

Italian Broccoli Rabe Pizza

Italian Broccoli Rabe Pizza

In Southern Italy, pizza is often simple. It starts with good dough, olive oil, and what is in season. Italian broccoli rabe pizza (**Cime di rapa**), is a common topping and is loved for its slightly bitter flavor.

This is the kind of pizza I make at home. After many years working in restaurant kitchens, I learned that Italian cooking does not need a lot of ingredients. It needs balance. For this pizza, Italian sausage adds flavor, while **cannellini beans** make it hearty without feeling heavy.

Everything is cooked together in one pan before going on the pizza. The result is a rustic, olive oil-based pizza that is simple, comforting, and very Italian.

Things to know about this Italian Broccoli Rabe Pizza

- **Blanching the broccoli rabe matters**

A quick blanch removes excess bitterness while keeping its signature flavor intact.

- **Everything cooks in one pan**

Cooking the garlic, sausage, broccoli rabe, and cannellini beans together allows the flavors to layer naturally—no need to remove ingredients or overcomplicate the process

- **Cannellini beans are traditional, not modern**

Beans have long been used in Southern Italy to stretch meals and add body. Lightly mashing a few into the pan

creates a natural creaminess without sauce.

*(If you enjoy beans on pizza, you may also like my **Italian Escarole and Beans with Sausage** post.)*

▪ **Minimal cheese is intentional**

This pizza is olive-oil based. If you use cheese, keep it light—just enough to enhance, not dominate.

*(For dough texture that works best with oil-based toppings, use my over night **Pizza Dough Recipe***





Italian Broccoli Rabe Pizza

Serves: 2–4

Prep Time: 15 minutes

Cook Time: 12–15 minutes

Ingredients

- 1 lb. (450 g) **broccoli rabe**, trimmed

- 2–3 tbsp **olive oil**, plus more for brushing
- 3 cloves **garlic**, thinly sliced
- 1/2 tsp **red pepper flakes** (optional)
- 6 oz (170 g) **Italian sausage**, casings removed
- ½ cup **cannellini beans**, drained and rinsed
- Salt, to taste
- **12 oz (340 g) pizza dough** (homemade or store-bought – *use my [Pizza Dough Recipe] for best results*)

1–2 tbsp grated **Pecorino Romano**

Instructions

1. Blanch the Broccoli Rabe

Bring a pot of salted water to a boil.

Blanch broccoli rabe **2–3 minutes** until bright green.

Drain well and gently squeeze out excess water.

2. Build the Topping

Heat olive oil in a skillet over medium heat.

Add garlic and red pepper flakes; sauté **30–60 seconds** until fragrant.

Add sausage directly to the pan and cook, breaking it up, until browned and cooked through (**5–6 minutes**).

Add broccoli rabe and cannellini beans directly into the same pan.

Toss and sauté **2–3 minutes**, lightly mashing a few beans so they cream into the oil and sausage fat.

Season lightly with salt. Remove from heat.

3. Prepare the Dough

Preheat oven to **500°F (260°C)** with a pizza stone or baking sheet inside.

Stretch dough into a **12-inch round** on parchment paper.

Brush lightly with olive oil.

4. Assemble

Evenly distribute the broccoli rabe, sausage, and bean mixture over the dough.

Optional: finish with a **very light sprinkle of Pecorino Romano**.

Drizzle with a touch more olive oil.

5. Bake

Slide pizza onto the hot stone or pan.

Bake **12–15 minutes**, until crust is golden and crisp.

Rest 2–3 minutes before slicing.

The Ultimate Guide to Italian & Italian-Inspired Soups

The Ultimate Guide to Italian & Italian-Inspired Soups

10 Cozy, Classic Soup Recipes for Every Season

Soup has always been at the heart of Italian home cooking – simple ingredients, slow simmering, and deep, comforting flavor. Whether you're craving a light brothy soup or something rich and hearty, this **Italian soup collection** brings together my most-loved recipes, many inspired by dishes I cooked in my restaurants and made at home for my family.

This guide features **10 Italian and Italian-inspired soup recipes**, perfect for weeknight dinners, holidays, and cozy weekends. Bookmark this post – it's your go-to soup resource all year long.

