



Hershey's-Style Cupcake Frosting

I'm Dreaming of an Italian Christmas

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Traditional Italian food and wine brings Italy to your Christmas table



Italians embraces the art of living better than the rest of us. A culture based on 4-course meals and some of the world’s greatest wines bring together friends and family at the holidays like none other. Whether your family has Italian blood running through their veins or not, you can celebrate the holidays Italian style.

According to tradition, Italians celebrate big at Christmas, with Christmas Eve dinner taking center stage. Historically, Italian chose to fast all day on Christmas Eve, attend midnight mass, then return home to indulge in a feast that had been in preparation all day. Today, the fasting is not as extreme; however, the Christmas Eve meal, Cenone della Vigilia, is still the main family gathering of Christmas for many Italian families.

In the US when we speak of Italian food we speak in error. Italian cuisine is regional, right down to the style and shape of the pastas. This is great news because it means instead of one type of Italian food, there are twenty regional cuisines. Here are some classic Christmas dishes from Piemonte, Sicily, and Umbria paired with delicious wines to inspire your Italian Christmas meal.

Piemonte cuisine is bold, rich, and savory. Located in northern Italy, Piemonte is home to white truffles, beef, risotto, and the king of Italian wine, Barolo. If you can afford and acquire a white truffle of Alba your

Christmas meal will be a breeze; simply make some fresh pasta, toss with extra virgin Italian olive oil and aged parmesan, then top with shaved white truffles. For an equally decadent and slightly more affordable option Risotto al Barolo is a Piemonte Christmas classic. Combining these two stalwarts of Piemonte creates a decadent dish. Another ideal Piemonte Christmas dish is Brasato al Barolo. Imagine veal marinated overnight in Nebbiolo, then braised with herbs and vegetables till it melts in your mouth. Ironically, both of these Christmas classics involve cooking with Barolo, an expensive wine. I recommend buying an inexpensive bottle of Barolo or Nebbiolo for cooking and a bottle of high-quality Barolo for drinking. Fontanafredda is the 2017 Wine Star Award winery for “European Winery of the Year.” From its royal beginnings in the 19th century till today, the Fontanafredda name has always stood for the highest quality Barolo. The 2013 DOCG Barolo is layered and complex, with flavors of red fruit, dried herbs, fennel, nutmeg, cloves, and smoked meat. It is elegant and round on the palate, yet a softer more approachable Barolo that will dance beautifully with the risotto. The 2013 Serralunga d’Alba DOCG is sophisticated and intense. Dried Christmas potpourri, deep red fruit, dried herbs, forest floor, leather, roses and trailing vanilla envelop the palate, the body has finesse with a lush mouthfeel and a long finish. This is definitely a red meat wine; a decadent Christmas pairing with the Brasato.

The Feast of the Seven Fishes is synonymous with Sicilian Christmas. It is so popular it is embraced by many Sicilian Americans as well. However, an island as diverse as Sicily is bound to have more than one Christmas food tradition. The western side of Sicily has a pronounced North African influence. It is seen in the architecture, the cuisine, and the wines. Two Christmas classics of this region are Pork Shoulder of Nebrodi with Bronte Pistachios and Braciolone (Sicilian stuffed beef rolls). By utilizing ingredients of pistachios, currants, and Mediterranean spices these two dishes add an exotic flare to Christmas. Donnafugata is an iconic Sicilian winery and ideal for a Sicilian Christmas. The 2012 Mille e una Notte is a blend of Nero d’Avola, Petit Verdot, Syrah, and other grapes. Its bold flavors of black fruit, exotic spices, and balsamic with a lush palate that is rich and elegant make it an ideal pairing for the pork shoulder. The 2012 Tancredi is a blend of Cabernet Sauvignon, Nero d’Avola, Tannat, and other varieties; it combines dark and red fruit with mulled spices, black licorice, warm tobacco, and black pepper with a rich and robust palate for a perfect accompaniment to a classic Sicilian Braciolone.

Umbria flies under the radar with its foods. Many are drawn to the region to visit the medieval hill towns, churches, and rolling green hills. Some may attend a white truffle hunt or festival as well, but few realize the hidden food gem that is Umbria. Lunch appears to be the center of the Christmas meal celebration in Umbria. A unique Christmas pasta dish in

Umbria is Maccheroni con Mile e Noci, Pasta with Walnuts and Honey. This pasta favorite combines two ingredients found in many Umbrian desserts with the region's pasta for a dish that is decadent and delicious. Cappelletti in Brodo has a broader Italian appeal. Cappelletti hails from Emilia-Romagna, it is pasta filled with ground beef, pork, and chicken, parmesan and nutmeg. It is then served in a rich capon broth for an elegant and delicious Christmas lunch. The Goretti family combines four generations of tradition with modern wine making techniques to create high quality wines in the Montefalco and Perugia regions of Umbria. The 2012 L'Arringatore Colli Perugini DOC is a blend of Sangiovese, Merlot, and Ciliegiole. With layers of dark fruit, spice, and licorice it is a hearty wine with rich tannins. After decanting, this wine is a lovely match with Maccheroni or white truffles. The 2011 Sagrantino di Montefalco DOCG, crafted of 100% Sagrantino, is a structured wine with rich fruit, baking spice, and depths of earthiness. It is bold and rich with layers of texture. This wine also needs decanting but after a couple of hours will pair beautifully with Cappelletti.

Enjoy these traditional Italian food and wine pairings at your Christmas table.