

# SAMUELE CRESTALE

A close-up photograph of a wooden cutting board. On the left, a red-handled apron is visible, featuring a small red patch with a black ampersand logo. On the right, a metal pot with a lid sits on the board. The background is a wooden surface.

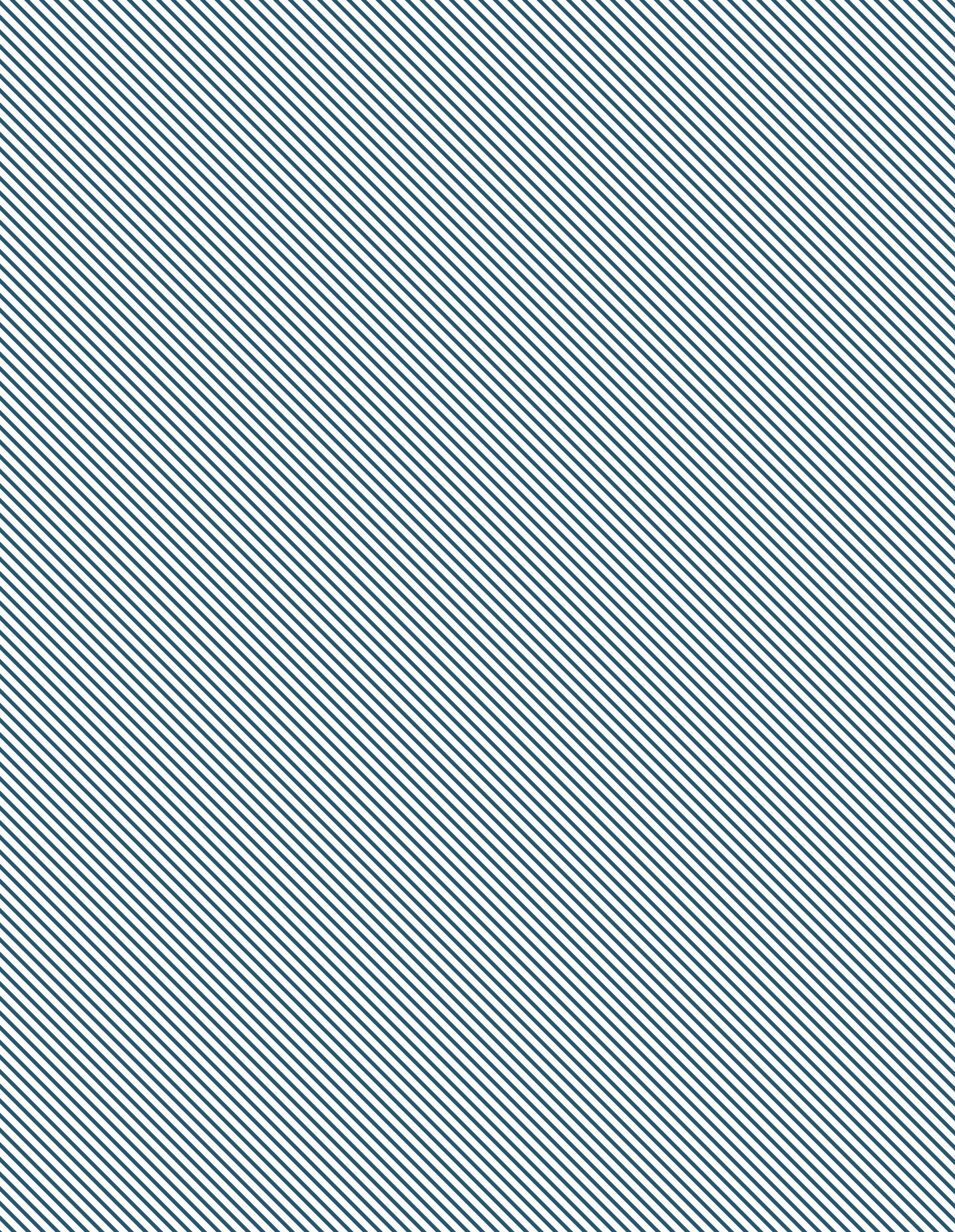
## MY LIFE IN A RECIPE

THE JOURNEY OF CULT RECIPES FROM WEST TO EAST

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WORLD-CLASS CULINARY COACH

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# SAMUELE CRESTALE

REAL CHEFS, REAL LIVES, REAL STORIES, REAL RECIPES



# MY LIFE IN A RECIPE



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Samuel Cortez

Glady  
Executive Chef



# Introduction

Being a chef today is a very different than it was even just a decade ago. Chefs are used to be invisible workhorses hiding behind a stove, churning out one glorious dish after another without much recognition from their diners. Today that whole dynamic has changed and chefs are the reason to go to a restaurant. One thing that hasn't changed in all this time is the life of a chef and how very difficult it can be; the chefs work on their feet, when everyone else is off, without breaks and in a hot kitchen. The work is so intense, fast - paced and demands perfection every time; cuts and burns are expected and yet, their career choice is now revered by many people who only wish they had the courage to devote their life to back - breaking long hours all in the name of good food. As a chefs the food is our benchmark, we use fabulous, seasonal, imported, local, sustainable products packed with flavor and we transform them with dexterity into food wizardry. Our quality is at the heart of our work and we lift the senses of our customers as our guarantee to integrity which shows in our ingredients. Chefs won't settle for anything but the best ingredients because we aim for perfection and culinary departments are working hard every day with passion and commitments to provide food that sets the tone in any market.



# Grandma training

It all started here, I remember that my grandparents have been always a part of my life. During my elementary years Nonno Mario (my grandfather) used to pick me up from school after my class and then I spent every afternoon with him enjoying the walks in the nearby forest. It was a pure joy the experience of the nature, its colors, the fresh air, running wild and I can still remember the good smell of pine trees; while in the forest, we was used to pick variety of fruits and vegetables like mushrooms, wild asparagus, chestnuts, cherries, apricots, apples, etc. Sometimes Nonno was teaching