An aerial photograph of a rolling landscape in Piedmont, Italy. The foreground is dominated by a dense forest of trees with green and yellow foliage. In the middle ground, there are terraced vineyards with rows of grapevines. A small village with several buildings is situated on a hillside. The background shows more rolling hills under a clear sky. The text 'UNLOCKING THE MYSTERIES OF PIEDMONT' is overlaid in large white letters across the center of the image.

UNLOCKING THE MYSTERIES OF PIEDMONT



WHERE THE ALLURE OF BAROLO MEETS THE AROMA OF WHITE TRUFFLES

WRITTEN BY **RAY ISLE** / TRAVEL PHOTOGRAPHY BY **FINN BEALES**
FOOD PHOTOGRAPHY BY **CHRISTOPHER TESTANI**

“IN

TUSCANY, THEY HAVE UNDER THE TUSCAN SUN,” Luca Currado Vietti was telling me. “In Piedmont, we have *Under the Piedmontese Fog*.” Luca and his wife, Elena, his partner in the winery and in life, were in the barrel room of the Vietti winery, hidden under the narrow streets of the hilltop town of Castiglione Falletto, pouring me the latest vintage of Vietti’s impeccable Barolos. “Sometimes, it can actually be hard to see the next row of vines during harvest,” he continued. “It’s like, ‘Crap! Did we just harvest Marcarini’s grapes by mistake? We’re friends, but ...’”

I was in Piedmont because I take whatever chance I can get to go to Piedmont; of all the wine regions in the world, it is to me the most mysterious and the most alluring. It doesn’t have the shock-and-awe beauty of New Zealand’s Central Otago, with its Alps-like crags (watch the *Lord of the Rings* movies, which were filmed there, to get an idea); there are no ranks of shiny, multimillion-dollar tasting rooms as in Napa Valley (nor as many tech bros in Teslas, thankfully); nor does it have the grand, imposing (and somewhat chilly, to be honest) châteaux of Bordeaux. But it does have hills and vineyards and hazelnut forests and narrow-streeted small towns that seem to have been transported out of an earlier era, and it has soul. And no matter how many times I visit, it remains both familiar and unknowable. To paraphrase the first rule of *Fight Club*, the first rule of Piedmont is you can never truly know Piedmont unless you are Piedmontese—and I like that in a destination.

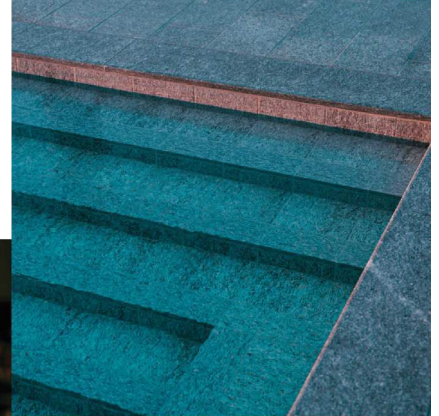
I’d stopped in to visit Luca and Elena on the first day of a weeklong trip. This time around, I was sticking to the towns of the Barolo DOCG, in the Langhe hills a few minutes southwest of the pretty town of Alba. For many wine lovers, Barolo is the only red



WHERE TO STAY

Fontanafredda

Now owned by Oscar Farinetti, of Eataly fame, Fontanafredda was once the hunting lodge of King Vittorio Emanuele II, the first king of Italy, and its buildings retain a regal character. Several of them are being converted to what's essentially a village of small hotels—the casual, charming Hotel Le Case dei Conti Mirafiore is already open; another will have a health and wellness focus; and another will lean toward outdoor activities. (Rooms from \$170, fontanafredda.it)



Casa di Langa

This new, ultra-luxe property outside Alba offers stellar views from its beautifully furnished rooms, not to mention from its infinity pool (not a bad place to sip a glass of wine). Cooking classes here are not to be missed; also tour the organic gardens—the produce is used by the on-site restaurant, Fàula—or arrange for a truffle-hunting expedition, run by the delightful Daniele Stroppiana and Marta Menegaldo of Bianco Tartufi. (Rooms from \$400, casadilanga.com)

Fratelli Alessandria

Fratelli Alessandria has been making stellar Barolo since the mid-1800s. Recently, the family decided to augment that with this charming guesthouse, which opened in 2022. Located in Verduno, it's a terrific spot from which to base a winery-centric trip. (Rooms from \$160, spezialewineresort.it)



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: THE GUESTHOUSE AT FRATELLI ALESSANDRIA; CASA DI LANGA BRINGS A NEW LEVEL OF LUXURY HOSPITALITY TO PIEDMONT, ALONG WITH CHEF DANIEL ZEILINGA'S STELLAR COOKING. OPPOSITE: LUCA CURRADO VIETTI AND ELENA PENNA OF VIETTI MAKE STELLAR WINES IN THE TINY TOWN OF CASTIGLIONE FALLETTO.

