

Spezzatino di Manzo, Italian beef stew

This is the first really cold day of fall and it's time to say goodbye to sultry afternoons and summer picnics. A cup of hot tea, a good book and an easy chair invite both body and spirit, and, when it comes time to cook supper, a good stew is just right.

In the north central region of Italy called Lombardy, where I



LUISA ARICO
Italian Cooking Made Easy

was born, braised meats are a staple. On researching the origin of this dish, I found out that some form of spezzatino was the center piece of most Sunday meals starting with the 19th century. Because the main ingredient was the not-so-tender parts of the animal, it was affordable for most people. There is a caveat though, and notwithstanding the sensibilities of my readers, I must confess that beef was only one of the meats used; horse and donkey meats also were the base of many a stew. These last two animals are safer now, but still one

can find, here and there, butchers that deal only in equine fare. To be honest, I never had any, but I'm told that it's very tasty; I will leave it to others to judge.

I'm certain that there are renditions of stufatino in every country and culture; the differences though are in the ingredients added to the meat. I'm giving you my mother's recipe, while adding my own twist to it.

You can make this recipe one or two days ahead, refrigerate it well and reheat to a simmer just before serving.

Spezzatino di Manzo for 4

1 pound beef chuck, or any other cut you prefer, diced into 2 inch cubes
2 tablespoons unsalted butter
1/4 cup extra virgin olive oil
1 tablespoon salt
1/2 tablespoon freshly ground black pepper
2 healthy tablespoons of tomato paste
1/2 cup of a good full bodied dry red wine
2 cups of beef stock
2 tablespoons of coarsely chopped flat leaf parsley
1 clove of finely minced garlic
2 fresh sage leaves and 1 small sprig of fresh rosemary (be conservative, these herbs can be overpowering)
1/2 cup of flour to dust the beef cubes
1 package (12 ounces) of frozen artichoke hearts, thawed
1/3 to 1/2 cup of frozen green peas, thawed
1 and 1/2 cup of soffritto: equal parts (1/2 cup each) of chopped onion, chopped celery, and chopped carrots.

Season the meat with both the salt and the pepper. Put the flour in a small paper or plastic bag, add the beef cubes and shake the bag (much like "Shake & Bake"), meantime, bring the butter and oil to heat. Take a pinch of flour and drop it in the pot; if it sizzles, the oil is ready. Take the meat out of the bag, pat the excess flour away and drop into the pot. Lower the heat to medium, stir the meat until each piece is browned

on all sides. The meat should be browned, not "blackened." Remove the meat from the pot, and set aside; keep all the good stuff accumulated on the bottom of the pot; this is what will give the stew a great taste.

Add the soffritto to the pot, stir and cook it until the carrots, celery and onions are tender. Add the garlic, tomato paste, browned meat and the wine. Stir well add the stock and the sage and rosemary. Stir again, cover with a lid and lower the heat to a very gentle simmer. Stir occasionally to make sure nothing is sticking to the bottom. After one hour, add the parsley, green peas and artichoke hearts. Stir and cover; cook for an additional 30 minutes or until the meat almost falls apart. From time to time check and, if necessary add salt and a little water. The end product should be a thick brownish sauce that envelopes the meat. And, as TV personality chef Anne Burrell says, "Brown food is goooooo!"

You may choose to add one cup of diced potatoes along with the peas and artichokes. This will make a more substantial sauce.

Life needs comfort food once in a while, and spezzatino is very comforting. Accompany this with good bread and a salad, or serve it on rice, on egg noodles, with potatoes or with my favorite — polenta.

All you need to add is a smile.

Buon Appetito!

Sweet story unfolds at Off Square Books

BY JEFF EUBANKS
Assistant News Editor

Katy Houston and Sam Lane have a sweet connection.

The Jackson natives will share that connection at Off Square Books at 5 p.m. Friday when they stop by to sign, "Sweetness Follows: The Story of Sam and the Treat of the Week."

The cookbook is filled with dessert recipes, but also shares the story behind the tasty treats and why they were made.

Lane, a junior at the University of Georgia in 2007, was riding his bicycle in a bike ride to raise awareness of bicycle safety in Athens and was hit by a drunk driver. The accident caused Lane to sustain a traumatic brain injury and he was in a coma at Athens Regional Medical Center.

Lane was then flown to St. Dominic Hospital in Jackson and later spent two months at Methodist Rehabilitation Center, during which he received intense physical, occupational and speech therapy.