me carefully to learn how to hunt. For generations Crestale's family is very passionate about hunting, we were going in the near fields with our hunting dog Silva, a springer breed of white color with brown blotches, Nonno was holding the shotgun and I was in charge on holding Silva in her brown leather leash; its always fun catching the "passerotti" a small type of wild bird that is easy to find on the branches of trees; for few times, motivated by my excitement, he let me shoot with his supervision and the fact is I was not holding the shotgun, its to big and heavy for me, he was holding the "flobert" and I was just fascinated on pressing the rifle trigger. I knew what were thinking, I was not a good hunter so I never really catch any bird. Nonno was a wise man, I can't forget his tender smile, his genuine care for me, his discipline, his love for the nature and animals. Nonna was different, her name is Stefanina (my grandmother) and she has a very strong personality; she has nomercy for anyone, we can call her the

“dictator” of Crestale’s family, whatever she decides will consider it done! After my afternoon walks with Nonno it’s a must to have my afternoon snack called “merenda”. I usually eat stuffed bread with butter and homemade apricot or fig jam, sometimes was a sandwich with salame or any available cold cuts; after my snack is my rest time so I enjoy to watch cartoons in TV but for nonna the rest time is parallel to look after school duties, I need to take care of my home work; so her trick is to shut down completely the electric panel of the whole house, so in that way no point to watch any TV shows or to have any other means of entrainments like video games and I was forced to do my assignments. That’s why growing up in such environment I can find in myself the combined traits of Nonno and Nonna. Stefanina was the cook! Nonno have no talent in the stove, he can merely make a coffe in the morning for his breakfast, I believe that he never cook nor I never saw him cooking so she was “in charge” for groceries, menu, budgeting, recipes, seasonal ingredients and quantity of meals for whole the family. Yes, because every Sunday at twelve pm we gather with all the family members and all of them was invited to Crestale’s house. The Sunday morning routine was to attend the mass in the church, ladies at 6.30am because then they need to set-up, prepare and cook the meal for the family; the men was attending the mass at 10.30 am to be just on time at 12pm for the lunch. I always go with nonno at 10.30am, nonno and I are sitting in the last row and he was giving me five millelire to give in offertory. By the end of

