

Cenone di Capodanno in New York

Charles Scicolone (December 23, 2008)



Italian New Years Dinner with Charles and Michele

My wife Michele writes Italian cookbooks. Every year at this time she gets the same question: "What are you cooking for Christmas and New Years?" Her answer is always the same, "Something Italian," and when she explains what she is making people always say, "can we come?" This year we are having Christmas dinner at a friend's house, so Michele will not be cooking but she will do a dinner New Years Day.



My grandparents came from Sicily and Michele's were from the Naples area but she makes dishes from all over Italy and does not make the same thing every year. Once she decides what she is making, I will try to find the wines to match the menu. Our Manhattan apartment is on the East Side and we have a great view of the Empire State Building, the golden tower of the New York Life Insurance Company and the clock on the Met Life building. We are in New York proprio, but we try to make our guests feel as if they are in Italy with our food, wine and music (Verdi, Puccini, Neapolitan songs and The Play of Herod).

This New Year's Day, our dinner will begin with wedges of pecorino Toscano stuffed into large Medjool dates. I love the combination of the sweet softness of the dates with the salty sharpness of the cheese. This is the last of the wheel of pecorino I brought back from Siena in October, but a nutty, aged Parmigiano Reggiano would work well too. We will drink a toast to the New Year with Prosecco from Venegazzu. Another good choice would be the Ferrari Brut NV. Either would be a perfect match with the cheese and dates.

For the main course, Michele is making Bollito Misto. The recipe is in her book [1,000 Italian Recipes](#) [2]. She simmers various cuts of beef, veal, and chicken in a flavorful broth. At Buon'Italia, the excellent Italian food store in the Chelsea Market, we purchased a zampone, a boned pig's foot stuffed with spiced pork sausage meat. She will cook this too, but in a separate pot so that it does not ruin the bollito broth and make it greasy.

The first course will be the mixed meat broth with homemade tortellini. Barbera D'Alba "Tre Vigne" from Vietti is a good combination. Then the assorted meats, including the zampone, will be sliced and served steaming hot with a variety of sauces, including my favorite, mostarda. There are different kinds of mostarda made in different parts of Italy, but the kind I prefer is made with whole fruits, such as figs, apricots, cherries, and so on, preserved in sweet and spicy mustard flavored syrup. I try to keep the mostarda on my end of the table. Michele also makes Salsa Verde, with parsley, garlic, olive oil, anchovies and capers. We will also serve some good grainy mustard and coarse salt. Dry Lambrusco goes very well with Bolito Misto, such as the Lambrusco Reggiano Concerto from Ermet Medici, but this time of year I prefer Amarone such as Costasera or Campofiorin "Ripasso" from Masi.



No New Year's Day meal would be complete without lentils, which in Italy symbolize money and good luck for the coming year. We have some tiny lenticchie di Castelluccio from Umbria that we have been reserving for this dinner.

To complete the meal, Michele plans to make Panettone Bread Pudding. It's a great way to use up the last of the holiday panettone. Here is the recipe from her book [1,000 Italian Recipes](#) [2]:

Panettone Bread Pudding

Torta di Panettone

Makes 8 servings

Serve plain or with ice cream or zabaglione.

2 cups milk

3/4 cup sugar



1 cup heavy cream

1/4 cup orange liqueur

1/4 cup rum

3 large eggs

2 teaspoons grated orange zest

1/2 teaspoon ground cinnamon

8 to 12 (1/2-inch-thick) slices leftover homemade or store-bought panettone, or brioche bread

2/3 cup raisins

Confectioners' sugar

1. Bring the milk and sugar to a simmer in a small saucepan. Stir until the sugar is dissolved, about 1 minute. Remove from the heat. Stir in the cream, orange liqueur, and rum.

2. Whisk together the eggs, zest, and cinnamon. Stir in the milk mixture.

3. Grease a 13x9x2-inch baking dish. Layer half the bread slices in the pan. Scatter the raisins on top. Arrange the remaining bread slices in the pan. Carefully pour the milk mixture over the bread slices, pressing the bread down to keep it submerged. Let stand 10 minutes until the liquid is absorbed.



4. Place a rack in the centre of the oven. Preheat the oven to 375°F. Bake the pudding 40 minutes or until a knife inserted near the center comes out clean and the top is golden.

5. Cool on a wire rack. Serve warm, sprinkled with confectioner's sugar.

After dessert there is caffè and of course grappa.

Felice Anno Nuovo from Charles and Michele.

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[2] http://www.amazon.com/000-Italian-Recipes-Michele-Scicolone/dp/0764566768/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&s=books&qid=1229354711&sr=8-1%20