Lane and Katy's son, Andrew, were lifelong friends, the two even paired together as roommates at UGA and went to the school because of Athens' vibrant music scene.

'Treat of the week'

While Lane recovered in Jackson, Katy delivered homemade desserts, reminiscent of the treats she had prepared for the boys during their childhood, and brought him the "treat of the week" every Monday morning for 62 consecutive weeks.

"I told him, 'When you get out, I'm going to feed you back to health,'" Katy said. "Desserts are what I like to cook. As soon as I delivered one, I was excited about what I was going to do next week."

The desserts and caring nature shown by Katy to Lane aided in his recovery and helped him through tough times.

"It helped in a way that is not really measurable," Lane said. "It helped an indescribable amount. Ms. Houston is like a mother to me. It was great just having something to look forward to, to always keep my mood lifted. If I had

a particular; tough week, the next week would be lifted on that Monday."

The title of the book, "Sweetness Follows," is two-fold, as it portrays the sweetness of the desserts and friendship, and pays homage to Athens' music legends R.E.M. — one of Lane's favorite bands.

Katy said when deciding on the title, she contacted R.E.M.'s management for approval of the song title, and they not only approved, but gave their blessings, as members of the band bicycled on the same road of the accident.

"R.E.M. are such legends," Lane said. "It was great to get the blessing of people who were such luminaries in the sense we were so connected to."

Time at Ole Miss

Lane, who now resides in Boulder, Colo., graduated from UGA with a degree in English in 2011, but spent some time at Ole Miss after his recovery and took classes from the late author Barry Hannah.

"I was really happy to be able to take a class from one



of my heroes, Barry Hannah," Lane said. "I count myself lucky to be able to go to Ole Miss under one of my heroes."

In Colorado, Lane enjoys the scenery, hiking in the Rocky Mountains, and of course, taking in a concert at the legendary Red Rocks Amphitheatre in Morrison.

"I'm very happy with my life," Lane said. "It's a wonderful life. It's so beautiful there I can do so much I've always wanted to do."

Portions of the proceeds from the book will go to The Wilson Research Foundation at Methodist Rehabilitation Center.

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Made in Indiana: Chattanooga Whiskey

CHATTANOOGA, Tenn. (AP) — Chattanooga Whiskey can't be distilled in Chattanooga.

The Chattanooga Times Free Press reported prohibition-era statutes prevent distilleries in Hamilton County, so the whiskey that bears the city's name is being made in Lawrenceburg, Ind.

"We called it Chattanooga Whiskey because that's where we're from," said Joe Ledbetter, president of the company of himself and business partner Tim Piersant.

The company began with a Facebook page and a question about whether people would buy spirits called Chattanooga Whiskey.

There are now about 16,000 Facebook followers.

Ledbetter said Chattanooga Whiskey launched on April 15 and has sold 3,000 cases of six bottles each so far. The company is also expanding its distribution, adding Georgia, Kentucky, South Carolina and Washington, D.C.

He said if the company could distill locally, there would be more than a dozen new jobs and more than \$150,000 in tax and tourism dollars paid annually.

"We're trying to restart an industry that was completely lost to prohibition," Ledbetter said.

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EYE CARE UPDATE

by William S. Mayo, D.O.

Double Board Certified Ophthalmologist & Eye Surgeon

HOW LED SCREENS INHIBIT SLEEP

If you are spending an inordinate amount of time at night looking at the backlit LED screens of most computers (including tablets and smartphones) and many flatscreen TVs, they may be interfering with your ability to sleep. LED screens emit blue light, which plays a role in promoting sleep. The body's sleep/wake cycle is affected by the pineal gland's secretion of melatonin, the hormone that is produced nightly to promote drowsiness. Exposure to light (notably blue light) during the day suppresses the production of melatonin, which is why lack of light at night helps us to sleep. However, if the eyes are exposed to LED screens that produce enough blue light to turn off melatonin production, sleep suffers.

Computer screens have become an integral part of our lives. Many of us use computers at work and home, and more and more people are reading books on tablet readers. Staring at computer screens can take a toll on your eyes. Research shows exposure to these screens can also interfere with your ability to sleep. Please call MAYO EYE CENTER at 662-234-3937 to schedule a comprehensive eye examination. Our practice is located at 2890 South Lamar Blvd.

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