



The pastas with sardines



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How the pastas with sardines were born? History or myth ?

The pastas with sardines have been invented by a chef whose name remains unknown. In the 9th century before J-C, between the Byzantine and Arabic dominations, Eufemio of Messina, the supreme commander, against the Byzantine domination, decided to oust the rebels. But he has been caught and forced out of Sicily because he would have fallen in love with a nun and tried to persuade her to deny her vows.

It was of course a false pretence. Eufemio took refuge in Africa and in a spirit of revenge, he joined his forces with the Saracens in order to lead his fleet to Sicily. When he arrived at

Mazara del Vallo, he had to feed all soldiers with whatever available Sicilian ingredients found on the spot, like pastas, sardines, fennel (in order to hide the stinking smell of sardines that weren't fresh) and saffron offered by the Arabs.

This delicious dish is among the most famous Sicilian dishes. It hasn't won the Masterchef contest yet, but it has entered the history of regional gastronomy.



INGREDIENTS (for 6 persons)

- 500 g Bucatini pasta
- 500 g sardines
- 200 g fennel
- 1 onion
- 8 anchovies fillets in oil
- 50 g breadcrumb
- 30 g raisins
- 20 g pine nuts
- 10 g saffron threads
- olive oil to taste
- salt and pepper to taste



Preparation

First clean the sardines, remove the edges and the inner part.

Rinse the sardines under water and place them on a plate.



Preparer the fennel

Clean the fennel by eliminating the tougher ends and wash.

Preparer the sauce

- Sauté a chopped onion in a saucepan at low temperature.
- Add the anchovies fillets and crumble them with a spoon.
- Add raisins previously softened in warm water and pine nuts.
- In the meanwhile, cut the fennel into dices and add the onion.



- Dilute the saffron threads in a glass of cooking water, then pour the liquid obtained in the saucepan.
- Cook for a dozen minutes.



Add the sardines

- You can now add a half of the sardines.
- Cook for a few minutes, turn them upside down to make them crisp.



- In a second step, add the remaining sardines, which mustn't become crunchy (they just need a few minutes cooking).



Preparation of the pasta

- In the meanwhile, you can cook the pasta in the fennel cooking water.

Traditionally, the "Bucatini" is the most used type of pasta, that you can cut in two, so that you can eat them more easily (the Bucatini don't roll around the fork).



- When the pastas are "al dente", transfer them to the pan with the sardine sauce.
- Sauté them some minutes and add the pasta cooking water if necessary. Add a little extra virgin olive oil if need be.



The dish is now ready

Season and serve your pastas with sardines.

The icing on the cake : sprinkle them with toasted breadcrumbs, the famous Sicilian "muddica atturrata" !

Enjoy your meal !