

Italian Bracirole in Tomato Sauce

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The first day of September always feels like the true start of my fall cooking. The air turns a little cooler, and I naturally begin to crave those cozy Italian dishes that remind me of home.

When I was growing up, Sundays meant sauce simmering on the stove. My mom usually made it with meatballs, ribs, sausage – or sometimes all three. But every once in a while, she added **bracirole**, and that made the meal extra special. She would pound slices of beef thin, fill them with cheese, herbs, and breadcrumbs, then roll them up tightly. After slowly cooking in the sauce until tender, they became the kind of dish that felt like a celebration.

For me, bracirole will always mark the beginning of hearty, comforting meals – perfect for the cooler season ahead.

Things to Know About Italian Bracirole

What is Bracirole?

Bracirole (pronounced *brah-cho-lee*) is a classic Italian dish made with thin slices of beef rolled around a savory filling, then simmered slowly in tomato sauce until tender. Once cooked, the rolls are sliced and served with the rich sauce over pasta or alongside crusty bread.

Regional Variations

Every Italian family makes bracirole a little differently. In Southern Italy, you'll often find fillings with raisins and pine nuts for a sweet-and-savory touch. In other regions, it's kept simple with just breadcrumbs, garlic, parsley, and cheese. Some families also prepare bracirole with pork or veal instead of beef.

Cooking Low and Slow

The key to tender bracirole is patience. The beef needs time to soften as it gently simmers in the sauce, soaking up all that flavor. A heavy pot or Dutch oven works best for even cooking.

Perfect for Sunday Dinner

Bracirole has always been considered a special occasion dish, often reserved for Sunday dinners or holidays. Making it on the first cool days of fall captures that same cozy sense of comfort and tradition.

Make-Ahead Friendly

Like many Italian dishes, bracirole tastes even better the next day after the flavors have had time to meld. It's the perfect make-ahead meal – impressive for guests yet easy to reheat and serve

Ready to bring a little Italian tradition into your kitchen? Try this bracirole recipe for your next Sunday dinner – then let me know in the comments how your family enjoyed it! Don't forget to check out my other cozy Italian recipes like spicy Italian sausage gnocchi soup or easy crispy chicken parmesan for more fall cooking inspiration.



Servings: 4

Cook Time: About 2 hours (hands-on 30 minutes)

Ingredients

For the Bracirole:

- 4-6 thin slices beef top round (about 6–8 ounces each,

pounded to $\frac{1}{4}$ -inch thickness)

- 1/2 cup grated Parmesan or Pecorino Romano
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup breadcrumbs (preferably Italian seasoned)
- 2 garlic cloves, finely minced
- 1/2 cup fresh parsley, chopped
- 2 tablespoons pine nuts (optional, but traditional in many regions)
- Salt & freshly ground black pepper
- Olive oil, for searing
- Butcher's twine or toothpicks for tying

For the Sauce:

- 3 tablespoons olive oil
- 1 small onion, finely chopped
- 2 garlic cloves, minced
- 1/2 cup chopped parsley
- 1 can (28 ounces) crushed tomatoes
- 1 can 14 ounces tomato sauce
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup red wine
- 1 teaspoon dried oregano (or 2 teaspoons fresh)
- $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon red pepper flakes (optional)
- 1 bay leaf
- Salt & pepper to taste
- Fresh basil, for finishing

Instructions

1. **Prepare the filling** – In a small bowl, combine breadcrumbs, Parmesan, garlic, parsley, and pine nuts. Season lightly with salt and pepper.
2. **Assemble the rolls** – Lay each beef slice flat. cover with plastic wrap and pound thin divide the filling evenly in the center of each slice. Roll the beef tightly into a log and secure with twine or toothpicks.
3. **Brown the braciolo** – Heat olive oil in a large heavy pot or Dutch oven over medium-high heat. Sear the beef rolls on all sides until browned, 6–8 minutes. Transfer to a plate.
4. **Make the sauce** – In the same pot, add more olive oil if needed. Sauté onion until soft, about 5 minutes, then stir in garlic and parsley. Deglaze with red wine, scraping up any browned bits. Add crushed tomatoes and the sauce, oregano, red pepper flakes, bay leaf, salt, and pepper. and stir well, Simmer covered for 1 hour
5. Return the braciolo to the pot, nestling them into the sauce. Cover with a lid and simmer gently on low for about 1 hour, or until the beef is tender. Stir occasionally and add a splash of water if sauce thickens too much.
6. **Serve** – Remove the twine or toothpicks, slice the braciolo into rounds, and serve topped with sauce. Garnish with fresh basil and more grated cheese.

7. **More Serving Suggestions for Braciolo**

- **Over Pasta** – Toss the rich tomato sauce with spaghetti, rigatoni, or ziti, then serve the

sliced bracirole on top.

- **With Polenta** – Creamy polenta is a classic Italian pairing that soaks up all the delicious sauce.
- **Crusty Bread** – A warm loaf is a must for dipping into the sauce.
- **Vegetable Sides** – Pair with roasted broccoli, garlicky green beans, or a simple side salad for balance.
- **Wine Pairing** – A medium-bodied red like Chianti or Montepulciano complements the richness perfectly.