



Saturday, 23rd April 2011

treat yourself

EXPERIENCE best

Torta pasqualina

Serves: 6

INGREDIENTS

- 4 puff pastry sheets
- 100ml milk
- 6-8 eggs
- 1kg silver beet (or spinach), cooked, drained and chopped
- 300g fresh ricotta
- 100g grated grana padano cheese
- 1 pinch of grated nutmeg

METHOD

- 1 Grease a round (20cm diameter) oven baking tray and insert three puff pastry sheets covering the edges.
- 2 Mix milk and three eggs in a large bowl. Add the silver beet to the egg and milk, add the ricotta and grana padano and nutmeg. Place the mix into the baking tray and with your hand make up to five small holes in the mix.
- 3 Crack the remaining eggs and place each one of them into the holes.
- 4 Cover the top with a puff pastry sheet.
- 5 Cook in a pre heated oven at 170C for 35-40minutes.
- 6 Allow to cool and serve warm.



Cook up an Italian Easter delicacy, writes Victoria Hannaford

THERE'S always lots of great food around at Easter time and the holiday is celebrated across Sydney with special dishes to mark the occasion. In search of something other than sweet treats, I headed to Casa Barilla for an Italian Easter Cooking Class, led by chef Luca Ciano.

We're greeted with a glass of prosecco – sparkling Italian wine – and delicious antipasto. We then make our way to the kitchen. Luca wants to show us how to make traditional Italian dishes, created in his home country and eaten to celebrate the religious feast.

"There's a lot of regions in Italy and each region would do the food a little bit differently. I picked dishes you might come across in most of Italy," he says.

Luca has chosen pappardelle with chestnuts and goat ragu, a torta pasqualina, a traditional Easter pie with ricotta, spinach and cheese and toasted colomba (Easter cake).

Luca is a charming teacher and has lots of hints – he recommends using a jar of pasta sauce as a quick way of making the goat and chestnut ragu.

"To make a classic sauce would take four or five hours, this is a way to make a ragu or bolognese in 20 minutes," he says.

It's a simple dish and Luca says goat is eaten across Italy during Easter.

"I find it really delicious but it's also low in cholesterol and is really lean," he says.

We watch Luca execute the dish and then break off into groups of four to make the ragu. It's a well-equipped kitchen and fun cooking as a team.

Once we have the sauce simmering, Luca shows us how to make the torta pasqualina. He recommends shop-bought puff pastry for speed.

When the filling has been added to the pie, the eggs go into the little gaps, which adds to the presentation. We have another glass of wine and a slice of the pie and it's time to eat the ragu. As with any cooking, the best part is sharing a meal and a chat, and we all enjoy the delicious combination of goat, chestnuts and the long ribbons of pasta.

The next dish – colomba is a bit like panettone, and Luca has devised a simple way of turning it into a dessert. He recommends toasting the sweet bread and then combining marscapone, brandy, sugar and eggs to create a tiramisu-like filling.

Once we've whisked everything together, we assemble the toasted colomba in layers with the filling in between, topped with shavings of dark chocolate.

"Of course you'll be making all of these dishes at home," Luca says. He's right – armed with a different culinary take on Easter, I can't wait to unleash these new dishes this long weekend.

● Casa Barilla, 4 Annandale St, Annandale; classes \$90, bookings essential, 8585 3911, barillaus.com



Expert touch: Chef Luca Ciano with his Easter pie. Picture: Katrina Topper

Publication: The Daily Telegraph, Best Weekend

Date: 23rd April 2011

Readership: 867,000

Circulation: 325,000

Equiv Advertising Rate: \$14,921.50

Equiv PR Rate: \$59,686.00