tongs, place cannoli tube in oil. Cook for 3-4 mins, until crisp and golden. Remove from oil, place on a wire rack and remove metal tube. Repeat with remaining dough. Cool cannoli cases completely.

**4** Mix together ricotta, sugar, lemon and orange

rinds and chocolate until smooth. Spoon into a piping bag fitted with a star nozzle. Pipe filling into cannoli cases. Dust with icing sugar to serve.

**In each cannoli 686 kilojoules, 4g protein, 10g total fat (4g sat fat), 15g carbohydrate (7g sugar), neg fibre, 50mg sodium.**

### Ricotta & mixed berry mini cakes

**MAKES 12 PREP 40mins CHILL 2hrs**  
**COOK 30mins**  
**MAKE IT AHEAD • FREEZER FRIENDLY**

200ml milk
20g unsalted butter
1 vanilla bean, seeds scraped
1½ cups (295g) caster sugar, plus 1 tbsp extra
400g sheep's ricotta or normal ricotta
5 egg yolks
3 eggwhites
250g strawberries, hulled, quartered
125g blueberries
125g raspberries
finely grated rind of 2 lemons
icing sugar mixture, for dusting
<b>pastry</b>
½ cup (110g) caster sugar
140g unsalted butter, chopped
2¼ cups (335g) "00" flour or plain flour
2 eggs
grated rind of 1 lemon

**1** To make pastry, place sugar and butter in a food processor. Process until combined. Add flour and pulse to combine. Add eggs and lemon rind and pulse until dough forms a ball around blade. Wrap in plastic wrap and refrigerate for 2 hrs or overnight.

**2** Preheat oven to 190C or 170C fan. Grease and flour 12 x 10cm loose-based flan pans.

**3** Heat milk, butter, vanilla bean and seeds and extra sugar in a pan on medium. Simmer for 5 mins. Transfer to a bowl. Cool. Strain and discard vanilla bean.

**4** Using an electric mixer, beat ricotta and sugar until smooth. Add egg yolks and beat until well combined. Add milk mixture and beat to combine. Whisk eggwhites in a bowl until soft peaks form. Fold into ricotta mixture. Fold in berries and lemon rind.

**5** Roll pastry on a lightly floured surface until 5mm thick. Cut 12 x 14cm rounds from pastry. Line prepared pans, pressing pastry into edges. Fill with ricotta mixture and smooth surface. Bake for 25-30 mins, until set and golden. Cool on a wire rack. Serve dusted with icing sugar.

**In each cake 1862 kilojoules, 11g protein, 19g total fat (11g sat fat), 59g carbohydrate (39g sugar), 2g fibre, 106mg sodium.**

**SPECIAL OCCASION**

Ricotta & mixed berry mini cakes



**HERE TO HELP KEY INGREDIENT**

"When you're in the mood for baking, these gorgeous baby ricotta & berry cakes are a joy to make – and eat."

Luca