**BUNET (CHOCOLATE
CRÈME CARAMEL WITH
AMARETTI) P. 96**



BELOW, FROM TOP:
VALTER FISSORE AND
NADIA COGNO OF
ELVIO COGNO WINERY
ARE FANS OF LAN-
GOTTO RISTORANTE
IN NEARBY NOVELLO;
OTTO LUCA, THE
CHEF AT LANGOTTO
RISTORANTE; CHIARA
BOSCHIS AT E. PIRA
& FIGLI.

**STRACOTTO DI
FASSONA PIEMONTESE
(PIEDMONT BRAISED
BEEF) P. 96**



FOOD STYLING: MELISSA GRAY; PROP STYLING: CLAIRE SPOLLEN



wine that rivals Burgundy in its uncanny ability to reveal the character of a place—a vineyard, even a small portion of a vineyard—in a glass. It is made solely from the Nebbiolo grape, which is thought to get its name from the Italian word for fog, *nebbia*. Luca wasn't joking about his home being known for the stuff. I remember driving late one night on an earlier trip, the road winding up and down the hills. At the tops of the hills, for a minute, maybe two, I could see the night sky, the stars. Then I'd plunge down into the fog again. It was so thick, I couldn't see in front of my car. At all. I drove along at a crawl, cautious, cautious, and every once in a while, some Italian lunatic in an Alfa Romeo would blow past me at 60 miles an hour, apparently entirely unconcerned with visibility, other vehicles, and/or certain death.

I'd made the recently opened Casa di Langa my home base for the first part of this visit. Tucked away in the hills south of Alba, it's a gorgeous spot—who can argue with an infinity pool that looks out past vineyards at a medieval town in the distance? But the real highlight for me proved to be a cooking class with chef Daniel Zeilinga of *Fàula*, the restaurant on the property. We started by making the classic *tajarin* pasta of the region, for which it is necessary to first cancel any upcoming appointments to one's cardiologist: The recipe involves 40 egg yolks for every kilo of flour. After kneading the dough and letting it rest, we ran it through a pasta machine to produce flat sheets and then folded the sheets over to cut the narrow strands by hand. "You know how to use a knife," Zeilinga said approvingly. I passed this off with an "aw, you know, whatever" but inside was rather proud of myself; apparently, years spent lurking around the F&W test kitchen have taught me something. Then we moved on to a white *ragù*, made with tomato water and *salsiccia di Bra* (find the recipe, somewhat modified, on p. 95), and *bunet*, the absurdly delicious Piedmontese dessert that combines the best aspects of *crème caramel* and *chocolate mousse* (recipe p. 96). "Now you can eat," Zeilinga said, looking at the array of plates in front of me. "Don't I have a dinner reservation in just a couple of hours?" I asked. "Then you can eat again," he replied confidently.

It was a quick drive the next day from the hotel to G.D. Vajra; in truth, it's a quick drive almost anywhere here because Barolo is tiny. Only 7 miles long and 5 miles wide, it's a sort of lozenge of spectacularly valuable vineyard land. But that wasn't always the case. As Giuseppe Vaira told me, pouring a taste of his fragrant 2018 Barolo *Bricco delle Viole*, "You have to remember, until the 1980s, the wealthy land

was the flatland. The hillsides, the vineyards, those were poor." The wine had what all great Barolos have: elegance and strength simultaneously, a formidable structure when young that can hide the wine's alluring fruit, a gift for developing and changing—for the better—over years or even decades. Before he joined the winery, which his father founded, Giuseppe was headed to medical school. He had doubts about the value of making wine. He asked his father, "Dad, what is the social purpose of what we do?" His father replied, "Giuseppe, if you want to save lives, go be a doctor. We don't save lives. You don't need art or poetry or a glass of wine in order to stay alive. But what's the point of life without those things?"

After leaving G.D. Vajra, it was another short drive to meet Valter Fissore and Nadia Cogno, owners of *Elvio Cogno*, at one of their favorite restaurants, *Langotto*, in Novello. Chef Otto Lucà had the mixed fortune to open during the pandemic, but he weathered the crisis, and on this day, the small dining room was full of people, mostly locals, eating, drinking, talking. Over a glass of Champagne to start (in my experience, Piedmontese winemakers are obsessed with Champagne), Valter echoed my feelings about what Barolo can offer: "Elegance and complexity, but always wines you can enjoy with food. That's what I make. Wines where you always want another glass. Who wants some super-*bomba* wine where you can't drink another glass?"

Inarguable point. Let's leave the super-*bomba* wines to financial titans bidding at auctions. Post-bubbles, he opened a bottle of his 2008 Ravera, from the vineyards around the winery. The wine recalled dried cherries and the smell of a forest in the fall, autumnal yet full of life, and was gorgeous with chef Otto Lucà's *stracotto*, fall-apart-tender beef slow-braised in red wine (recipe p. 96). Then it was off to the winery to look at the new tasting room and to taste through several vintages of *Anas-Cëtta*, a mineral white made from the once nearly extinct *Nascetta* grape. Valter's father-in-law and mentor, *Elvio Cogno*, who passed away in 2016, essentially rescued *Nascetta* from nonexistence. A Barolo legend, he was one of the first to bottle single-vineyard wines here; that was at *Marcarini*, which he left in 1990 to found his namesake winery. "My father-in-law bought this winery when he was 60 years old," Valter said. "Can you imagine? It took incredible willpower. But he knew the potential of this *cru*."

