

Good Taste

Some of our favorite jewelry designers get creative in the kitchen. *Buon appetito!* BY BETH BERNSTEIN

DIMODOLO (DINO MODOLO)



I find that cooking helps me change my focus from my design work; it allows for meditation and a different type of creativity—you must be fast and precise to serve your guests on time. In some ways, cooking is a bit like designing: there is an alchemy of different elements and of finding the perfect balance. My favorite part is to go to different shops and markets and understand the specifics of different ingredients, where they are from and why

they will work in a recipe or not.

The first time I cooked for anyone was in the late '70s. I was in England as a student and one Sunday, I cooked spaghetti with my mother's homemade Bolognese sauce (which took 4 hours) for my friends. To thank me, they poured so much beer I couldn't even make it home that night.

These days, I am quite competent with a number of Asian and Indian dishes, but the recipe I've mastered (and personalized) is one I learned from friends who are restaurant owners in Tuscany. It's called *Spaghetti Alla Vongole Veraci* (spaghetti with clams).

SPAGHETTI ALLA VONGOLE (CLAMS) VERACI

INGREDIENTS (SERVES 4):

2 lbs fresh *vongole veraci* (large) from Adriatic Sea
1 lb spaghetti grano duro n°12 from Cecco
¹/₄ cup Italian Chardonnay (Tuscany)
1 small red chili (Sicily)
1 clove of garlic
6 cherry tomatoes, quartered (Sardegna)
Fresh ground black pepper
Sea salt (Guérande, France)
5 tablespoons of cold-pressed olive oil (Puglia)
Parsley (flat leaf)

DIRECTIONS:

Wash clams under cold water for five to 10 minutes (or soak in cold water with coarse salt for 30 minutes. Change water if it gets too murky).

In a large steel frying pan warm, on low-to-medium fire, three tablespoons of olive oil. When warm, add the minced red chili and garlic. Cook until garlic changes color.

Add the clams and the white wine (at the same temperature). Don't overcook. Once the clams open, transfer to a bowl (reserve the liquid in the pan). Do not use clams that remained closed.

Pour remaining liquor (cooking liquid) into a bowl.

Cook spaghetti in salted boiling water until *al dente*.

While spaghetti is cooking, take the (unwashed) frying pan, and add the two remaining tablespoons of olive oil. Warm over medium fire. Add the tomatoes, salt and pepper, and cook for four minutes.

Once the tomatoes are warm, add the clam liquor. Stir

everything and cook for another four minutes, until the mixture reduces.

Add the spaghetti. Stir them into liquor. Add the clams and cook everything for another four minutes.

Add the fresh parsley (snipped) to garnish. Serve immediately.

STEPHEN WEBSTER



There are times I'm so busy, I find that up to 36 hours have passed without anything solid passing my lips. This is very disappointing for my wife, Assia. She loves food and is truly at home in the kitchen, the one place in the house I generally try to avoid.

The times I do find myself in the most frightening room having to prepare something to eat, the meal never changes: a cheese sandwich. The amazing part of it is that, if you ask my youngest daughter what she would like to eat more than candy, she will say one of Papa's "tasted" cheese sandwiches.

"TASTED" CHEESE SANDWICH RECIPE

Two pieces of bread (any kind and shape)

A thick piece of strong English cheddar (the sort that burns the roof of your mouth)

Sliced cucumber

Picalilli pickle (which is specific to a small population of English people who have nothing but contempt for their stomachs)

Put cheese, cucumber and pickle in between slices of bread and you're ready to eat.

If you're feeling really creative, toast sandwich.

PENNY PREVILLE



I love being in the kitchen; it's an environment that to me means escape from my hectic, fast-paced life. I prefer baking to cooking: when I cook I tend to burn things, and baking puts me in sync with family and home.

This is probably because I helped my mom bake brownies ever since I was a little girl. They were handed down to her from her grandmother, my great-grandmother.

In college, I continued

the tradition of making my family's special brownies but added a few ingredients of my own. My mom's were fudgy and I liked mine more cake-like. Today, I make them for holidays like Thanksgiving, Christmas, Hanukkah and Mother's Day. My sons love them too but never wanted to learn how to make them. So it was fun to hand down the recipe to my new daughter-in-law recently. I'm sure she will personalize them the way I did.

GRANDMA PRED'S SECRET BROWNIES

INGREDIENTS:

8 squares of unsweetened Baker's chocolate

6 eggs

3 cups of sugar

1 ¹/₄ cup sifted flour

3 teaspoons vanilla

2 sticks of margarine

BAKING INSTRUCTIONS:

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Grease baking pan with margarine. Beat eggs in mixing bowl. Add the sugar while slowly stirring. Melt chocolate squares and margarine together in a double boiler. Add chocolate to eggs and sugar. Mix in vanilla. Mix in flour. Using electric beater, stir everything together so that the texture of the ingredients is smooth. Pour everything into the baking pan and bake in oven for 30 minutes. (Test the brownies with a toothpick to make sure they are done.) Take out and let cool.

