

SERGIO HERMAN NEW

ITALIAN

RECIPES AND STORIES

NIJGH & VAN DITMAR



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FOREWORD

Italian cuisine. Comfort food of the purest kind. Its flavours have long held a place in my heart. The simplicity, pleasant bite, and savoury notes of a plate of pasta can make me intensely happy. Sitting around a table together, enjoying pasta, pizza, or risotto, is such a satisfying experience. Hand me a fork and I'm ready to dig in.

When I eat Italian food, I taste atmosphere and character. A ristretto or cappuccino early in the morning at the counter of a *tabacchi*, elegant snacks with an *aperitivo*, toasted ciabatta for a quick lunch, or a pan of pasta to share... It also seems as if every Italian village boasts not only a fine church spire but its own speciality in the form of a cheese, sausage, or pastry. You will find every Italian *nonna* in the village proudly willing to share her tips and tricks for giving a pasta dish its unique flavour. I love the Italian kitchen so much that I decided to delve into the recipes, ingredients, producers, and especially the way it all comes together on a plate. How do you create that characteristic vibrancy and bite?

For me, the Italian sense of simplicity, detail, and perfection in their cooking is a constant thrill. That special feeling, not always easy to capture in words – I sometimes miss that in the Netherlands and Belgium. Over here, the Italian kitchen is often watered down. I certainly experience it very differently than in, say, Sicily. I suspect the food is modified to bring it into line with the flavours that are familiar to us, as is often the case with Chinese cooking. At the same time, I've noticed that certain family recipes or dishes that were invented a long time ago are rarely adapted, whereas they could be fine-tuned with the help of new insights or techniques, and surprise us again.

All the more reason to go in search of the '*cucina nuova*', the new Italian kitchen. I have a great deal of respect for the origins of Italian recipes, for the authentic, classic character of a particular dish. But I'm trying to add something, without taking it too far or seeking to change what makes it unique. An extra dimension, another layer, more finesse. I'm trying to achieve a balance between authenticity and innovation. No easy feat, but certainly a fascinating challenge, and one that has resulted in the 65 new Italian recipes in this book.

Buon appetito!

Sergio



Avocado, artichoke, gambero rosso

Avocado, artichoke, gambero rosso

Cut the courgette into tiny cubes, put into a bowl. Add 100 ml sweet-and-sour-mixture and allow to stand for at least 10 minutes, then pour off the sweet-and-sour mixture. Stir in the shallot and artichoke crème to make a nice, moist courgette salad. Season with freshly ground black pepper and fine sea salt.

Cut the avocados in half lengthwise and remove the stones. Carefully remove the flesh from the peel so that the avocado half comes out in one piece. Fill the hollows that held the stones with the courgette salad, making the hollows a little larger, if necessary. Gently turn over the avocado halves.

Carefully score the rounded side of the avocado a few times, and season with pepper, fine sea salt, and 2 tablespoons sweet-and-sour mixture. Drizzle with olive oil, and sprinkle with the chilli flakes, pistachios, and lemon zest.

Rub the garlic crème into the prawns. In a hot pan, fry them for about 20 seconds on both sides in a splash of olive oil. Season with fleur de sel and pepper. Finish with the lemon zest and juice.

Divide the avocado halves over 4 plates, with the rounded side up. Top with the gambero rosso prawns, and finish with pepper and fleur de sel.

avocado with courgette salad

¼ courgette
100 ml sweet-and-sour mixture, plus
2 tablespoons (see page 271)
1 shallot, finely chopped
2 tablespoons artichoke crème
(see page 217)
2 avocados
olive oil
½ teaspoon chilli flakes
2 tablespoons pistachios, toasted and very
finely chopped
grated zest of ¼ organic lemon

prawns

1½ teaspoons garlic crème (see page 265)
4 gambero rosso prawns
olive oil
grated zest and juice of ½ organic lemon

Arancini, 'nduja, mozzarella

Traditionally, this dish is made with leftover risotto from the day before. No leftover risotto? Heat the chicken stock in a large pot and keep it hot. Sweat the shallot and grated garlic in a splash of olive oil in a hot pan with high sides. Stir in the Carnaroli rice, and sauté until all of the grains are translucent. Deglaze with the white wine. When the wine has been absorbed, add some of the stock, making sure that the rice is covered. Stir constantly. Repeat this process until the rice is tender but still firm. This takes about 18 minutes. Allow the liquid to reduce a bit more, and add the Parmesan. Tip the risotto into a shallow baking dish. Allow to cool, and refrigerate.

Make the filling. In a hot pan with a splash of olive oil, sweat the shallot with the garlic crème. Add the mushrooms and the 'nduja (which will add a touch of heat), and sauté for 3 minutes. Remove from the pan, and allow to cool. Then, finely chop the filling mixture and add the tarragon. Season with freshly ground black pepper and fine sea salt. Put the filling through a food mill placed over a bowl, and pour off any excess liquid – the filling should be as dry as possible.