The Ultimate Guide to Italian & Italian-Inspired Soups

10 Cozy, Classic Soup Recipes for Every Season

☐ Brothy & Light Italian Soups

Simple, nourishing, and perfect when you want something lighter.

1. Italian Wedding Soup



Tender meatballs, leafy greens, and delicate pasta simmered in rich chicken broth – a true Italian classic.

- [Get the recipe: Italian Wedding Soup](#)

2. Tortellini in Brodo



A Northern Italian favorite featuring cheese-filled tortellini served in hot, savory broth.

- [Get the recipe: Tortellini in Brodo](#)

☐ **Hearty & Rustic Soups**

These soups eat like a full meal – filling, cozy, and deeply satisfying.

3. Pasta e Fagioli



A rustic, comforting soup made with beans, pasta, and a flavorful tomato base – just like Nonna used to make.

-☐ *Get the recipe:* **Authentic Italian Pasta e Fagioli**

4. Sausage & Lentil Soup



Traditionally served on New Year's Eve for good luck, this hearty soup is rich, savory, and deeply comforting.

-> *Get the recipe:* **Sausage and Lentil Soup**

5. Escarole & Beans with Italian Sausage



A classic Italian-American soup that's simple, nourishing, and packed with bold flavor.

-> *Get the recipe:* **Italian Escarole and Beans**

☐ Creamy & Comforting Soups

Rich, velvety soups that feel like a warm hug.

6. Creamy Sausage Tortellini Soup



A fan favorite – cheesy tortellini, Italian sausage, and a creamy broth that comes together quickly.

→☐ *Get the recipe:* **Creamy Sausage Tortellini Soup**

7. Potato Leek Soup with Pancetta



A restaurant-style classic – silky smooth with crispy pancetta for added depth and flavor.

-> *Get the recipe:* **Potato Leek Soup with Pancetta**

8. Vegetarian Mushroom Soup (Italian Style)



Earthy mushrooms, herbs, and a rich broth make this vegetarian soup incredibly satisfying.

-> *Get the recipe:* **Italian Mushroom Soup**

☐ **Holiday & Special Occasion Soups**

Perfect for celebrations, traditions, and family gatherings.

9. Italian Holiday Chicken Soup



☐ A comforting soup often served during holidays – light, flavorful, and deeply nostalgic.

☐ *Get the recipe:* **Italian Holiday Chicken Soup**

10. Creamy Italian Bean and Parmesan soup



A hearty, old-fashioned soup that was always a staple in my restaurants – filling, budget-friendly, and perfect for leftovers.

→ *Get the recipe:* creamy Italian Bean and Parmesan soup

□ **Good to Know**

- Most of these soups **freeze beautifully**
 - Brothy soups are perfect for **make-ahead meals**
 - Many recipes can be adapted for **vegetarian or gluten-free diets**
 - Homemade broth adds the best flavor, but quality store-bought works well too
 - A heavy-bottomed 8–12 quart stainless steel stockpot is ideal for making soup because it heats evenly, prevents scorching, and gives you plenty of room for simmering brothy and hearty soups alike.
-

□ **What to Serve with Italian Soup**

- Crusty Italian bread
- Garlic bread or focaccia
- Simple green salad
- Grated Parmigiano Reggiano

Pizza di Scarola: Classic Italian Savory Escarole Pie

Pizza di Scarola: Classic Italian Savory Escarole Pie

Pizza di Scarola is a classic Italian savory pie filled with tender escarole, garlic, olives, capers, and anchovies, all wrapped in soft pizza dough. Rooted in Neapolitan cooking, this humble dish has been made for generations using simple pantry ingredients and seasonal winter greens.

Traditionally, **Pizza di Scarola** is prepared during the **Christmas season and enjoyed through Epiphany**, when Italian families gather to mark the close of the holidays. Its balance of bitter greens and savory flavors reflects both the season and the rhythm of Italian home cooking, making it a recipe that feels just as comforting today as it did centuries ago.