SCOTT KAY



During my last year in high school, I had a part-time job with a Kosher Catering company. There is a certain way they teach you to make meat and chopped salad platters, but I was given a big job and decided to get creative about it. My boss began to yell "we don't do it this way," when the woman whose platters I had worked on came in and said they were just what she had wanted. For me, the creative outlet is

most important, and, as, with my jewelry design, I can bend or break rules in the process.

But I do love to cook. Sauces are my favorite to make (an old Italian friend once told me, "You don't call it sauce. You call it gravy.")

My house is up on a cliff on a 26-acre estate, and used to

be John Houseman's home in the 1940's. I also have the most incredible professional kitchen. It's 50 feet long by 30 feet wide and has two ovens, an eight-burner stove, flat pan grills, a huge butcher block table, three sinks and two dishwashers. When I'm preparing a meal, I tend to use all of the pots and pans in the kitchen and make a real mess. Although I get in touch with my feminine side with my bridal jewelry, you'll never find me serving dainty portions or delicate pastries. If there are 15 people, I prepare for 50.

The one piece of advice I have to give while cooking is don't be afraid to stick your spoon in and taste (of course use a clean spoon to continue).

FRA DIAVOLO BOUILLABAISSE / SAUCE

INGREDIENTS:

- 1 leveled tablespoon of salt
- 1 1/2 tablespoons of basil
- 1 1/2 tablespoons of black pepper
- 2 tablespoons of parsley
- 1 teaspoon of sugar
- 1/4 cup dry white wine
- 6 tablespoons of olive oil
- 6 crushed garlic cloves
- 6 cups of whole chopped tomatoes (include juice)
- 12 ounces of tomato sauce
- 8 fresh red peppers with seeds and juice (no crushed red pepper flakes)
- 1 whole onion (chopped)
- 1 1/2 lbs of shrimp (peeled and cleaned)
- 1 1/2 lbs of bay scallops
- 1 2-lb lobster (split and parted)
- 1 lb of fresh crabmeat
- 1 dozen little neck clams (cleaned)
- 1 dozen mussels (cleaned)

DIRECTIONS:

Using a large saucepot, heat olive oil over medium heat for one to two minutes.

Add crushed garlic and stir constantly for one to two minutes.

Add onions, red peppers and continue to stir for another two to three minutes allowing the natural juices to soak into the base that you are preparing.

Continue by adding the spices: basil, parsley, black pepper, sugar and salt, cook for four to five minutes over medium heat.

Add un-drained, chopped tomatoes and the tomato sauce.

After a few minutes add the dry white wine. Allow to come to a light boil, stirring constantly. Reduce heat and simmer for approximately 30 minutes, stirring occasionally.

Taste frequently and personalize with a little more of this or a little more of that!

Add mussels and clams first, followed by the crabmeat. Allow to cook, about 10 minutes. Then add shrimp, scallops, little neck clams, and cracked lobster. Cook for another 10 minutes while constantly checking the texture of your seafood.

This is great to eat alone as a bouillabaisse or as a sauce over a bed of spaghetti or linguini.

ROBERTO COIN



As a young man, I attended catering school in Switzerland, then was sent to work at some of the best hotels in Europe. I went from being a bar waiter to a qualified chef and then manager and shareholder in the hotels. But at 32 years old, I realized I had another dream—to design jewelry. Luckily I was able to turn the

dream into a successful reality.

My background has taught me that the secret of fine cooking is to do it a lot. I can prepare a good minestrone, spaghetti Bolognese and Chateaubriand.

But it takes time to get all the ingredients and proportions right, and I don't have that much time with designing the different collections, traveling and trade fairs. So my favorite recipe to prepare is Crêpes Suzettes. I think I've mastered this dish.

CRÊPES SUZETTES (serves 10)

Take some orange peel and lemon peel and stir with sugar (four teaspoons per serving), cooking in a large copper saucepan over low heat until the mixture becomes a beautiful caramelized sugar. In a separate pan, combine one cup fresh orange juice and 1/3 cup fresh lemon juice. Cook over low heat, stirring constantly, until approximately 80 percent reduced.

Thereafter, you take one crêpe at a time, you put it in the saucepan and inside each crêpe you pour just a little bit of sugar. You add a little bit of sauce at the center of the crêpe, you fold it twice and do the same with other crêpes.

Should you find yourself short of sauce, add orange juice only.

Once you've finished preparing the crêpes on the saucepan, leave them approximately five to 10 minutes, depending on the thickness of your crêpes (which should be, anyway, as thin as possible). Add half a shotglass of Cointreau and a shot of Grand Marnier. Then take the saucepan near the flame and add two shots of cognac, catching the mixture on fire. Let the flame burn out (about 10 seconds) and the crêpes suzettes are ready.

Remove them from the fire, remove citrus peels, and serve on a small plate by themselves or with a bowl of light vanilla ice-cream. Garnish with a bit of orange or lemon peel. Enjoy.

The best part of this dish is when you're drinking coffee, laughing and enjoying the company of your guests. This is true happiness. The first part of the meal satisfies your stomach; the last part satisfies your heart and mind.