



Cucina di Magro: Cooking Lean the Traditional Italian Way

Franco G. Romagnoli

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COOKING LEAN DOES NOT necessarily mean skimping on flavor or elegance. Cucina di magro — lean food — originated in the fourth century in response to the Roman Catholic tradition of foregoing meat on Fridays, holy days, and for Lent and has had sixteen centuries to perfect its gustatory and salutary attributes. It is the only cooking style that unites all of Italy's richly varied regional culinary traditions.

Originally published in 1976, this revised edition has been updated to include the fresh ingredients available in today's markets and contains twenty-one completely new recipes. Romagnoli's friendly style is wonderfully suited to his topic: "Press down on the bits of garlic with a wooden spoon and mash any resisting pieces to nothingness." "If olive oil leaves a bitter aftertaste, it is perfect — to boil in cauldrons and pour on attacking enemies." The book outlines special techniques for the savvy home chef, such as pasta-making with a Cuisinart, and includes photographic illustrations. Featuring classic dishes — fettucine pomodoro e basilico, flounder with capers, savory risotto in red wine sauce, and fresh fig pie, for example — these recipes satisfy every expectation of pan-Italian eating while simultaneously respecting the principles of lean cooking.

As in grand opera, where the difference in pitch between an alto and a basso is used to mutual advantage, the contrasting tastes of dishes on a menu should enhance rather than fight each other. At the end of a well-orchestrated meal, no matter how simple or rich, you and your guests should stand up and say: "Ah, that was a performance! Bravo!"

- From The Introduction



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