TRAPANI

PALERMO

AGRIGENTO

CALTANISSETTA

MESSINA

ENNA

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A quarter of the Sicilian population reside in the province of Palermo, along the northwest coast of Sicily. The capital city is Palermo, with over 800,000 inhabitants, and other notable townships include Monreale, Cefalù, and Bagheria. It is also home to the Parco Naturale delle Madonie, the regional natural park of the Madonie Mountains, with some of Sicily’s highest peaks. The park is the source of many wonderful food products, such as a cheese called the **Madonico Provolone**, a unique bean called the **fasola badda** (badda bean), and **manna**, a natural sweetener that is extracted from ash trees.

The diversity from the sea to the mountains and the culture of a unique city, Palermo, contribute to a synthesis of the products and the history, of sweet and savoury, of noble and peasant. The skyline of Palermo is outlined with memories of the Saracen presence. Even though the churches were converted by the conquering Normans, many of the Arab domes and arches remain. Beyond architecture, the table of today is still very much influenced by its early inhabitants.

The streets and the markets of Palermo are coloured with the abundance of the countryside, a bright palette of violet aubergines, sun-brushed **tarocco** (blood oranges), and serpentine green cucuzza squash, fresh fish and anchovies from Cefalù, spices and herbs and roasted onions, tomatoes and garlic dangling next to bunches of explosive peppers. The clamour of the vendors harmonizes with the many smells. The exotic feeling of the markets bears witness to the cross-cultural food history with ingredients that are laced through the traditional dishes. The specialty of Palermo illustrates this: Pasta con le Sarde, bucatini tossed with fresh sautéed sardines, wild fennel, saffron, raisins, pine nuts, and garnished with toasted bread crumbs.

Another favorite is Involtini di Spatola, scabbard fish fillets rolled around a filling of pine nuts, breadcrumbs, and currants.
**Spaghettini fritters**

- 300 g /11 oz very fine spaghettini
- 30 g/1 oz butter
- 150 g grated caciocavallo or Parmesan cheese
- 1–2 tablespoons aggrassatu sauce (see page 216)
- vegetable oil, for deep-frying
- salt and pepper

Preparation time: 40 minutes, plus resting time  
Cooking time: 50 minutes  
Serves 4

Boil the pasta in salted water until it is al dente, drain, dress with the butter and 2–3 tablespoons of parmesan, then stir in the aggrassatu sauce and season with freshly ground pepper.

Take a little mixture and roll it in your hand to form a small fritter. Place on a plate sprinkled with parmesan sauce and continue until the mixture is used up. Sprinkle the fritters again with parmesan and keep under a weight for 30 minutes. Heat plenty of oil in a frying pan and fry the fritters until golden. Drain on kitchen paper and serve with the sauce of your choice.

**SCUMA FRITTA**

Preparation time: 40 minutes, plus resting time  
Cooking time: 50 minutes  
Serves 4

Boil the pasta in salted water until it is al dente, drain, dress with the butter and 2–3 tablespoons of parmesan, then stir in the aggrassatu sauce and season with freshly ground pepper.

Take a little mixture and roll it in your hand to form a small fritter. Place on a plate sprinkled with parmesan sauce and continue until the mixture is used up. Sprinkle the fritters again with parmesan and keep under a weight for 30 minutes. Heat plenty of oil in a frying pan and fry the fritters until golden. Drain on kitchen paper and serve with the sauce of your choice.
Coniglio dei Nebrodi in Agrodolce

Preparation time: 30 minutes, plus soaking time
Cooking time: 2 hours
Serves 4–6

Stir 200 ml/7 fl oz (scant 1 cup) of the vinegar into a bowl of water. Add the pieces of rabbit and let soak for 30 minutes, then drain and pat dry.

Heat the olive oil in a large non-stick frying pan or skillet, add the pieces of rabbit and cook over medium-high heat, turning occasionally, for 8–10 minutes, until evenly browned. Remove the pan from the heat.

Pour water into a small frying pan or skillet to a depth of 1.5 cm/3/4 inch, add a pinch of salt and set over medium-low heat. Add the onions and celery and cook for about 15 minutes, until the onions have become translucent.

