

HOW TO MAKE THE BEST OF WALNUTS

Tastes of Italia

THE BEST IN ITALIAN COOKING

OCTOBER 2013

**Classic
Tastes of
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26

Great Recipes From Italy

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Ribollita ■ Tortellini Bolognese Style
Spaghetti alla Puttanesca ■ Pasta Southern Style
Divine Pear Crostada with Walnuts and more

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THE FOODS OF BOLOGNA

Bologna. La Citta Grassa – The ‘Fat City’s’
Finest Pasta *By Lauren Birmingham Piscitelli*



Legend says the creation of the tortellini was inspired from the navel of Venus. The chef loved the shape of the goddess's navel so much that he shaped a pasta after it.

This classic Bolognese pasta—little round pockets stuffed with pork, mortadella, Parma ham, nutmeg and Parmigiano-Reggiano—is served in a brodo (broth). Other classic Bolognese pasta varieties include tagliatelle, tortelloni, lasagne, strichetti, gramigne and maltagliati, with the key ingredient being farm fresh eggs.

Bologna, famous worldwide for its food, is hailed “the food capital of Italy” or “Bologna, la città grassa”—the fat city! The region

scene as vendors sell their regional products including oodles of fish, artisan cheese, prized truffles, chocolate, prosciutto and mortadella, aged balsamico, and Sangiovese and Lambrusco.

She starts the tour with an introduction to Bologna's food culture. “We have to thank the Celts for Bologna's food fame, because it started with their invasion and importation of pigs here. This is the reason why Bologna and the entire Emilia Romagna area are so famous for sausages, prosciutto, mortadella, culatello and salami. Everything started 2,400 years ago,” says Anna. “In addition to our traditional pork products, pasta is a staple food here, and it is a food culture in itself,” says Anna as she offers me a sample of a crisp Parmigiano-Reggiano. We admire the many cheeses in La Baita Formaggi,

Sforza, the wife of Giovanni Bentivoglio, the Lord of Bologna during the Renaissance in the 15th century. A chef was so fascinated by her golden locks that he created the tagliatelle after them.

“This pasta is made in very long ribbons, is very yellow, and is eaten only with Bolognese sauce. Any others are not authentic. Spaghetti Bolognese does not exist in Bologna, because it is a dry pasta, and it does not go well with meat sauce. If you come to Bologna and ask for this, usually the waiter will laugh, because there is no such recipe,” Anna explains.

Then there are the tortellini bosses, and Paolo Atti was one of them. He came to Bologna in 1877 and became a pasta maker. Today, Atti & Figli is still owned by the same family and is still very famous for its fresh, handmade pasta, especially the tortellini. You

There are many legends that tell about the oldest pasta in Bologna. For example, the classic, tagliatelle, first appeared in the Middle Ages around 1200 A.D. Tortellini followed during the 16th century and were filled wild pheasant meat. Recipes certainly have changed during the centuries.

became famous thanks to the Celts who arrived from France and Germany in 400 B.C. They imported pigs to this region, so pork evolved into a very important part of the cuisine. The locals used pork to stuff pasta, make salami and prosciutto and add it to slow cooked sauces. Today pork is a staple in Bologna's cuisine and the secret ingredient in the classic Bolognese sauce.

To learn more about Bologna's historic pastas, I head north from my home in Positano on an early morning EuroStar. Within four-and-a-half hours, I am strolling the Quadrilatero, the medieval market, of La Città Grassa with Signorina Anna. She is a native Bolognese guide and landmark historian who will explain the distinctive pastas of the region.

Anna and I meet at the Piazza Maggiore and greet each other with an Italian, cheek to cheek, kiss, and a “Benvenuti ciao ciao,” welcome. We cross the Fontana del Nettuno, the Fountain of Neptune, and enter the lively medieval market side streets and small passageways that crisscross. It is a colorful

Bologna's oldest and most famous cheese shop.

Anna knows her pasta by heart. “Let's start with tortellini,” she says. Cooked in chicken broth with carrots and onions, it is freshly made and stuffed with pork, Parmigiano-Reggiano cheese, and nutmeg. In Bologna, each little one is still made by hand, one-by-one. “The sfogline, the skillful women who patiently knead, roll and stuff each one, are the master artisans who keep this tradition alive,” says Anna. There are no machines. And they must be made very, very small, like the small navel of Venus. “So with one kilogram (about 7 cups) of flour and 10 eggs, you will be able to make 800 tortellini. If you make less, it means you made them too big and they cannot be called Tortellini Bolognesi.”