the mass before going home we were lighting up a candle. At 12 pm the lunch is served in Crestale's house and every weekend was a new festivity for us with variety of appetizers, starters, risotto, pastas, main courses, deserts and afternoon games. In 1986 during a summer school break was my first approach with a cooking stove, Nonna was the trainer, she took a chair and fixed it near the stove; I was standing on it and we started to cook the famous risotto alla Milanese. First we prepared the chicken stock with of course one of our own chicken from the "pollaio", then we chopped brown onion and sautéed it with the butter; added the carnaroli rice and toasted it well while paying attention not burn the onion. At that moment we added the chicken stock considering that it needs to be at the same temperature of our rice at all the time. The stock need to be added slowly, ladle by ladle, until it is absorbed from the rice; then when the rice was half-cooked we added the saffron. Once the rice was cooked, we removed it from the fire and add on top a generous amount of parmigiano cheese and butter. After 5 minutes of resting, we stirred it and was ready to eat. Nonna was an amazing cook, simple touch with natural ingredients and lot of love which I guess her secret recipe. Some unforgettable memory of nonna's food are the insalata russa, fried zucchini flowers, porcini mushrooms lasagna, green bean and sausage, parsley escargots, linguine carbonara, liver with butter and sage, wild rabbit with polenta, spaghetti with anchovies and grated toasted bread, classic barbeque ribs, eggs frittata with wild asparagus, horse meat carpaccio, chicken liver, ricotta and chocolate mousse, apricot crostata and chiacchiere di carnevale.



# Fiori di zucca in pastella

- fried zucchini flowers -

## INGREDIENTS

15-20 pcs fresh zucchini flowers

150 gr. flour 00

200 gr. water

1 whole egg

1 l. Sunflowers oil – to fry

Salt to taste

Grounded pepper to taste

## METHOD

Clean the zucchini flowers. In a bowl pour the water and, with the prongs of a fork, beat the egg inside it. Now add the flour and incorporate it with a whisk then add salt and ground pepper. Heat the oil in a pan to bring it to a maximum temperature of 175 °. When the oil is ready, dip one zucchini flower in the batter at a time and fry it immediately. As soon as they are golden brown, drain them on a paper towel and serve them.





# Lasagna ai Porcini

- wild mushroom lasagna -

## INGREDIENTS

400 gr. fresh lasagna sheets

30 gr. Parmesan cheese

550 ml. béchamel

10 ml. extra virgin olive oil

Salt to taste

450 gr. fresh porcini mushrooms

200 gr. dry mozzarella

15 gr. parsley

1 clove of garlic

Grounded pepper to taste

## METHOD

Clean the fresh porcini mushrooms and cut them coarsely, meanwhile in a large pan heat a few tablespoons of extra virgin olive oil together with the clove of garlic cleaned and finely sliced. Pour the chopped mushrooms in the hot oil flavored with garlic and let them cook over a high flame until they are golden and crispy, only at this point salt and remove from the heat. Enrich the sautéed mushrooms with plenty of chopped parsley. Bring a saucepan to boil water and boil the egg-fresh pasta sheets for a minute. Prepare a pan by covering the bottom with the béchamel and then start to assemble your lasagna continuing with another layer of béchamel. Then cover a layer made with porcini mushrooms, then add a generous layer of diced mozzarella and cover everything with other sheets. Continue like this until you finish both the pasta and the stuffing ingredients. Once the last layer of pasta is done, continue with a final layer of béchamel which will be grated with parmesan cheese. Heat the oven to 180 degrees, preferably static, and insert the pan. Let the lasagna cook for 30 minutes and let it rest for at least 5 minutes before serving.



# Stefanina's Crostata

- grandma apricot tart -

## INGREDIENTS

300 gr. flour 00  
150 gr. alps butter  
130 gr. caster sugar  
2 whole eggs from the chicken coop  
1 teaspoon of baking powder  
1 lemon – only zest  
500 gr. homemade apricot jam

## METHOD

In a wood bowl add the cold butter cut into cubes and then the flour, start working it by hand until you get a sandy compost. Now add the sugar, the eggs, the baking powder and the lemon zest. Mix the ingredients for 2 minutes only, the dough should remain rough, wrap the dough in plastic film and rest for 30 minutes in the chiller. Take the pastry again and roll it out with a rolling pin until you get a sheet about 5cm high. Put the dough in a 24cm mold, remove the excess dough and prick the base with a fork. Pour the jam on top of the pastry and level it with a spoon, with the advanced dough prepare the strips and decorate the tart. Bake in a convection oven preheated to 180 \* C for 30-40 minutes, when the tart is completely golden, remove it from the oven and let it cool. Remove it from the mold and serve.