Willpower, generally, is not lacking in this place. (A local brewery even bottles a beer called *Bogia Nen*, a phrase that roughly

WHERE TO EAT

Fàula Ristorante

Chef Daniel Zeilinga oversees this elegant restaurant at Casa di Langa, where he uses organic produce from the on-site garden and creates thoughtful twists on classic Piedmontese dishes (and runs excellent cooking classes, as well). (casadilanga.com)

Langotto Ristorante

Chef Otto Lucà combines his Piedmontese roots and his experiences cooking in Alsace at this lovely spot in Novello. Don't miss the *stracotto*; also don't miss the pigeon with cherries and *Langhe hazelnuts*. (langottoristorante.com)

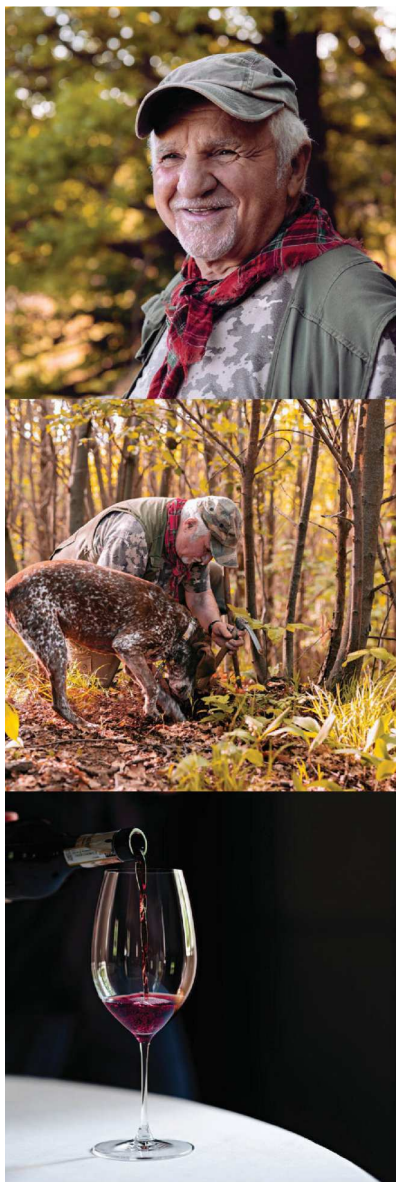
Guido Ristorante

Housed in a 19th-century villa on the Fontanafredda property, this Michelin-starred establishment is one of *Langhe's* most elegant restaurants—and an excellent place to splurge on white truffles. (guidoristorante.it)

Vinoteca Centro Storico

Make sure to visit to this tiny spot in Serralunga d'Alba for top-quality, perfectly sliced *prosciutto*; artisanal cheeses; excellent pasta; and a wealth of Barolos, *Barbarescos*, and, surprisingly, Champagnes. (Local winemakers drink a lot of it, as does *Alessio Cighetti*, *Centro's* lively owner.) (Via Roma 6, 12050 Serralunga d'Alba)





TRUFFLE HUNTING WITH ONE OF TARTUFLANGHE'S SUPPLIERS. OPPOSITE, FROM TOP: PIERO ALCIATI (LEFT) AND CHEF UGO ALCIATI, BROTHERS AND OWNERS OF GUIDO RISTORANTE, WHERE THE AGNOLOTTI DEL PLIN ARE SECOND TO NONE. ITALO, A TERRIER, IS A REGULAR AT ALESSIO CIGHETTI AND STEFANIA SAGLIETTI'S VINOTECA CENTRO STORICO.

translates to “doesn’t budge” and refers to the supposed stubbornness of the Piedmontese personality.) The next day, I stopped in at E. Pira & Figli to taste with owner and winemaker Chiara Boschis, who for many years has made sublime Barolos but early on had to fight against a deeply traditional, male-dominated wine world to do so. “In my generation,” she told me, “there were no women in the cellar. It was heavy, heavy work, and the feeling was, “Eh, if you want to be like a man, OK, work like a man. Move that barrel.” Chiara was sparkling and funny, a joy to spend time with, but also clearly not one to put up with idiots: “The boys in town would be at the bar in front of the winery, watching me work late at night, cleaning tanks, and they’d say, ‘Hey, hey, you are never going to get married!’ ‘Well,’ I’d say, ‘certainly not to you!’”