The traditional sfoglia, literally translating to leaves, are made of egg and flour. The proportion is one egg to 100 grams (about 3/4 cup) of white flour for each person.

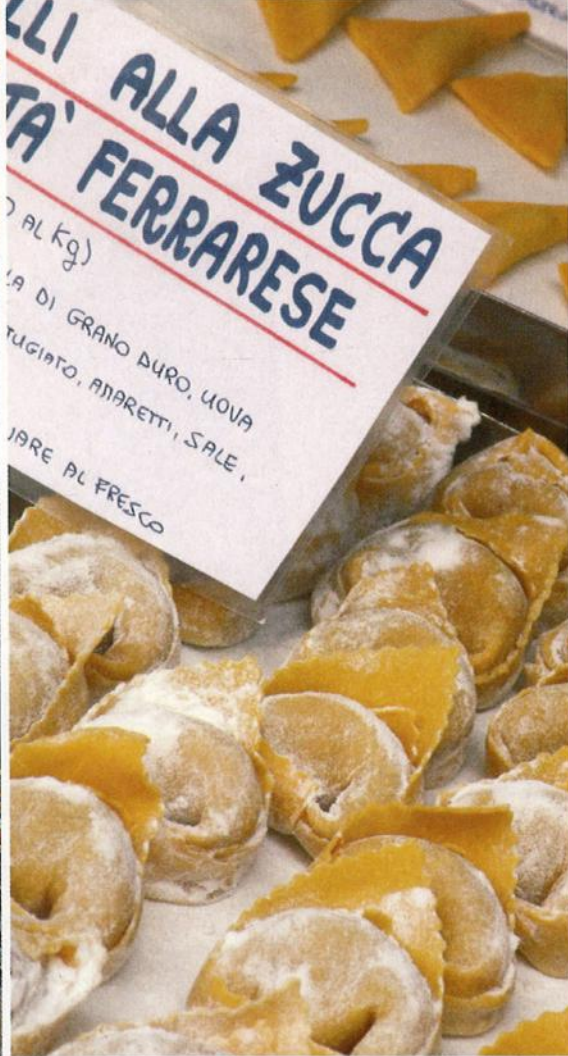
Another famous pasta from Bologna is tagliatelle. Legend says this pasta was inspired by the beautiful blonde hair of Ginevra

can buy them in a box, bring them home, and serve them with your own homemade broth.

Tortellini also take on a sweet side when a hazelnut paste with nutmeg and sugar is used as the filling. The sfogline at the Ponte Rosso Ristorante prepare their traditional tortellini with a creamy strawberry sauce. Tortellini are so much a part of the food culture here in Bologna that their shape is often used in other food preparations.

“The Bolognese are so serious about pasta that they keep their recipes for tagliatelle, ragu, Bolognese sauce and friggione under lock and key in Palazzo delle Mercanzie, the 13th century building that is home to the Chamber of Commerce,” Anna says. “There you can see the official measurement for tagliatelle. Professional cooks and chefs come from around the world to see this work of art which is tagliatelle made in 24-kt solid gold. Tagliatelle is only pasta to eat with a great homemade Bolognese sauce.”

On my tour with Anna, I also learn that authentic Bolognese sauce is made with a small quantity of tomato sauce that is used



BOLOGNA'S VIA DELL'INDIPENDENZA (pages 38 and 39) runs from north of the city near the train station to the Piazza Maggiore, a bustling square created in the 13th century. This page, above left: A pasta artisan displays perfect fresh tagliatelle. Center: Fresh tortellini at Atti & Figli. Right: A sfogline (tortellini artisan) at Amerigo's in Bologna. Bottom: Pastries and desserts on display in shop windows in the Piazza Maggiore. Bolognese recipes start on page 44.

PHOTOGRAPHY BY LAUREN BIRMINGHAM PISCITELLI



Native Intelligence

only to give it a little color (contrary to using large quantity as does the rest of the world).