Mix the tomato purée (paste) with 200 ml/7 fl oz (scant 1 cup) hot water. Transfer the pieces of rabbit to a large pan, add the tomato purée mixture and the onion and celery mixture, cover and simmer for 45 minutes. Stir in the pickled vegetables and the apples, re-cover the pan and simmer for another 45 minutes.

Heat the remaining vinegar in a small pan, then remove from the heat, stir in the sugar and add to the pan of rabbit. Season to taste with salt and remove the pan from the heat.

Transfer the stew to a serving dish and let cool, then sprinkle with the hazelnuts and garnish with the wild fennel.

Sweet-and-sour Nebrodi rabbit

— 300 ml/½ pint (1¼ cups) red wine vinegar
— 1 x 1.5-kg 3¼-lb rabbit, cut into pieces
— 3 tablespoons olive oil
— 2 onions, thinly sliced
— 1 celery stalk, chopped
— 1 tablespoon tomato purée (paste)
— 250 g/9 oz mixed pickled vegetable garnish, chopped
— 4–5 apples, peeled, cored, sliced and blanched in acidulated water
— 3 tablespoons sugar
— 50 g/2 oz (½ cup) shelled hazelnuts, roasted and chopped
— salt
— wild fennel, to garnish
**Sweet-and-sour meatballs**

- 500 g/1 lb 2 oz lean veal, minced (ground) twice
- 150–200 g/5–7 oz (1¾–2½ cups) grated pecorino cheese
- 150 g/5 oz (2½ cups) fresh breadcrumbs
- 1 garlic clove, finely chopped
- 1 tablespoon chopped flat-leaf parsley
- 2–3 eggs, lightly beaten
- vegetable oil, for deep-frying
- salt

*For the sauce:*

- 1 onion, chopped
- 150 g/5 oz pickled vegetable garnish
- 80 g/3 oz (scant ½ cup) sugar
- 100 ml/3½ fl oz (scant ½ cup) red wine vinegar
- 800 g/1¾ lb tomato sauce

Mix together the veal, pecorino, breadcrumbs, garlic, parsley, eggs and a pinch of salt in a bowl, adding a little water if necessary to make a firm, even mixture. Take a small amount of the mixture at a time and shape into a ball between the palms of your hands, then gently flatten. Pour oil into a frying pan or skillet to a depth of about 10 cm/4 inches and heat. Add the meatballs, in batches if necessary, and cook, turning once, for 10–15 minutes until golden brown on both sides. Remove with a fish slice (spatula) and drain on paper towels.

To make the sauce, transfer 4–5 tablespoons of the oil used to cook the meatballs to a pan and heat. Add the onion and cook over medium–low heat, stirring occasionally, for 8–10 minutes, until golden brown. Add the pickled vegetables and cook for a few minutes more. Mix the sugar with 100 ml/3½ fl oz (scant 1/2 cup) hot water and stir into the pan with the vinegar and tomato sauce. Taste and add more sugar or more vinegar if necessary.

Simmer for a few minutes, then add the meatballs and cook for another 10 minutes. Transfer to a serving dish and serve at room temperature.
Gelo di caffè

Coffee jelly

This type of dessert is very common in Sicily and hugely popular in the summer. More popular versions include those flavoured with jasmine flowers, prickly pear or watermelon.

Preparation time: 5–10 minutes
Cooking time: 20 minutes
Serves 6

Rinse out a 500-ml/18-fl oz (2-cup) decorative mould with cold water. While the coffee is still hot, pour it into a bowl, stir in the cinnamon, then add the sugar and continue to stir until cooled slightly. Sift the cornflour (cornstarch) or arrowroot into the mixture and whisk to prevent any lumps from forming. Strain the mixture into a pan and bring to a boil over a very low heat, stirring constantly. Remove the pan from the heat, stir for a few seconds and then pour into the prepared mould. Chill in the refrigerator for at least 3 hours. To serve, remove from the refrigerator and turn out the mould onto a serving dish.
SICILY

• A stunning cookbook containing more than 50 recipes from the tables of Sicily, the most unique region of Italy

• Recipes are accompanied by texts detailing traditional Sicilian ingredients, producers, food markets and specialty stores

• Contains specially commissioned photography of landscapes and products from all provinces of Sicily, from Palermo and Catania to Messina and Trapani

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