The wine that first brought her fame, the E. Pira & Figli Chiara Boschis Cannubi Barolo, from the cru of the same name, lived up to its reputation: lush, dark cherry fruit; sleek but substantial tannins; hints of licorice. “It’s super-smooth,” she said, sounding satisfied with her work. “A silk glove. What’s the fame of the Cannubi vineyard? It’s about this magic, how it stays on your tongue, how it’s ethereal. Who doesn’t want the ethereal?”

Excellent question. I gave it some thought at Guido Ristorante, one of the best restaurants in the region, which is located at one of the most historic wineries in the region, Fontanafredda (once the hunting lodge of King Vittorio Emanuele II). As a cloud of white truffles settled across a plate of agnolotti del plin (recipe p. 97) in front of me, I decided that the answer to Chiara’s question was “people who do not like white truffles,” a group contained, if you ask me, within the somewhat broader category of “complete and utter lunatics.”

White truffles, which are native to Piedmont, manage to be both ethereal and deeply earthy all at once. As those whisper-thin shavings settled over the plate, I definitely felt a sense of being transported heavenward even as I was being drawn down deep into the earth, a feeling only amplified by the glass of 2017 Fontanafredda Vigna La Rosa Barolo that I was drinking. No other food does that, at least that I’ve ever had, and no other wine works as well with white truffles as Barolo. Of course, one pays dearly for them. As Luca had said to me, “In Piedmont, we must be geniuses because we have figured out how to make people pay a fortune for a small, smelly potato.”

Or, technically, for a pale-gold, nubby fungus, nondescript except for its penetrating, heady aroma, that lives its secret life in darkness under the earth until, one day, a dog digs it up. Good truffle dogs are a valued commodity, and good locations where white truffles can be found even more so; in fact, the whole business still operates under a shroud of secrecy and wariness. At Tartuflanghe, one of the bigger purveyors in the region, old men still come in from morning visits to the woods with their bounty wrapped in a cloth; the deal is made right there. I made a vague move to take a behind-the-scenes photo at one point and was given a stern finger-shake from the founder of the company.

Not that I can blame him: Given how valuable white truffles are, thievery is always a risk. I spoke to the young founders of Bianco Tartuffi, Daniele Stroppiana and Marta Menegaldo, who do truffle-hunting excursions at Casa di Langa. They started their business in 2019, but the first year, someone broke into their home in November, the height of the season, and stole a kilo and a half of truffles, essentially everything they had. “Then, in 2020, we had the pandemic. And in 2021, a terrible harvest—almost no truffles! But still, business is good,” Daniele said. His optimism was enviable. Maybe it stems from youth. He and Marta, who are in their early thirties, belong to an association of truffle hunters where, he says, “we’re the youngest, by a lot—the average age is 65.”

Is it possible to have too many truffles? Aficionados might argue that the idea is blasphemy, but my feeling is that sometimes you simply need a plate of perfectly sliced ham and a glass of excellent wine to finish the day. That’s why, at the end of every trip here, I find myself at Vinoteca Centro Storico in Serralunga d’Alba. Simply put, it’s one of the world’s great wine bars. Nothing advertises that: There are a few wooden tables, a tiny kitchen, and shelves of wine. But owner Alessio Cighetti—funny, opinionated, often unsparingly direct, always passionate—has infallible taste, both in terms of the wines available here and the quality of the food he serves. There’s a reason local winemakers and far-flung wine travelers can always be found at Centro Storico; it’s one of the few places where, even if you weren’t born six generations ago into a Piedmontese family, you can still feel, for a moment, with a glass of Barolo in front of you and a little local cheese and bread, that you actually are from this remarkable place.

WHERE TO TASTE

Vietti

Luca Currado Vietti and Elena Penna pour some of Barolo's best wines at their small tasting room in Castiglione Falletto. Make sure to try Elena's excellent artisanal gin as well. (vietti.com)

G.D. Vajra

Make a reservation to stop by and taste the Vaira family's range of excellent bottlings, among them a stellar Riesling, a rarity in Barolo. (gdvajra.it)

E. Pira & Figli Chiara Boschis

Chiara Boschis was a trailblazer for women making wine in Piedmont, and every wine she makes is stellar. Visits are limited, so arrange in advance. (pira-chiaraboschis.com)

Elvio Cogno

The new tasting room here has beautiful views over the estate's vineyards in Ravera, one of Barolo's best crus. (elviocogno.com)

Fontanafredda

This gorgeous estate, once the property of King Vittorio Emanuele II, is now owned by Eataly founder Oscar Farinetti, who grew up in nearby Alba. (As a result, there's a mini Eataly in the tasting room.) Definitely sign up for a tour of the historic cellars. (fontanafredda.it)

Tartuflanghe

Tartuflanghe offers a variety of truffle-hunting experiences—some venturing deep into the more remote reaches of Langhe and Roero—and tastings out of its showroom in Piobesi d'Alba. (tartuflanghe.us)



RAGÙ DI SAISICCIA
(SAUSAGE RAGÙ)
WITH TAJARIN



RAGÙ DI SALSIÇCIA (SAUSAGE RAGÙ) WITH TAJARIN

ACTIVE 1 HR 5 MIN; TOTAL 2 HR 30 MIN
SERVES 4 TO 6

Sausage and veal come together in a lightly sweet and aromatic ragù with tajarin—a Piedmontese fresh pasta that gets its gold color from a high ratio of egg yolks to flour. At Casa di Langa in Piedmont, chef Daniel Zeilinga uses tomato water made from fresh tomatoes strained overnight in the ragù; this streamlined version uses a mixture of tomato juice and water, making the dish achievable on any evening at any time of year. One pound of purchased fresh egg spaghetti or about 12 ounces of dried thin spaghetti may be substituted for the tajarin. A final drizzle of olive oil adds a rich finish to the lean meat sauce.