Often served warm or at room temperature, this savory pie is meant to be shared—whether as part of a holiday table or as a simple, satisfying meal any time of year.

Things to know about this Pizza di Scarola: Classic Italian Savory Escarole Pie

- **Escarole is traditional.** Its mild bitterness balances the salty olives, capers, and anchovies that define this

classic pie.

- **Substitute greens, if needed.** While escarole is the authentic choice, endive, broccoli rabe, Swiss chard, or spinach can be used when escarole isn't available. Always blanch and squeeze the greens very dry to prevent a soggy filling.
- **Anchovies melt into the filling.** They don't make the pie taste fishy—just deeply savory. You can omit them if preferred, but they are traditional.
- **Make it ahead.** Pizza di Scarola is often prepared in advance and served warm or at room temperature. In fact, the flavors improve after resting.
- **Use pizza dough, not pastry.** This is a bread-style pie, not a puff pastry tart—keeping it rustic and true to its Neapolitan roots.
- Serve Pizza di Scarola as part of an Italian spread alongside a **simple citrus salad**, a bowl of **Italian wedding soup**, or one of my **easy Italian cookies** for dessert. It also pairs beautifully with other traditional recipes often served during the holiday season or for casual family meals.

□ Be sure to explore:

- **My Italian Wedding Soup**
- Persimmon carpaccio salad
- **Creamy Italian zuppa Toscana**





Pizza di Scarola (Italian Escarole Pie)

Serves: 6–8

Prep Time: 30 minutes

Cook Time: 40–45 minutes

Total Time: About 1 hour 15 minutes

Ingredients

For the dough

- 1 lb pizza dough (store-bought or homemade), at room temperature
- Extra virgin olive oil, for brushing

For the escarole filling

- 2 large heads escarole, washed and chopped
- 3 tbsp extra virgin olive oil
- 3 cloves garlic, sliced
- 4 anchovy fillets, chopped (optional but traditional)
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup pitted Gaeta or Kalamata olives, chopped
- 2 tbsp capers, rinsed and drained
- 2 tbsp pine nuts (optional)
- 2 tbsp raisins (optional, traditional sweet-salty touch)
- Salt and black pepper, to taste
- Red pepper flakes (optional)

• Instructions

▪ Prepare the escarole

Bring a large pot of salted water to a boil. Add the escarole and blanch for 3–4 minutes until just tender. Drain well and squeeze out excess water. Set aside.

▪ Cook the filling

In a large skillet, heat olive oil over medium heat. Add garlic and sauté until fragrant. Stir in anchovies and let them melt into the oil.

Add escarole, olives, capers, pine nuts, and raisins. Season lightly with salt, black pepper, and red pepper flakes. Cook for 5–7 minutes until well combined and flavorful. Let cool slightly.

▪ Assemble the pie

Preheat oven to **375°F (190°C)**. Lightly oil a 9–10 inch round baking pan.

Divide dough into two pieces, one slightly larger than the other. Roll out the larger piece and line the pan, letting excess hang over the sides.

Fill with escarole mixture. Roll out remaining dough and place on top. Seal and crimp edges. Prick the top with a fork and brush lightly with olive oil.

- **Bake**

Bake for 40–45 minutes, or until golden brown and cooked through.

Let rest at least 20 minutes before slicing. Traditionally served **warm or at room temperature.**

Mushroom & Fontina Puff Pastry Tart

Mushroom & Fontina Puff Pastry Tart

This **mushroom and fontina puff pastry tart** is proof that simple ingredients can create something truly special. Earthy mushrooms, melty grated fontina, and flaky puff pastry come together in an elegant Italian-inspired appetizer that looks impressive but couldn't be easier to prepare. It's the kind of dish that belongs on a holiday table, yet is just as perfect for casual entertaining or a cozy night in.

Things to know about this Mushroom & Fontina Mushroom Puff Pastry Tart

- **Egg wash tip:** Brushing the border with beaten egg gives a glossy, golden finish without weighing down the tart.
- **Cheese balance:** Fontina melts beautifully, but feel free to mix with a small amount of Parmesan for extra flavor and a sharper bite.
- **Mushroom moisture:** Cook mushrooms thoroughly to avoid soggy pastry; draining excess liquid helps keep the tart crisp.
- **Serving temperature:** This tart is delicious warm or at room temperature, making it perfect for parties.
- **Prep ahead:** You can assemble the tart and refrigerate for up to an hour before baking. Brush with egg wash right before it goes in the oven.

