

Braised Fennel Oreganata with Pancetta

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Braised fennel oreganata with pancetta is one of those simple Italian side dishes that feels both rustic and elegant – the kind of recipe that tastes like it came out of a cozy countryside kitchen. Fennel is one of my favorite seasonal ingredients to cook with this time of year. When it's in season, it's sweet, aromatic, and incredibly versatile, and I love finding ways to let its natural flavor shine.

In this dish, the fennel softens into buttery tenderness as it braises, soaking up the richness of pancetta and white wine. Then it gets finished with a crisp, garlicky oreganata topping that adds the perfect contrast of texture. It's hearty enough for chilly winter dinners, yet light enough to pair with almost anything – roasted chicken, fish, or even a simple bowl of polenta.

Seasonal cooking always inspires me to slow down and appreciate ingredients at their best, and this fennel

oreganata is exactly that kind of recipe: unfussy, comforting, and deeply flavorful.

Things to know about this Braised Fennel Oreganata with Pancetta

- **Make-Ahead Friendly:** You can braise the fennel up to a day in advance. Just keep the topping separate and broil right before serving for maximum crispiness.
- **Storage:** Store leftovers in an airtight container in the fridge for up to 3 days. Reheat gently on the stovetop or in the oven.
- **Variations:**
 - Add a few slices of orange zest to the broth for a bright, citrusy twist.
 - Swap the pancetta for prosciutto or smoked bacon if you prefer.
 - Make it vegetarian by omitting pancetta and using vegetable broth.
- **Serving Tip:** Pair with roasted meats, fish, or a simple grain like creamy polenta to make it a complete meal
- If you loved this **Braised Fennel Oreganata with Pancetta**, you'll also enjoy:
 - Italian Escarole & Beans with Sausage – a hearty, cozy winter side
 - Spinach Ricotta gnudi– perfect as an appetizer or snack
 - Creamy Sausage Tortellini Soup – comforting and easy for chilly weekends

Try one (or all!) of these recipes to keep your seasonal Italian cooking going strong

Braised Fennel Oreganata with Pancetta



For the Fennel

- 3 large fennel bulbs, trimmed and cut into wedges
- 4 ounces pancetta, diced
- 1 tbsp olive oil
- 1 tbsp butter
- 3 garlic cloves, sliced
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup dry white wine
- 1 cup vegetable or chicken broth
- Salt and black pepper, to taste

For the Oreganata Topping

- 1 cup Italian-style breadcrumbs (or panko)
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup grated Parmesan cheese
- 2 tsp dried oregano
- 1 tbsp chopped fresh parsley
- 1 tbsp lemon zest
- 2 tbsp olive oil

- Pinch of salt
- Pinch of black pepper

To Finish

- Fresh lemon juice
- Reserved fennel fronds

1. Prep the fennel

Trim the stalks, reserve some fronds for garnish, remove any tough outer layers, and cut each fennel bulb into wedges.

2. Cook the pancetta

Heat a large skillet over medium heat. Add the diced pancetta and cook for 3–4 minutes, until it renders its fat and begins to crisp. Remove half the pancetta pieces with a spoon and set aside for garnishing later, leaving the rest and the fat in the pan.

3. Sear the fennel

Add the olive oil and butter to the pancetta fat. Once melted, add the fennel wedges in a single layer. Sear for 3–4 minutes per side until lightly golden. Season with salt and pepper.

4. Add garlic + deglaze

Stir in the sliced garlic and cook for 30 seconds. Pour in the white wine and let it reduce by half.

5. Braise the fennel

Add the broth, cover the skillet, reduce heat to medium-low, and simmer for 10–12 minutes, or until the fennel is tender.

6. **Make the oreganata topping**

In a bowl, mix the breadcrumbs, Parmesan, oregano, parsley, lemon zest, olive oil, salt, and pepper. The mixture should be moistened but crumbly.

7. **Broil**

Preheat the broiler. Transfer the fennel and its cooking juices to a baking dish (or leave in an oven-safe pan). Sprinkle the oreganata topping evenly over the fennel. Broil for 2–3 minutes, or until golden and crisp.

8. **Serve**

Top with the reserved crispy pancetta, a squeeze of fresh lemon juice, and fennel fronds.

9. **Serving Suggestions**

Perfect alongside roasted chicken, baked cod, turkey cutlets, or pork chops

Add to a winter antipasto spread

Serve over creamy polenta