RAGÙ

- 1 Tbsp. extra-virgin olive oil, plus more for serving
- 10 oz. mild Italian sausage, casings removed
- 6 oz. 90% lean ground veal
- 1 small (6-oz.) white onion, finely chopped (about 1½ cups)
- 3 medium celery stalks (about 4 oz.), trimmed and finely chopped (about ¾ cup)
- 2 small carrots (about 3½ oz.), peeled and finely chopped (about ½ cup)
- 1 tsp. fine sea salt, plus more to taste
- ½ tsp. black pepper, plus more to taste
- ⅓ cup dry white wine (such as Arneis)
- 1¾ cups water
- ¾ cup tomato juice (such as Campbell's) (1 [5½-oz.] can)
- 3 (5-inch) thyme sprigs
- 2 fresh bay leaves
- 1 (5-inch) sage sprig
- 1 (5-inch) rosemary sprig

TAJARIN

- 1⅓ cups fine semolina flour (such as Caputo) (about 7¾ oz.), plus more for dusting
- ¼ cup 00 flour (such as Caputo) (about 1⅞ oz.), plus more for dusting
- 14 large egg yolks

ADDITIONAL INGREDIENTS

- 4 qt. water
- ¼ cup fine sea salt

1. Make the ragù: Heat oil in a medium-size Dutch oven over medium. Add sausage and

veal; cook, stirring often to break meat into small crumbles, until meat is browned, 6 to 8 minutes. Add onion, celery, carrots, salt, and pepper; cook, stirring often, until vegetables are softened but not caramelized, about 8 minutes. Add wine; cook, stirring to scrape up browned bits from bottom of Dutch oven, until almost completely evaporated, about 2 minutes. Stir in 1¾ cups water and tomato juice. Using kitchen twine, tie together thyme, bay leaves, sage, and rosemary to form a bouquet garni; add to Dutch oven. Bring to a boil over medium. Reduce heat to low; cover and simmer, stirring occasionally, until flavors meld, about 2 hours. Remove and discard bouquet garni. Season with additional salt and pepper to taste. Keep ragù warm over low until ready to use.

2. While ragù cooks, make the tajarin:

Whisk together semolina flour and 00 flour in a large bowl; transfer to a clean large work surface. Make a well about 5 inches in diameter in center of flour mixture. Add egg yolks to well, and whisk using a fork to break yolks. Using fork, push some of the flour mixture from inside edge of well into eggs, and whisk with fork until just incorporated. Continue incorporating flour mixture into eggs and whisking with fork until a shaggy dough forms.

3. Knead dough until smooth and elastic, about 10 minutes. Shape into a ball, and wrap tightly in plastic wrap; let rest at room temperature at least 1 hour or up to 3 hours.

4. Unwrap dough, and divide evenly into 4 portions. Working with 1 dough portion at a time (and keeping remaining portions covered with a towel), flatten dough to ⅓-inch thickness. Roll flattened dough through a pasta machine with rollers on widest setting. Fold dough in half crosswise, and reroll through pasta machine until dough is as wide as the pasta machine (about 5 to 5½ inches). Continue rolling dough through pasta machine, reducing width of rollers 1 setting at a time, until dough has been rolled through setting 3 (the fourth-thinnest setting), dusting dough with 00 flour as needed to prevent sticking.

5. Dust both sides of dough with 00 flour, and fold in half crosswise. Starting at the folded edge, very loosely roll up dough into a log to form long coiled strands. Cut log crosswise into ⅛-inch-wide pieces. Unroll log; sprinkle with 00 flour, and cut pasta strands in half crosswise to form pieces about 12 to 14 inches long. Form pasta strands into small bundles or nests, and transfer to a rimmed baking sheet dusted with semolina flour; cover with plastic wrap. Repeat process with remaining 3 dough portions.