• Variations

1. **Cheese swap:** Use Gruyère, Fontina + Mozzarella, or a mix of Fontina and Parmesan for a richer flavor.
2. **Add herbs:** Fresh thyme, rosemary, or oregano folded into the mushrooms adds an aromatic punch.
3. **Vegetable twist:** Mix in caramelized onions, roasted red peppers, or spinach for extra layers of flavor.
4. **Mini tart version:** Cut puff pastry into squares or rounds for bite-sized appetizers.
5. **Nutty crunch:** Sprinkle toasted pine nuts or walnuts over the mushrooms before baking for added

texture.

6. Love simple, elegant Italian appetizers? Explore more **crowd-pleasing recipes** on the blog, including **Italian Sausage Rolls**, Italian sausage **Stuffed Mushrooms**, and **Prosciutto wrapped chicken fingers**. Each recipe is easy to make, full of flavor, and perfect for entertaining any time of year.





Mushroom & Fontina Puff Pastry Tart (Recipe Card)

Servings

6–8 appetizer portions

Prep Time

15 minutes

Cook Time

20 minutes

Total Time

35 minutes

Ingredients

- 1 sheet puff pastry, thawed
- 8 oz mushrooms, cleaned and thinly sliced
- 1 cup grated fontina cheese
- 2 tbsp olive oil
- 1 clove garlic, minced
- salt and pepper to taste
- 1 tbsp fresh parsley, finely chopped
- 1 egg, beaten (for egg wash)

Instructions

1. Cook the mushrooms

Heat olive oil in a skillet over medium heat. Add mushrooms and cook until softened and lightly golden, about 6–8 minutes. Stir in garlic, salt, and pepper; cook 30 seconds more. Remove from heat.

2. Prepare the pastry

Preheat oven to **400°F (200°C)**. Place puff pastry on a parchment-lined baking sheet. Lightly score a 1-inch border around the edges, being careful not to cut all the way through.

3. Egg wash

Brush the scored border of the puff pastry with the beaten egg. This helps create a beautifully golden, glossy edge. **Optional sprinkle with sesame or everything**

bagel seeds. Use a fork to gently prick the center of the pastry—this helps prevent it from puffing up too much while baking.

4. **Assemble the tart**

Sprinkle grated fontina evenly inside the border. Spoon the mushroom mixture over the cheese.

5. **Bake**

Bake for **18–22 minutes**, until the pastry is puffed and deep golden and the cheese is melted and bubbly.

6. **Finish & serve**

Sprinkle with fresh parsley. Let cool slightly, then slice and serve warm or at room temperature

Prosciutto-Wrapped Chicken Fingers with Hot Honey

Prosciutto-Wrapped Chicken Fingers with Hot Honey

When it comes to Italian-style appetizers, simple ingredients done right always steal the show. These **prosciutto-wrapped chicken fingers with hot honey** are the perfect balance of savory, salty, and just a little sweet. Lightly seasoned chicken is wrapped in prosciutto, pan-seared until crisp, then finished in the oven and drizzled with hot honey for an irresistible bite. Elegant enough for New Year's Eve, yet easy enough to make any time you're entertaining.

Things to know about this Prosciutto-Wrapped Chicken Fingers with Hot Honey recipe

- **Prosciutto does the work:** Its saltiness adds flavor and helps keep the chicken juicy.
- **Pan-sear first:** This step crisps the prosciutto and adds depth before finishing in the oven.
- **Drain excess fat:** If needed, blot lightly before baking so the prosciutto stays crisp.
- **Hot honey at the end:** Drizzle just before serving to keep the coating glossy and fresh.
- **Perfect for parties:** Skewers or toothpicks make these easy, mess-free appetizers.
- If you love easy Italian-inspired appetizers, be sure to explore more crowd-pleasing recipes on the blog. From savory **Italian sausage rolls** to **vegetarian stuffed mushrooms** and elegant **puff pastry twists**, you'll find simple, flavorful ideas perfect for entertaining, holidays, or casual gatherings any time of year.