Make the tomato aioli. Put the egg yolk into a tall, narrow measuring jug (like the one that came with your hand blender), and add the garlic crème, grated garlic, ¼ teaspoon fine sea salt, the Cabernet Sauvignon vinegar, and tomato compote. With the hand blender running at medium speed, gradually add the grapeseed oil. When the aioli starts to thicken, increase the speed to high. If necessary, add more pepper and fine sea salt. Sprinkle with a little tomato powder, if desired.

Heat a deep fryer to 175 °C. Take the risotto out of the refrigerator. Scoop a spoonful of risotto onto the palm of your hand with a large soup spoon. Flatten the risotto, and put a little of the mushroom mixture and some mozzarella in the middle. Close your fingers around the risotto to form a ball, making sure that all of the filling is sealed inside. Make about 20 arancini (the size of a golf ball). Roll the arancini in a plate with the panko, then coat them with the flour and the egg white, and finally, coat them one more time with the panko. Deep-fry the arancini for 2 minutes. Allow them to drain on kitchen paper.

Arrange the arancini on a platter, and serve with the tomato aioli. Garnish with the lime zest. Leftover tomato aioli is delicious as a dip for grissini or sturdy sourdough bread.

risotto

1½ litre chicken stock
1 shallot, finely chopped
1 garlic clove, grated
olive oil
500 grams Carnaroli rice
50 ml white wine
250 grams freshly grated Parmesan

filling

olive oil
1 shallot, finely chopped
1 tablespoon garlic crème (see page 265)
100 grams beech mushrooms, sliced
100 grams chanterelles, sliced
100 grams trompette de la mort (horn of plenty) mushrooms, sliced
1 tablespoon 'nduja (spicy spreadable sausage)
10 tarragon leaves, finely chopped

tomato aioli

1 egg yolk
1 tablespoon garlic crème (see page 265)
½ garlic clove, grated
½ teaspoon Cabernet Sauvignon vinegar
1 tablespoon tomato compote (see page 271)
200 ml grapeseed oil
tomato powder, to garnish (health food shop, optional)

arancini (makes about 20)

1 ball soft mozzarella, cut into pieces
150 grams panko (Japanese breadcrumbs)
150 grams flour
3 egg whites

also needed

grated zest of 1 organic lime

equipment

food mill
pan with oil for deep-frying
kitchen thermometer



Pesche Melba

If you are using fresh peaches, remove the skin by plunging the peaches into boiling water for a few seconds. The skin will then slip off easily. Remove the pits from the peaches, and dice the flesh. Mix in the lemon verbena leaves and lime zest.

Line a metal or plastic tray that will fit into your freezer with baking paper, and place the plating rings on the tray. Divide the peach mixture over the rings, and press down on the mixture with the back of a spoon. Spoon 4 tablespoons of peach sorbet into each ring, press down again, and put the tray in the freezer for 30 minutes.

Remove the rings from the freezer, and place them in the centre of attractive plates. Put your hands around the rings to warm them slightly, and carefully remove the rings. Allow the vanilla ice cream to soften somewhat, then scoop the vanilla ice cream into a piping bag. Top each pesche Melba with a piece of almond crunch, and pipe on a rosette of vanilla ice cream. Finish with the wood sorrel or young sorrel, and the raspberry powder, if using. Serve immediately.

pesche Melba

4 ripe fresh peaches (or tinned peaches)
10 lemon verbena leaves, finely chopped
grated zest of 1 organic lime
500 ml good quality peach sorbet
(available in better ice-cream parlours
and larger supermarkets)

also needed

500 ml good-quality vanilla ice cream
(available in better ice-cream parlours
and larger supermarkets)
4 large (round) pieces almond crunch
(see page 244)
sprigs of wood sorrel or young sorrel,
to garnish
freeze-dried raspberry powder (health food
shop, optional)

equipment

4 plating rings (6 cm Ø)
piping bag



Italian food: comfort food of the purest kind. Like so many of us, Sergio Herman has been captivated by Italy's food culture for many years. Who doesn't love a plate of pasta? Italian cuisine is loved all over the world, and the food is part of our collective culinary heritage. But the focus always seems to be on authenticity; there is little experimentation with new flavour combinations.

Sergio is changing this with his personal take on 'cucina nuova'. In over 60 recipes – which are well within the reach of the home cook – he presents dishes that are based on Italian classics, but have their own logic and distinctive twists that fully reflect his vision of the new Italian kitchen. So rather than an authentic pasta carbonara with bacon, think in terms of carbonara with pipe rigate and North Sea crab, or pappardelle with Zeeland mussels and 'nduja instead of vongole.

Let's allow ourselves to be surprised by the Italian kitchen.

Sergio Herman is a chef and gastronomic entrepreneur. He is the man behind several Michelin-starred restaurants, the most recent being Le Pristine, which was awarded its first star shortly after opening. Other restaurants include AIRrepublic, Blueness, Pure C, and The Jane. He has also garnered success for his cookbooks and TV programmes.