6. Bring 4 quarts water to a boil in a large pot over medium-high. Stir in salt, and return to a boil. Add tajarin; cook, stirring occasionally, until al dente, 2 to 3 minutes. Using a spider or fine wire-mesh strainer, remove tajarin from water, and add to ragù in Dutch oven. Cook, uncovered, over medium, stirring often, until ragù thickens slightly and coats tajarin, 2 to 3 minutes. Divide mixture evenly among 4 to 6 bowls. Drizzle lightly with additional oil, and serve immediately. —*FÀULA RISTORANTE, CERRETTO LANGHE, ITALY*

MAKE AHEAD Ragù can be made up to 2 days in advance and stored in an airtight container in refrigerator. Uncooked tajarin can be placed on a flour-dusted baking sheet, covered tightly, and refrigerated up to 1 day or frozen in ziplock plastic freezer bags up to 3 weeks. (Pasta can be cooked directly from frozen.)

WINE Lively, berry-inflected Barbera: 2019 Fontanafredda Briccotondo

NOTE Find semolina and 00 flour at most specialty stores or online at italianfoodonline.com.



TO GIVE THE TAJARIN THE BEST COLOR, USE PASTURE-RAISED OR FREE-RANGE EGGS, WHICH HAVE DEEP-ORANGE YOLKS.

BUNET (CHOCOLATE CRÈME CARAMEL WITH AMARETTI)

PHOTO P. 90

ACTIVE 30 MIN; TOTAL 2 HR 45 MIN, PLUS 4 HR CHILLING; SERVES 8 TO 10

Bunet (also known as bonet) is a creamy, rich custard dessert hailing from Piedmont. The addition of amaretti cookies as a garnish enhances the almond flavor of the pudding while adding a lovely crunch.

- 1½ cups superfine sugar, divided
- 2 Tbsp. water
- 4 large eggs
- 1½ cups whole milk
- 1½ cups heavy cream
- 1½ cups amaretti cookies (such as Asturi) (about 2¾ oz.), crumbled, plus more whole cookies for garnish
- ¾ cup unsweetened cocoa (about 2½ oz.)
- ¼ tsp. fine sea salt
- Hot water, as needed

1. Preheat oven to 350°F. Stir together ½ cup sugar and 2 tablespoons water in a small saucepan over medium. Cook, stirring occasionally, until sugar is dissolved, 2 to 3 minutes. Bring to a boil, undisturbed, brushing sides of pan with a wet pastry brush to prevent crystals from forming. Boil, swirling pan occasionally, until caramel is a medium amber color and registers 400°F on a candy thermometer, 4 to 6 minutes. Immediately pour caramel into an 8-inch round cake pan. Quickly tilt pan to evenly coat bottom of pan with caramel. Set aside.

2. Whisk together eggs and remaining 1 cup sugar in a medium bowl; set aside. Bring milk and cream to a boil in a medium saucepan over medium, stirring occasionally. Remove from heat; whisk in crumbled cookies, cocoa, and salt. Let stand 5 minutes. Whisking constantly, gradually pour milk mixture into egg mixture in bowl. Whisk until well combined.

3. Set a fine wire-mesh strainer over cake pan with caramel; pour milk mixture through strainer over caramel in cake pan. Discard solids. Let mixture in cake pan stand 10 minutes. Set cake pan in a medium roasting pan. Add enough hot water to roasting pan to come halfway up sides of cake pan. Carefully transfer roasting pan to preheated oven. Bake until bunet is set on the sides with just a slight wobble in the center, about 1 hour. Remove from oven. Carefully remove cake pan from

roasting pan, and place on a wire rack; let cool at room temperature 1 hour.

4. Cover bunet with plastic wrap, and chill until cold and firm, at least 4 hours or up to 12 hours.

5. Fill a large skillet with water to a depth of ½ inch; bring to a simmer over medium. Unwrap bunet. Run a small offset spatula around edge of cake pan. Dip cake pan in simmering water until bunet releases from bottom of cake pan and spins when pan is rotated side to side, 3 to 5 seconds. (Don't leave it any longer or pudding will melt.) Invert bunet onto a large rimmed platter. (If bunet doesn't come out once inverted, keep inverted until it releases.) Garnish with whole cookies. Slice and serve. —*FÀULA RISTORANTE, CERRETTO LANGHE, ITALY*

MAKE AHEAD Bunet can be kept chilled up to 1 day.

WINE Herbal, lightly sweet Barolo Chinato: NV G.D. Vajra Barolo Chinato

STRACOTTO DI FASSONA PIEMONTESE (PIEDMONT BRAISED BEEF)

PHOTO P. 90

ACTIVE 1 HR 20 MIN; TOTAL 3 HR 20 MIN, PLUS 12 HR CHILLING; SERVES 8

Chef Otto Lucà considers this rustic top blade roast, slow-braised in red wine until it's falling-apart tender, the most important main course of classical Piedmontese cuisine. Marinating the roast overnight jump-starts tenderizing and helps season the meat all the way through. Mashed potatoes make an excellent side for this dish, providing a delicious way to mop up the sauce.