It is a sauce that is made with veal, and each family has its own secret recipe. Nonnas of Bologna, Italian grandmothers, always use some pork in their stuffing, like little pieces of bacon or sausage (not smoked, as it is not part of the Bologna food tradition). A true Bolognese sauce needs to stew at least nine hours, and is usually prepared the night before, typically on a Saturday for Sunday. A good sauce takes a long time to simmer," Anna says.

"Lasagne is another typical Bolognese pasta, and in Bologna it is green because we put spinach in the sfoglia. We layer the pasta ribbons with Bolognese sauce and then bake it," Anna says. "The word lasagna is from the south of Italy, not from Bologna, and in Naples they layer it with little meatballs," she adds.

Friggione is another typical traditional pasta dish made with onions and tomato. "It is a poor man's dish, because the main ingredients are just these two things. During the Second World War, it was 'the everyday food' eaten for breakfast, lunch and dinner," Anna explains.

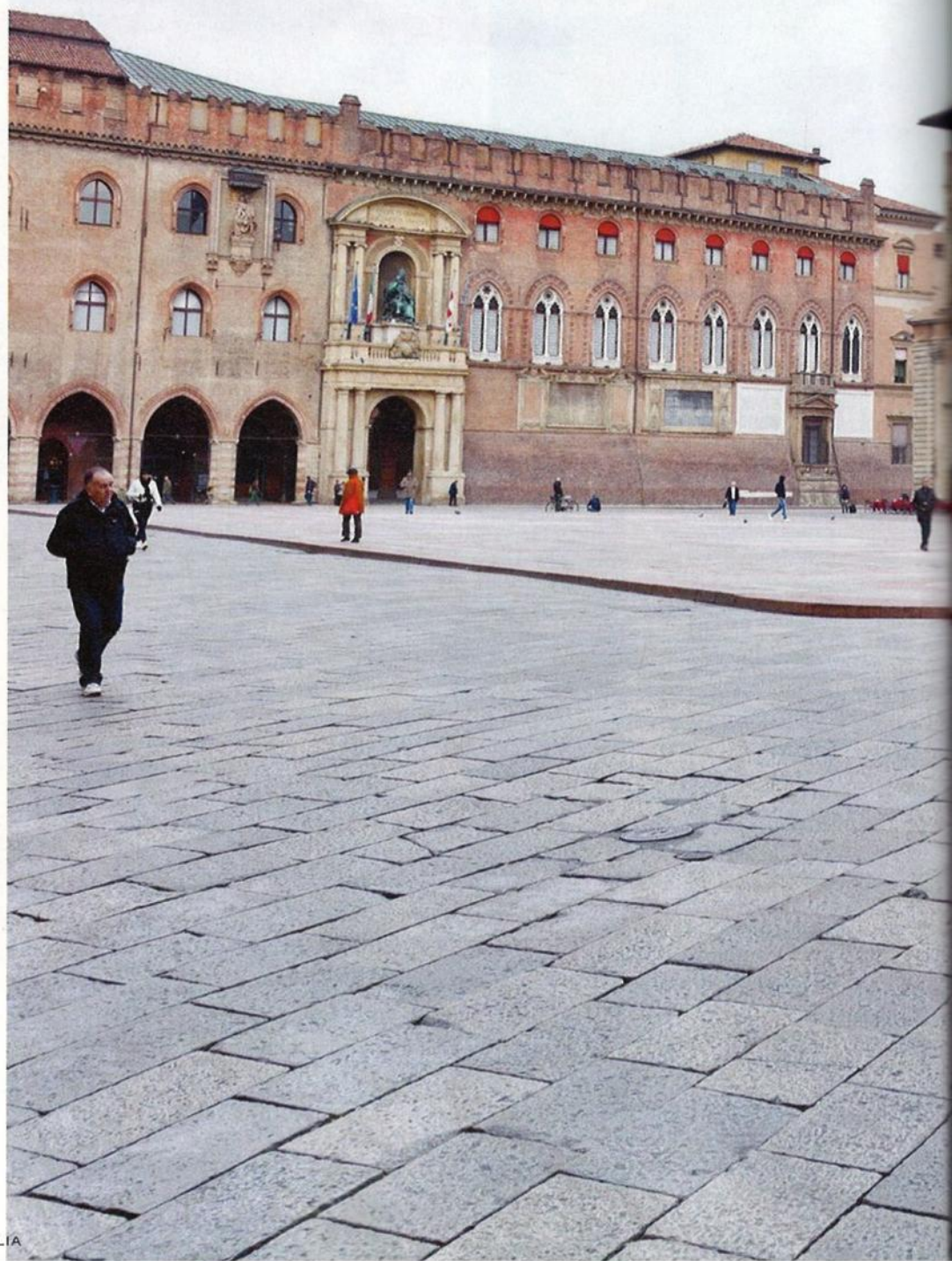
There are many different legends that tell about the oldest pasta in Bologna. For example, the classic, tagliatelle, first appeared in the Middle Ages around 1200 AD. Tortellini followed during the 16th century, and at that time they were filled with wild pheasant meat. Recipes certainly have changed during the centuries.

