

THE TIMPANO RECIPE (from the movie Big Night)

Timpano alla 'Big Night'

Dough:

4 cups flour
4 large eggs
1 teaspoon kosher salt
3 tablespoons olive oil
Butter
Olive oil
1/2 cup water, divided

Filling:

2 cups Genoa salami, cut in 1/4-by-1/2-inch pieces
2 cups sharp Provolone cheese, cut in 1/4-by-1/2-inch pieces
12 hard-boiled eggs, shelled, quartered lengthwise, with each quarter cut in half
2 cups Little Meatballs (recipe follows)
8 cups Ragu Tucci (recipe follows)
3 pounds ziti, cooked al dente (about half the time recommend on the package)
2 tablespoons olive oil
2/3 cups finely grated pecorino Romano cheese
4 large eggs, beaten

Dough: Place flour, eggs, salt and olive oil in a stand mixer fitted with the dough hook. (A large capacity food processor may also be used.) Add 3 tablespoons water and process. Add water, 1 tablespoon at a time, up to 1/2 cup, until mixture comes together and forms a ball. Turn dough out onto a lightly floured work surface and knead to make sure it is well-mixed. Set aside to rest for 5 minutes.

Flatten dough on a lightly floured work surface. Dust top of dough with flour and roll it out, dusting with flour and flipping the dough over from time to time, until it is 1/16-inch thick and is the desired diameter.

Generously grease timpano baking pan with butter and olive oil. Fold dough in half and then in half again, to form a triangle, and place it in the pan. Open dough and arrange it in the pan, gently pressing it against the bottom and the sides, draping the extra dough over the sides. Set aside.

Preheat oven to 350 degrees.

Filling: Have salami, provolone, hard-boiled eggs, meatballs and ragu at room temperature. Toss drained pasta with olive oil and 2 cups of the ragu. Distribute 6 generous cups of the pasta on the bottom of the timpano. Top with 1 cup salami, 1 cup provolone, 6 hard-boiled eggs, 1 cup meatballs, and » cup Romano cheese. Pour 2 cups ragu over these ingredients. Top with 6 cups pasta. Top with 1 cup salami, 1 cup provolone, 6 hard-boiled eggs, 1 cup meatballs, and 1/3 cup Romano cheese. Pour 2 cups ragu over these ingredients. Top with 6 cups pasta. (The ingredients should be about 1 inch below the rim of the pot.) Spoon 2 cups ragu over the pasta. Pour beaten eggs over filling. Fold pasta dough over filling to seal completely. Trim away and discard any double layers of dough.

Bake about 1 hour until lightly browned. Then cover with aluminum foil and bake about 30 minutes until timpano is cooked through and dough is golden brown (and reaches an internal temperature of 120 degrees). Remove from oven and let rest for 30 or more minutes.

The baked timpano should not adhere to pan, but if any part is still attached, carefully detach with a knife. Grasp pan firmly and invert timpano onto a serving platter. Remove pan and allow timpano to cool for 20 minutes. Using a long, sharp knife, cut a circle about 3 inches in diameter in the center of the timpano, making sure to cut all the way through to the bottom. Then slice the timpano as you would a pie into individual portions, leaving the center circle as a support for the remaining pieces. Makes 16 servings.

Little Meatballs

10 (1-inch thick) slices Italian bread
1 pound ground beef chuck
2 tablespoons chopped fresh parsley leaves
2 cloves garlic, finely chopped
1 large egg
5 tablespoons finely grated pecorino Romano cheese
Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste
2 tablespoons olive oil

Arrange bread on a cookie sheet and allow it to dry out, uncovered, 3 days. Place dried bread in a bowl; add warm water to cover. Set aside 5 minutes until bread softens.

In another bowl, combine beef, parsley, garlic, egg, cheese, salt and pepper; use your hands to mix. Remove and discard crust from bread. Squeeze water out of bread and break it into small pieces. Work bread into meat until combined and the mixture holds together like soft dough.

Warm olive oil in a large frying pan set over medium-high heat. Use a 1/2-teaspoon scoop to form 1/2-inch balls. Cook 1 meatball 6 minutes until well-browned on all sides. (If the meatball sticks to the pan, it is not ready to be turned.) Taste meatball; adjust seasoning of remaining mixture. Shape remaining meatballs and cook in small batches. As each batch is completed, remove to a warmed serving plate. Add to timpano as directed. Variation: If preparing meatballs as a separate course or for ragu, they should be larger. To form, scoop out a heaping tablespoon of the meat mixture. Roll it between the palms of your hands to form a ball about 1 1/2 inches in diameter. Meatballs served separately should be fully cooked, about 8 minutes. Makes 4 servings.

Ragu Tucci

1/2 cup olive oil
1 pound stewing beef, trimmed of fat, rinsed, patted dry and cut into pieces
1 pound country-style spareribs, trimmed of fat, cut in half, rinsed, patted dry
1 cup chopped onions
3 cloves garlic, chopped
1/2 cup dry red wine
1 (6-ounce) can tomato paste
1 1/2 cups warm water, divided
8 cups whole plum tomatoes or 2 (35-ounce) cans, passed through food mill
3 fresh basil leaves
1 tablespoon chopped fresh oregano leaves or
1 teaspoon dried

Warm olive oil in a stew pot set over medium-high heat. Sear beef 10 minutes until brown on all sides. Remove from pot and set aside in a bowl. Add spareribs to pot and sear 10 minutes until they are brown on all sides. Remove and set aside in bowl with beef. (If the pot is big enough to hold all the meat in a single layer, it may be cooked at the same time.)

Stir onions and garlic into pot. Reduce heat to low and cook 5 minutes until onions begin to soften and lose their shape. Stir in wine and scrape bottom of pot clean. Add tomato paste. Pour 1/2 cup warm water into can to loosen residual paste, then pour water into the pot. Cook 2 minutes to warm through. Add tomatoes along with 1 cup warm water. Stir in basil and oregano. Cover with lid slightly askew and simmer 30 minutes.

Return meat to pot, along with juices in bowl. Cover with lid askew and simmer, stirring frequently, 2 hours until meat is tender and tomatoes are cooked. If sauce becomes too thick, add warm water to the sauce, in 1/2-cup portions.

When using ragu in timpano, use only the sauce and serve the meat separately.

For the timpano, the sauce should be thin, so measure out 7 1/2 cups of prepared sauce and stir in 1/2 cup water before proceeding with the timpano.

Variation: Sweet Italian sausage may be added to this sauce. Saute it after the spareribs and then proceed with the recipe. Makes 8 servings (with meat).