- 2 (750-ml.) bottles Piedmontese red wine (such as Barolo)
- 2 lb. yellow onions (about 4 medium onions), finely chopped (about 6 cups)
- 12 oz. carrots (about 4 medium carrots), peeled and finely chopped (about 2 cups)
- 1 medium (about 1-oz.) celery stalk, finely chopped (about ¼ cup)
- 3 medium garlic cloves, finely chopped (about 1 Tbsp.)
- 1 (5-inch) rosemary sprig
- 2 fresh bay leaves
- ¼ tsp. ground cloves
- 1 (4- to 4½-lb.) boneless top blade roast

- 4 tsp. kosher salt, divided, plus more to taste
- 2 tsp. black pepper, divided, plus more to taste
- 5 Tbsp. extra-virgin olive oil

1. Stir together wine, onions, carrots, celery, garlic, rosemary, bay leaves, and cloves in a large enameled Dutch oven. Rub meat all over with 2 teaspoons salt and 1 teaspoon pepper, and place in wine mixture. Cover with lid, and refrigerate overnight (about 12 hours).

2. Remove meat from wine mixture. Scrape off any vegetables stuck to meat, and transfer meat to a large plate. Pat dry with paper towels. Pour wine mixture through a colander set over a large bowl; reserve vegetables and liquid separately at room temperature. Wash and dry Dutch oven.

3. Add oil to cleaned Dutch oven; heat over medium-high. Sprinkle meat all over with remaining 2 teaspoons salt and remaining 1 teaspoon pepper. Add meat to Dutch oven; cook, turning occasionally, until browned on all sides, 16 to 20 minutes. Transfer meat to a large plate. Add reserved vegetable mixture to drippings in Dutch oven; cook over medium-high, stirring often, until softened, 12 to 16 minutes. Return meat to Dutch oven, and pour in reserved strained wine. Bring to a boil over medium-high. Reduce heat to medium-low; cover and simmer, turning meat occasionally, until meat is fork-tender, 2 hours to 2 hours and 30 minutes.

4. Transfer meat to a cutting board, and tent with foil; let rest while reducing sauce. Remove and discard rosemary sprig and bay leaves from mixture in Dutch oven. Using a fine wire-mesh strainer, scoop and remove vegetable mixture from Dutch oven, and transfer to a medium bowl; set aside. Increase heat under Dutch oven to medium; cook, stirring occasionally, until wine mixture reaches the consistency of jus and has reduced to about 2½ cups, 30 to 35 minutes. Season to taste with salt and pepper, if desired.

5. Slice meat crosswise into ½-inch-thick pieces. Arrange on a platter. Ladle about ½ cup sauce over meat on platter. Serve alongside mashed potatoes and reserved vegetables. Serve remaining sauce on the side. —*OTTO LUCÀ, LANGOTTO RISTORANTE, PIEDMONT, ITALY*

MAKE AHEAD Recipe can be prepared through step 3 up to 1 day in advance. Let cool completely, and chill overnight. Reheat over medium, and proceed with step 4.

WINE Structured, cherry-scented Barolo: 2017 Elvio Cagno Cascina Nuova

AGNOLOTTI DEL PLIN

PHOTO P. 93

ACTIVE 2 HR; TOTAL 3 HR 15 MIN

SERVES 8

These tiny, meat-filled Piedmontese agnolotti (the name translates as “agnolotti with the pinch”) originated as a means of using up braised meat. In this version from Casa di Langa’s Fàula Ristorante, the agnolotti are stuffed with a pork, chicken, veal, and vegetable filling bound with butter and cheese. The pasta is typically served on special occasions with a reduced sauce made from meat drippings, but the restaurant finishes it in a simple butter sauce. If you can’t find Grana Padano, Parmigiano-Reggiano is a good substitute.

PASTA SHEETS

- 2 cups fine semolina flour (about 10¾ oz.) (such as Caputo), plus more for dusting
- ⅓ cup 00 flour (about 1⅝ oz.) (such as Caputo), plus more for dusting
- ½ tsp. fine sea salt
- 10 large egg yolks
- 2 large eggs

FILLING

- 2 Tbsp. extra-virgin olive oil
- 2 (about 9-oz.) veal osso buco, meat cut into ¾-inch pieces and bones reserved
- 8 oz. boneless, skinless chicken thighs, cut into ¾-inch pieces
- 8 oz. boneless pork loin chops, cut into ¾-inch pieces
- ⅓ cup dry white wine
- 1 cup vegetable broth (such as Zoup!)
- 4 cups packed fresh spinach (about 4 oz.)
- 2½ cups roughly chopped Savoy cabbage (about 4 oz.) (from 1 small cabbage)
- ¼ tsp. fine sea salt, plus more to taste
- ¾ tsp. black pepper, plus more to taste
- ¾ cup unsalted butter (6 oz.), chilled and cut into ½-inch pieces
- 2 oz. Grana Padano cheese, finely grated (about ½ cup)

ADDITIONAL INGREDIENTS

- 1 large egg, beaten
- 4 qt. water
- ¼ cup fine sea salt
- ½ cup unsalted butter (4 oz.), divided
- Shaved Grana Padano cheese
- Cracked pepper and flaky sea salt (optional)

1. Make the pasta sheets: Whisk together semolina flour, 00 flour, and fine salt in a large bowl; transfer mixture to a clean large work surface. Make a well about 4 inches in diameter in center of flour mixture.