Anna explains how trends have changed. "In the '70s, making pasta at home changed and less was made. At that time, women were working more and less in the kitchen. However, since 2005, women have returned to learning making pasta at home again," Anna says.

When I ask Anna her favorite pasta, she confirms without hesitation, "Tagliatelle al Ragù." Top quality ingredients make the difference.

"Come to Bologna," she says, "and I'll show you how a sfogline's work is done!"

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THE PIAZZA MAGGIORE
with the Accursio Palace and Palazzo del Podestà, which was built around 1200 A.D. The Piazza Maggiore began as a central marketplace in the 13th century and is still an important culinary and cultural destination for residents and tourists alike.

Tortellini Bolognese Style

In Bologna, making authentic tortellini is a multi-day process because the meat used is allowed to marinate to bring out the best flavor. Plan ahead for the best results. The same goes for the broth the tortellini is cooked in. It's best if the broth has been allowed to steep and simmer for several hours to allow a rich flavor to develop. Start the filling first, then make the dough on the day you're ready to use it.

For the filling:

- 2/3 pound pork loin**
- 1/2 teaspoon each of salt, black pepper**
- 2 tablespoons chopped fresh rosemary or 1/2 teaspoon dried rosemary**
- 4 cloves garlic, chopped**
- 3 tablespoons butter**
- 2/3 pound prosciutto**
- 2/3 pound mortadella**
- 2 1/2 cups grated Parmigiano-Reggiano**
- 3 whole eggs**
- 1/8 teaspoon nutmeg**

For the dough:

- 3 1/4 cups superfine flour (you can use cake flour)**
- 4 large eggs**
- 1/8 teaspoon salt**
- 1 tablespoon water, or more if needed**
- 8 cups chicken broth**
- Grated Parmigiano-Reggiano, for garnish, if desired**

For the Filling: Create a rub for the pork loin by combining the salt, pepper, rosemary, and garlic. Rub over the pork and allow to marinate in the refrigerator for 2 days.

In a large pan, melt the butter and cook the pork loin on low heat until fully cooked.

On a cutting board, mince together the pork loin, prosciutto and mortadella with a meat pounder.

Add the Parmigiano-Reggiano, eggs, and the pinch of nutmeg to the meat mixture. Mix until it is well combined. Transfer and store for at least 24 hours in the refrigerator.

For the pasta: On a clean work area, pour the flour and make a well in its center. Add the eggs and salt. A few tablespoons of water can be added one at a time, if needed.

