

THE CHAÎNE GOES TO TUSCANY ITALY FOR GNUDI



ON Sunday evening, June 13th, 14 Chaine Members, their partners, two young sons (no doubt in training for later Chaine Membership), and some visiting friends swelled our group of keen Tuscany “travellers” to close to thirty. Included were two new Chaine Members who hopefully will be inducted in December, Covid permitting. Our National Bailli, Tony Catanese and wife Silvana were participating, as was my personal friend and Texas Chaine Member, Dr Maria Fawcett, who was visiting in Vancouver. There was even a former Victoria Bailliage Echanson lurking in the background at one Member’s home, giving me a different kind of “food” for thought.....

Chef Gaia, our culinary guide, was impressively bright and welcoming, given that it was 4am in

Florence, which is a testament to the impressive and supportive service that her organisation, “Eating Europe” provided for us. Gaia asked each of us in turn, what came to mind when one thought of Tuscany. As many of us had visited, reminiscences ranged from the wonderful wines, to the traditional Bistecca alla Fiorentina, the rolling countryside with lines of Poplar trees, and the welcoming nature of the locals. Gaia noted historical background on the origin of Gnudi, its regional or amusing colloquial names, some of which date back to the Italian language at the time of Michael Angelo.

Gaia had provided her recipe for the Spinach Gnudi, well in advance, and those planning to cook along with her were eager to begin. Those watching the fun were relaxed and enjoying a beverage of their choice.

Gnudi dalla cucina de Gail



The Bailli had suggested some traditional red wines and a selection of dry Prosecco and Italian whites which would pair with Spinach Gnudi and suit most palates for dining or quaffing.

Likely most thought that the spinach that we had to pre-cook and drain was ready, but not so, as Chef Gaia demonstrated that some solid hand squeezing was needed to remove an impressive stream of watery green liquid.

The ricotta also had to be drained of excess liquid, though my supply barely managed to fill a teaspoon, making me wonder if my Gnudi dumplings were already doomed for watery failure. During the preparation phase, Gaia responded to several questions about the ingredients and the consistency of the Gnudi mixture. Then the sage butter sauce was made and set aside while the Gnudi were shaped, then poached in a pot of bubbling water, to which salt and olive oil had been added.

Then it was time to display our creations as each was asked to show their platter of Spinach Gnudi, suitably dressed, with freshly grated parmesan, the sage butter sauce, possibly a drizzle of good quality Aceto Balsamico and some sage leaves. But wait, the Gnudi were so delicious that some did not make it to the plating stage and instead we saw smiling faces where their Gnudi had already begun to disappear! One creative group was seated and busy enjoying their Tuscany feast, having pre-made the Aperitivo cocktails and Crostini from our previous event, with the next course to come: tonight's Spinach Gnudi. Well done you!

From the reports and comments that I have already received, this event was extremely popular and enjoyed by all who participated. Our thanks to Chef Gaia for her warm hospitality and willingness to accommodate our request for an evening event scheduled in our time zone. We said our goodbyes as dawn approached for Gaia, in Tuscany.

Reviewed by Gail Gabel, Bailli
14 June 2021



Gnudi Making Class

Ingredients & Pre-Experience Preparation

INGREDIENTS (serves 2)

Gnudi

- 300 grams (1 1/2 cups) pre-cooked spinach (before class boil spinach in water (5 min), drain it and let it cool down.)
- 200 grams (3/4 cup) ricotta cheese
- 1 medium egg
- 50 grams (1/2 cup) Parmesan cheese + some extra for topping
- 50 grams (1/2 cup) flour plus extra for dusting (**gluten-free alternative**: rice flour)
- Nutmeg
- Salt
- Black pepper
- Garlic (optional)

Sauce

- *4 tablespoons of butter and Sage- fresh or dried*

COOKING TOOLS:

- Mixing bowl, Small frying pan, Pasta pot, Small saucepan, Skimmer/slotted spoon, Baking paper (optional)