Prosciutto-Wrapped Chicken Fingers with Hot Honey

Prep Time

10 minutes

Cook Time

15–18 minutes

Ingredients

- 1 lb boneless, skinless chicken breasts, cut into finger-size strips

- 3 Tbsp olive oil
- 2 tsp garlic powder
- 2 tsp Italian seasoning
- salt and pepper to taste
- 8–10 thin slices prosciutto, cut in half lengthwise if needed
- 1–2 tbsp olive oil or cooking spray
- 2–3 tbsp hot honey, for drizzling

▪ Instructions

▪ Season the chicken

Place the chicken strips in a bowl. Season with salt, black pepper, garlic powder, and Italian seasoning.

▪ Wrap with prosciutto

Wrap each chicken strip tightly with prosciutto. Thread onto skewers if desired.

▪ Pan-fry

Heat olive oil or in a large oven proof skillet over medium heat. Cook the chicken, turning, until the prosciutto is lightly crisped, about **5–6 minutes**.

▪ Finish in the oven

Transfer to a pre heated **375°F** until cooked through, **8–10 minutes**.

▪ Drizzle & serve

Drizzle with hot honey just before serving and serve warm.

Italian Sausage Rolls with Puff Pastry (Easy Savory Appetizer)

Italian Sausage Rolls with Puff Pastry (Easy Savory Appetizer)

Golden, flaky, and packed with classic Italian flavor, **Italian Sausage Rolls** are the kind of appetizer that disappears the moment they hit the table. Think buttery puff pastry wrapped around seasoned Italian sausage, kissed with garlic, herbs, and cheese—simple to make, impressive to serve, and endlessly versatile.

Whether you're hosting a holiday gathering, planning a New Year's Eve spread, or just want an easy savory bite with big flavor, these sausage rolls deliver every time.

Things to know about these Italian Sausage Rolls with Puff Pastry (Easy Savory Appetizer)

- **Easy but elegant** – store-bought puff pastry does the heavy lifting
- **Classic Italian flavors** – fennel, garlic, herbs, and Parmigiano Reggiano

- **Make-ahead friendly** – assemble and refrigerate or freeze
- **Perfect for parties** – slice small for appetizers or larger for lunch

• **Serving Ideas**

- Serve warm with **marinara sauce** for dipping
- Pair with **spicy Calabrian chili oil** for heat lovers
- Add to an Italian antipasto platter with olives, cheeses, and roasted peppers

Make-Ahead & Freezing Tips

- **Make ahead:** Assemble rolls, cover, and refrigerate up to 24 hours before baking.
 - **Freeze unbaked:** Slice, freeze solid, then transfer to freezer bags. Bake straight from frozen, adding 5–7 minutes to baking time.
-

Italian Variations

- **Sausage & Peppers:** Add finely chopped sautéed red peppers to the filling
- **Cheesy Mozzarella:** Add small cubes of low-moisture mozzarella
- **Spinach & Sausage:** Fold in sautéed, well-drained spinach

• **A Little Italian Inspiration**

Sausage wrapped in dough has long been part of Italian home cooking—from rustic breads stuffed with salsiccia to bakery-style savory pastries. These sausage rolls are a modern, party-friendly nod to those traditions, using puff pastry for ease without sacrificing flavor.

- If you loved these **Italian Sausage Rolls**, be sure to try my other favorite Italian appetizers like **Easy Savory Puff Pastry Twists**, **Italian Stuffed Mushrooms**, and **Shrimp Oreganata**—all simple, classic recipes that are perfect for entertaining. Don't forget to bookmark this recipe and follow along for more Italian comfort food made easy.