Add egg yolks and whole eggs to well, and whisk using a fork to break yolks and mix eggs together. Using fork, push some of the flour mixture from inside edge of well into eggs to combine. Continue incorporating flour mixture into egg mixture, kneading with hands until a shaggy dough forms.

2. Knead dough, adding additional 00 flour 1 teaspoon at a time as needed if dough sticks to work surface, until dough is smooth and elastic, about 10 minutes. Shape dough into a ball; wrap tightly in plastic wrap, and let rest at room temperature at least 1 hour or up to 3 hours.

3. Make the filling: Heat oil in a large saucepan over medium-high. Working in 2 batches, add osso buco meat and bones, chicken, and pork; cook, stirring occasionally, until browned on all sides, 8 to 10 minutes per batch. Return all browned meat to pan. Add wine; cook, stirring to scrape up browned bits from bottom of pan, until wine has reduced almost completely, about 4 minutes. Add broth; cook, stirring occasionally, until liquid has reduced to about ¼ cup, 15 to 20 minutes. Remove and discard osso buco bones. Stir in spinach and cabbage. Cook, stirring occasionally, until wilted, about 3 minutes.

4. Transfer hot filling mixture to a food processor. Add fine salt and pepper; process until finely chopped, about 10 seconds, stopping to scrape down sides of bowl as needed. With processor running, gradually add butter, processing until well combined after each addition. Process until mixture is smooth and creamy, about 30 seconds. Add cheese; pulse to combine, 10 to 12 pulses. Season with additional fine salt and pepper to taste. Transfer filling to a large piping bag or a ziplock plastic bag with a ½-inch hole cut in 1 corner. Set aside.

5. Divide pasta dough evenly into 4 portions. Working with 1 dough portion at a time (and keeping remaining portions covered with a towel), flatten dough to ⅓-inch thickness. Roll flattened dough through a pasta machine with rollers on widest setting, dusting with 00 flour as needed to prevent sticking. Fold dough in half crosswise, and reroll through pasta machine until dough is as wide as the pasta machine (about 5½ inches). Continue rolling dough through pasta machine, reducing width of rollers 1 setting at a time, until dough has been rolled through setting 0 (the thinnest setting), dusting dough with 00 flour as needed to prevent sticking. Fold pasta sheet in half lengthwise,

and press gently along the fold to create a crease; unfold. Using a fluted pastry wheel, cut pasta sheet in half lengthwise along the crease; trim ends to form 2 (about 36- x 2½-inch) sheets. Transfer pasta sheets to a clean work surface, and cover loosely with plastic wrap. Repeat process with remaining 3 dough portions.

6. Lay 1 pasta sheet lengthwise on a clean work surface with fluted side on top. Starting ½ inch from the left edge, pipe filling in a line running lengthwise across pasta sheet, about ¼ inch above the long edge closest to you, and leaving a ½-inch gap on the right edge. Brush exposed dough above filling lightly with some of the beaten egg. Starting at long edge of pasta sheet closest to you, roll the dough edge over the line of filling just until the filling is fully enclosed in a tube of dough, leaving about ½ inch of dough sheet unrolled at the top. Using thumb and index finger, pinch the filled dough tube every 1½ inches to form small pillows (about 20 per pasta sheet); pinch to seal ends. Using a pastry wheel, cut between pillows to separate and seal ends. Dust 4 baking sheets with semolina flour. Arrange agnolotti in a single layer on prepared baking sheets; cover with plastic wrap. Repeat process with remaining 7 pasta sheets and filling, arranging agnolotti evenly among the 4 baking sheets.

7. Bring 4 quarts water to a boil in a large pot over medium-high. Stir in fine salt, and return to a boil. Add half of the agnolotti; cook, undisturbed, until al dente, about 2 minutes. While agnolotti cooks, melt ¼ cup butter in a large skillet over medium. Transfer cooked pasta to butter in skillet, and add ⅓ cup pasta cooking liquid. Cook, stirring constantly, until sauce thickens and coats pasta, about 2 minutes. Transfer to a serving bowl. Repeat process with remaining agnolotti, butter, and pasta cooking liquid. Garnish with shaved Grana Padano and, if desired, cracked pepper and flaky salt. —FÀULA RISTORANTE, CERRETTO LANGHE, ITALY

MAKE AHEAD Uncooked agnolotti can be covered tightly on a lightly floured baking sheet and refrigerated up to 1 day or frozen on a baking sheet, transferred to ziplock plastic freezer bags, and frozen up to 3 weeks. (Add frozen agnolotti to boiling water, and increase cook time by 1 to 2 minutes.)

WINE Earthy, elegant Nebbiolo: 2019 Vietti Perbacco Langhe Nebbiolo

NOTE Find semolina and 00 flour at most specialty stores and online at italianfoodonline.com.