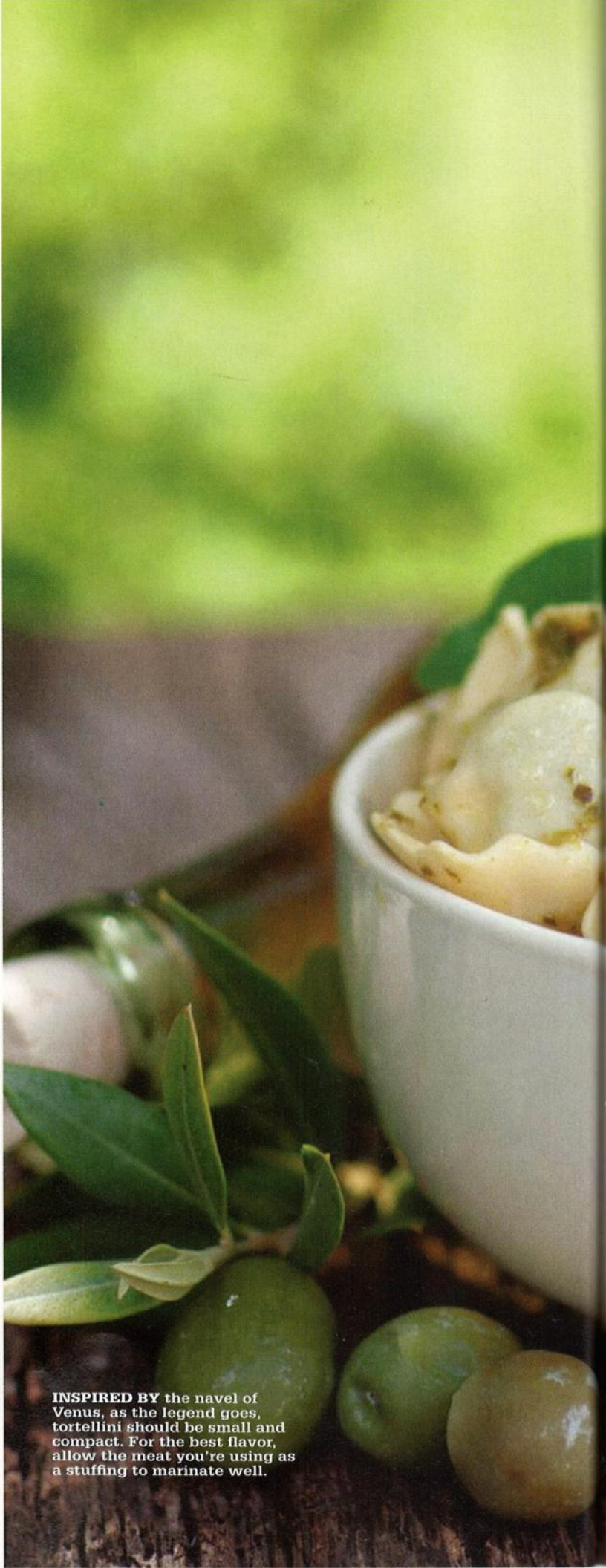
Combine the ingredients together and knead until well-blended. Divide the mixture in half and lightly grease both pieces with extra virgin olive oil. Wrap in plastic wrap and leave for half an hour at room temperature.

Remove the wrap and put the pasta on the board. With a rolling pin, stretch out the dough into a large thin sheet. Cover the dough with a clean cloth and let rest for a half hour.

Cut the dough into small 1 1/2-inch squares. Fill each square with about a teaspoon of filling. Fold the square over the filling, forming a triangle. Bring the two points together, lightly pinching the points together forming a small ring shape. A classic tortellino should weigh about 1/5 ounce. Repeat with the rest of the dough.

Bring the chicken broth to a boil, then reduce it to simmer. Add the tortellini and cook about 10 minutes until they have floated to the top of the broth. Ladle into bowls, top with grated Parmigiano-Reggiano, and serve.

Makes 4 servings.



INSPIRED BY the navel of Venus, as the legend goes, tortellini should be small and compact. For the best flavor, allow the meat you're using as a stuffing to marinate well.



Classic Bolognese Ragu

- ¼ pound pancetta, finely diced**
- 1 medium carrot, finely diced**
- 1 medium celery stalk, finely diced**
- 1 small onion, finely diced**
- $\frac{2}{3}$ pound of ground beef**
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup white or red wine**
- 5 tablespoons tomato sauce**
- 1 cup whole milk**
- Salt and pepper, to taste**
- 2 tablespoons heavy cream, optional**
- 1 pound tagliatelle, cooked al dente**

In a large pan, sauté the diced pancetta until slightly cooked. Add the diced vegetables and continue to cook for a few more minutes until soft.

Add the ground beef, stir and continue to cook until the meat sizzles. Pour in the wine and tomato sauce. Reduce heat to low and let the sauce simmer for about 2 hours, pouring in milk a little at a time throughout the cooking process.

Season with salt and pepper, to taste. Optional but advisable is the addition of a tablespoon or two of heavy cream when the sauce is ready. Serve sauce tossed with tagliatelle pasta, cooked al dente.

Makes 6 servings.