- **Italian Sausage Rolls with Puff Pastry (Easy Savory Appetizer)**
- **Servings:** 24 bite-size sausage rolls
- **Prep Time:** 20 minutes
- **Chill Time:** 20–30 minutes
- **Cook Time:** 22–25 minutes
- **Total Time:** About 1 hour

Ingredients

- 1 pound Italian sausage (sweet or hot), casings removed
- 2 sheets puff pastry, thawed
- 1/2 cup grated Parmigiano Reggiano
- 1 tablespoon Dijon or spicy brown mustard
- 1 clove garlic, finely minced
- 1 tablespoon chopped fresh parsley

- 1/2 teaspoon fennel seeds, lightly crushed (optional)
- Freshly ground black pepper, to taste
- 1 egg, beaten (for egg wash)
- Sesame seeds or flaky salt (optional, for topping)

Instructions

1. Prepare the Filling

In a bowl, combine the Italian sausage, Parmigiano Reggiano, mustard, garlic, parsley, fennel seeds, and black pepper. Mix gently until just combined—don't overwork the sausage.

2. Roll Out the Pastry

On a lightly floured surface, roll each sheet of puff pastry slightly to smooth seams and create an even rectangle. Cut each sheet lengthwise into two long strips.

3. Fill and Roll

Spoon a line of sausage filling down the center of each strip. Brush one long edge with egg wash, then roll the pastry over the filling, seam-side down.

4. Chill for Clean Cuts

Place the rolls on a parchment-lined baking sheet and refrigerate for 20–30 minutes. This helps the pastry firm up and makes slicing easier.

5. Slice and Bake

Cut each roll into 1½–2-inch pieces. Brush tops with egg wash and sprinkle with sesame seeds or flaky salt if desired. Bake at **400°F (200°C)** for 22–25 minutes, or until puffed and deeply golden.

Mama's Homemade Egg & Parmesan Croutons

Mama's Homemade Egg & Parmesan Croutons

There are some recipes that never had a real name in our house – they were simply “*what Mama made.*” These baked egg and Parmesan croutons are one of those childhood treasures. I grew up eating them tucked into soups, tossed into salads, or sneaking them warm right off the baking pan, but I never actually knew what they were called... and maybe they didn't have a name at all.

They were just Mama's croutons – simple, humble, and made with the handful of ingredients she always had on hand. Today I'm sharing them with you, not because they're fancy or complicated, but because they've been part of my family for as long as I can remember. Sometimes the most unforgettable recipes are the ones that never needed a title.

Things to know about Mama's Homemade Egg & Parmesan Croutons

- **Make Ahead:** You can bake the croutons a day or two in advance and store them in an airtight container. They'll stay crisp and golden until you're ready to enjoy them.
- **Size Matters:** Cut them into small, bite-sized squares for soups or slightly larger pieces for salads and

snacking.

- **Flavor Boost:** For a little extra depth, try sprinkling a pinch of garlic powder or smoked paprika into the batter before baking.

These croutons are the perfect companion to any warm holiday soup. If you're looking for inspiration, check out my [Holiday Soup Recipes](#) – they pair beautifully with Mama's croutons. And don't forget to explore my full collection of [10 Italian Christmas cookies](#) you must make for more family favorites and festive treats!





Mama's Homemade Egg & Parmesan Croutons (Baked)

Servings: About 4 cups of croutons

Prep Time: 10 minutes

Bake Time: 20–25 minutes

Total Time: 30–35 minutes

Ingredients

- 6 large eggs
- 1 cup freshly grated Parmesan cheese
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup all-purpose flour
- $\frac{1}{3}$ cup finely chopped Italian parsley
- 1 teaspoon baking powder
- Salt, to taste
- Freshly ground black pepper, to taste
- Olive oil or olive oil spray, for greasing

▪ Instructions

▪ Preheat the oven

Preheat your oven to **375°F (190°C)**. Line a 9 x13 baking sheet with parchment paper and lightly grease or spray it with olive oil.

▪ Make the batter

In a large bowl, whisk the eggs until smooth. Add the Parmesan cheese, flour, parsley, baking powder, salt, and black pepper. Mix until a thick, uniform batter forms.

▪ Spread the mixture

Pour the batter onto the prepared 9 x13 baking sheet and spread it into an even layer, about **$\frac{1}{2}$ inch thick**. Use a spatula to smooth the top.

