

The ingredients

From the larder

Salt and pepper
Butter
Oil
Flour
Sugar
Milk
Cream
Garlic
Onions/shallots
Lemon
Thyme/rosemary/basil
Eggs

The challenge ingredients

1 whole mackerel -
Capers
Cannelloni beans
Dried apricots
Pine nuts
Cauliflower
Ricotta cheese
Ciabatta bread
Crystallised ginger
Aubergine

The Italian way

A strict list of ingredients and a brief to make the recipe as innovative as possible; *BBC Good Food ME* puts three Dubai-based Italian chefs to the challenge

The Italian challenge marks the first of our Chefs' Challenge series, an exciting new feature where *BBC Good Food ME* asks chefs of the UAE to put their culinary mettle to the test and create a new dish for us. You might think that sounds easy, but with only a limited number of ingredients to choose from and instructions to be as creative as possible, we think it should get the ingenuity flowing to exciting results!

The chefs are allowed to use the basic larder store cupboard, which will stay the same each month, but the focal point of their dish must be on the challenge ingredients. The chefs have to use at least five ingredients from the challenge list, and can use all of them, if they so wish.

Chef Enzo Neri, from Rococo, Sofitel Dubai Jumeirah Beach

When I looked at the list of challenge ingredients, I was immediately taken back to my time as a chef de partie at the Michelin star restaurant *Il Postale* in Italy. It was there that I learnt that



pasta (made with simple, traditional ingredients) can be transformed into something really special, with different colourings, flavourings, fillings and cooking techniques. I love the challenge of creating a new dish; here I wanted to cook something classic, but give it an innovative twist. I particularly enjoyed experimenting with the dehydrated egg yolk, which really enhances the flavour of homemade egg pasta. I think that this dish provides a good balance of acid and alkali, sweet and bitter. 🍷



CHEF'S BITES ITALIAN CHALLENGE

Recipe Caramelle

SERVES 1

DEHYDRATED YOLK

2 egg yolks
80g sugar
120g fine salt
PASTA DOUGH
250g '00' pasta flour
2 dehydrated egg yolks
½ tsp extra virgin olive oil

1 tsp salt

2g thyme

CAULIFLOWER SAUCE

2 tbsp olive oil
1 garlic clove, roughly chopped
200g cauliflower, roughly chopped
250ml milk

AUBERGINE CROQUETTES

1 small aubergine
1 tsp coarse salt
2 tbsp olive oil
2 eggs, lightly beaten
50g breadcrumbs (from ciabatta bread)

CARAMELLE FILLING

400g mackerel
2 tsp fresh thyme leaves
200g ricotta
1 tbsp finely grated lemon zest

CRYSTALLISED PINE NUTS

50g sugar
25ml water
20g pine nuts

LEMON ZEST

½ lemon, zest cut into thin strips
60ml water
30g sugar
2 tbsp extra virgin olive oil
12 capers

1 Mix together the salt and sugar and use to cover the egg yolks. Transfer to the fridge and leave for 72 hours. When you are ready to use, wash in cold water and dry with a tissue.

2 Tip the flour and thyme leaves into a bowl, make a well in the centre and add the eggs, olive oil and salt. Using your fingers, mix together until well combined. Tip onto a lightly floured surface and knead until smooth. Chill in the fridge for 30 mins.

3 For the cauliflower sauce, heat the olive oil in a pan, add the garlic and cook for 3-4 mins until soft. Add the cauliflower and cook for a minute, then pour in the milk.

Bring to the boil, then reduce the heat and cook until tender. Whizz in a blender until smooth and season to taste with salt and white pepper. Set aside.

4 To make the croquettes, preheat the oven to 190C/170 fan/gas 5. Slice the aubergine in half lengthways and drizzle over the olive oil and salt. Bake in the oven for 20-25 minutes, until soft. Remove from the oven and scoop out the flesh, taste to check the seasoning and shape the flesh into four rounds. Place on tray in the freezer for an hour to set. When the flesh has set, beat the eggs with a fork in a shallow dish. Tip the breadcrumbs onto a plate. Coat the aubergine rounds first in egg, then breadcrumbs. Chill in the fridge until needed.

5 Remove the skin from the mackerel fillets, season with salt and white pepper and chop the flesh into small pieces. Heat a tablespoon of olive oil in a frying pan over a medium heat, add the mackerel and thyme leaves and cook for 1 to 2 mins. Tip into a large bowl and once cool, stir in the ricotta and lemon zest. Leave to rest in the fridge for 30 mins.

6 Toast the pine nuts in a hot pan until golden brown. Add 40g of sugar and the water to the pan and caramelize. Remove from the heat and stir in the remaining sugar, which will crystallise.

7 For the candied lemon, dissolve the sugar in the water and boil for 6-8 mins, to create sticky sugar syrup. Leave to cool slightly and stir in the strips of lemon zest.

8 Remove the pasta dough from the fridge, divide the pasta into two balls and work with one ball at a time, keeping the other covered with a damp cloth. Pass the pasta through the pasta machine (or roll by hand) until the sheet is approximately 1mm thick. Repeat with the other sheet of pasta.

9 Lay the first pasta sheet on a lightly floured surface and place spoonfuls of the fish mixture all the way along the sheet, about 5cm apart—you should have 20 little piles. Using a pastry brush dipped in water, brush the pasta around the piles of filling. Place the second sheet of pasta on top of the first and working from one end to the other, push the sheets tightly together around each pile of filling. Try to make sure that you get rid of all the air from inside the ravioli. Cut the ravioli into shapes and

if you like, crimp the edges together with your hands, to make a shape similar to a sweet wrapper.

10 Bring a large pan of salted water to the boil, add the ravioli and cook for 3-4 minutes. Drain and drizzle over a little olive oil. Meanwhile, pan fry the aubergine rounds for 2-3 minutes on each side, until golden brown. Gently reheat the cauliflower sauce.

11 To serve, lay out four warmed plates. Place a line of cauliflower sauce through the centre of the plate. Arrange the ravioli's on top and place the aubergine croquette to the side. Garnish with the candied lemon zest, pine nuts and capers

The BBC Good Food ME verdict:

We thought it was fantastic that Chef Enzo's personality really shone through in his dish; it is filled with character and flair! If you are following this recipe at home, don't feel like you have to replicate every single element; the ravioli and cauliflower sauce are the main components. Alternatively, why not have fun experimenting with the poached lemon zest, crystallized pine nuts or aubergine croquettes—they are all relatively easy to make and will add a certain pizzazz to a regular pasta dish.