- **Bake**

Bake for **20–25 minutes**, or until the top is firm, lightly golden, and set in the center.

- **Cut into croutons**

Remove from the oven and let cool for 5 minutes. Transfer to a cutting board and cut into small cubes or “little bites,” depending on how your mama made them.

- **Optional crisping**

For extra crisp croutons, return the cut pieces to the baking sheet and bake for **5–7 more minutes**.

- **Serve**

Enjoy in soups, salads, or straight from the tray – classic, simple, and comforting.

The Best Italian-Style Fried Calamari

The best Italian style fried calamari

Growing up, fried calamari was a true family affair. My mama always bought whole squid and cleaned every single one by hand – separating the tentacles, pulling out the quill, and rinsing everything until it was spotless. I can still see her at the sink, humming while she worked, making sure each ring would fry up perfectly tender.

These days, we're lucky. Most grocery stores and fish markets sell **calamari already cleaned** – tubes and tentacles prepped and ready to slice. And while nothing beats the love and tradition of doing it the old-school way, I'll be the first to admit that buying it cleaned makes this recipe come together in minutes instead of an hour.

Fried calamari has also always been a cherished part of our **Feast of the Seven Fishes** celebration – that beloved Italian Christmas Eve tradition where the table overflows with seafood. Whether you make this dish once a year for the feast or all year long for your family, this recipe brings that same crisp, golden bite we all grew up loving.

Whether you're using ready-to-cook calamari or honoring the way our mamas did it, this classic Italian fried calamari delivers that same crisp, golden bite we all grew up loving.

Things to know about this Best Italian-Style Fried Calamari

- **Dry calamari = crisp calamari.**

Pat the rings and tentacles *really* well with paper towels. Any moisture will make the coating soggy and cause the oil to splatter.

- **The flour mix matters.**

A 50/50 blend of all-purpose flour and semolina gives that classic Italian trattoria crunch. Semolina helps the coating stay light instead of heavy or bready.

- **Keep the oil hot.**

The magic temperature is **350–365°F**. If the oil drops too low, the calamari absorbs oil and turns greasy. Fry in small batches to keep the heat consistent.

- **Fast frying keeps it tender.**

Calamari only needs **1½–2 minutes** in the oil. Any longer

and it becomes chewy. Pull it out the moment it turns light golden.

- **Season immediately.**

Sprinkle with a little salt right after frying – it sticks better while the calamari is still hot.

- **Serve right away.**

Fried calamari is best eaten fresh from the fryer. It doesn't stay crisp long, so have your lemon wedges and marinara ready before you start cooking.

- If you love this crispy Italian fried calamari, don't miss my other seafood favorites!

Try my **Shrimp Oreganata**, , and **Shrimp Stuffed Calamari Steaks** for more Italian coastal flavors. And if you make this recipe, tag me on Instagram—I love seeing your kitchen creations!





The best Italian style Fried Calamari

Ingredients (Serves 4)

- 1½ pounds calamari, cleaned, rings + tentacles
- 1 cup all-purpose flour
- 1 cup semolina flour
- 1 teaspoon kosher salt, plus more for finishing
- 1 teaspoon black pepper
- ½ teaspoon paprika (optional, for color)
- 1 teaspoon garlic powder
- Oil for frying (peanut or light olive oil)
- Lemon wedges, for serving
- Marinara, for dipping

Instructions

1. Prep the calamari

Slice tubes into ½-inch rings. Pat rings and tentacles completely dry with paper towels.
(Drying is key for crispness!)

2. Make the coating

In a shallow bowl, whisk together: 1 cup all-purpose flour, 1 cup semolina flour, Salt, pepper, paprika, and garlic powder

3. Heat the oil

Pour oil into a heavy pot or deep skillet about 2 inches

deep.

Heat to **350–365°F**.

4. Coat the calamari

Toss the rings and tentacles in the flour–semolina mixture until lightly coated.

Shake off excess.

5. Fry in batches

Add calamari in small batches so the oil temperature stays stable.

Fry **1½–2 minutes**—just until pale golden.

(Over-frying = chewy.)

6. Drain & season

Transfer to a paper towel–lined tray and sprinkle immediately with a pinch of salt.

Serve

Enjoy hot with lemon wedges and marinara.

Braised Fennel Oreganata with Pancetta

Braised Fennel Oreganata with

Pancetta

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

Servings: 4

Prep Time: 10 minutes

Cook Time: 30 minutes

Total Time: 40 minutes

Ingredients

• For the Fennel

- 3 large fennel bulbs, trimmed and cut into wedges
- 4 ounces pancetta, diced
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 1 tablespoon 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 teaspoon 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

Instructions

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.

Serving Suggestions

- Perfect alongside roasted chicken, baked cod, turkey cutlets, or pork chops
 - Add to a winter antipasto spread
 - Serve over creamy polenta
-

Persimmon Carpaccio Salad (Italian Style)

Persimmon Carpaccio Salad (Italian Style)

This elegant **Persimmon Carpaccio Salad** is a simple yet stunning Italian-inspired winter dish. If you love seasonal produce and beautiful plating, this recipe is going to be a favorite. Thinly shaved Fuyu persimmons create a vibrant, sweet base that pairs perfectly with peppery arugula, crisp shaved fennel, toasted walnuts, and salty Parmigiano. It's light, fresh, and absolutely perfect for holiday gatherings, dinner parties, or as a bright starter to any Italian meal.

In Italy, carpaccio-style dishes are all about showcasing the beauty of the ingredients with minimal dressing—and persimmons shine beautifully prepared this way.

Things to know about this Persimmon Carpaccio Salad (Italian Style)

- **Use Fuyu persimmons**, not Hachiya—Fuyus are firm and perfect for shaving paper-thin.
- A **mandoline** gives the most even slices, but a very sharp knife works too.
- This dish is best served **immediately after dressing** so the persimmons stay crisp.

Variations

- **Honey drizzle:** Add a touch of honey if you prefer a sweeter profile.
- **With prosciutto:** Lay thin prosciutto slices over the persimmons for a sweet-salty bite.
- **Citrus version:** Add orange zest or a few citrus segments.
- **Add burrata:** For a creamier dish, serve with small pieces of burrata.

Storage

This salad is best enjoyed fresh.

If prepping ahead:

- Shave the persimmons up to **2 hours in advance** and store covered in the refrigerator.
- Shave fennel and store in ice water for crispness. Dress only when ready to serve.

• Looking for More Seasonal Recipes?

Browse some of my winter favorites:

- ☐ Orecchiette with **Italian Sausage and broccoli rabe**
- ☐ **Creamy Italian Sausage Risotto**
- ☐ Braised cabbage wedges with pancetta

Cozy, comforting, and full of Italian flavor.





**Persimmon Carpaccio Salad
(Italian Style)**

Servings: 4

Prep Time: 10 minutes

Total Time: 10 minutes

Ingredients

- **3 ripe Fuyu persimmons**, peeled and thinly shaved into rounds
- **1 cup arugula**
- **$\frac{1}{2}$ small fennel bulb**, shaved very thin
- **2 tablespoons toasted walnuts**, roughly chopped
- **$\frac{1}{4}$ cup shaved Parmigiano-Reggiano**
- **1–2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil**
- **1 tablespoon fresh lemon juice** *or* a splash of white balsamic vinegar
- **Sea salt**, to taste
- **Fresh cracked black pepper**, to taste
- **Fennel fronds**, for garnish
- *Optional*: a sprinkle of pomegranate arils for color

Instructions

- 1. Lay out the carpaccio:** Arrange the thinly shaved persimmon slices in a beautiful overlapping layer on a large round platter.
- 2. Add the vegetables:** Scatter shaved fennel on top. Add a

small handful of arugula for freshness and contrast.

3. **Dress the salad:** Drizzle evenly with extra virgin olive oil and fresh lemon juice or white balsamic.
4. **Season:** Sprinkle lightly with sea salt and freshly cracked pepper.
5. **Finish:** Add toasted walnuts, shaved Parmigiano, and fennel fronds. Serve immediately.