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ISTITUTO  
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# Hospitality Academy

I do remember my first day of college, 6am the alarm rang; brushed my teeth, washed my face, wore a black classic trouser, white shirt, maroon jacket, black tie, classic shoes; I was 14, then my mother dropped me to the train station in Oleggio. I was excited and scared at the same time, because for the very first time I was out of my own town alone; no family, no friends without nonno and nonna. 7am I got into the train station and I saw my schoolmates, it was easy to locate them, as we were wearing the same classic uniform and all the other students from different colleges were just wearing casual dress. From that point I already started to understand that hospitality college was different because there was a lot of discipline and discipline, I knew challenges were ahead of me. At 8am, I reached the Stresa train station, out from the train I just followed the flow, all other new students directed to the Hospitality academy “E. Maggia”, at that time it was one of the most renowned colleges in Italy; when I reached there, it was not what I expected like a college facility but it was like a Hotel. When we entered in our left side there was the Hotel reception with 2 receptionists and one manager that greeted us and directed us in a big meeting hall. The President of the academy was there; a short introduction was given, quick briefing and straight away in the new classroom where the teacher allowed us to introduce ourselves with our new classmates. The day was smooth, fast and easy, in the same way I reached the college I was able to go back at home.

I reached home at 7pm because the classes was ending at 5pm and there was one hour of travel time to go back but in Arona station the connection of the trains was not aligned so there was one hour of waiting before next. When I reached home the day was not finished, yes, I still need to do my homework. Next day will be the same routine from waking up at 6am, dress, train, walk and class. I started to study new courses such as English, Economics, Accounting, History of nutrition, Cooking technique, Enology, etc. Lets be fair, at 14 I didn't like much to study, my excitements for hospitality college was from the idea of cooking learning and in the deal that I was going to meet real big chefs. In the third day of my agenda, was the first meeting with our culinary teacher and at this point of life my ideas and dreams became into reality, sometimes reality is not aligned with our expectation; the teacher was a man of 40, he never smile on us, his last duty was in a cruise and in the very first meeting he explained to us in details of how is the life of chefs. In the cruise he didn't have a day off, 6 months of duty in the sea and 1 month of rest on land; during the 6 months the chefs was working from 16 to 18 hours a day and he was sleeping only 2 to 3 hours a night considering that after duty to release the stress accumulating during the day he was going to the disco or to the bar with the crew. At that moment from the fun of cooking with nonna, I started to swallow the bitter taste of the pressure of a real cooking world where the only word exist in the kitchen is "yes chef". After few theory classes, the day as come, black and white checkered trousers, white chef jacket, apron and chef hat and finally we went into the kitchen.

From the entrance in our right is the chef table, in the left is the pastry production, following with the vegetable, butcheries, appetizer, pasta, grill, hot and cold sections, whoa.. too big, I was lost already, the kitchen was just huge and actually there were 3 kitchens in the hotel, at different levels with 3 different courses which were going on at the same time. But something was very strange, the kitchen was huge and there were almost hundreds of students all around but there was no noise, no sound, no one was talking, only the teachers are speaking; all of them are focusing on the work and I can hear only one word from the students “yes chef!”. Cooking classes started in a regular basis and day by day I was learning new ingredients, flavors, equipment, techniques, recipes and dishes; the college was divided in 3 orientations: Back of House, Front of House and Host. During our practices we were divided by groups so the first group was hosting, cooking and serving and the second group was enjoying the meal and the services and then shifted it so the first group can sit in the restaurant and the second will work. I really enjoyed that times, I remember that any cooking class was a new page of the book with new flavors and impeccable taste. My favorite memory of the college is the Insalata Russa, crespelle al prosciutto, crema pasticcera, riso pilaf con uvetta sultanina e curry, lasagne alla Bolognese, salt’ imbrocca di vitello, bine’ al cioccolato.





# Insalata Russa

- Russian salad -

## INGREDIENTS

270 gr. carrots	270 gr. potatoes
175 gr. fresh peas	500 gr. mayonnaise
125 gr. pickled gherkins	20 gr mustard
15 ml. lemon juice	Salt to taste
Grounded pepper to taste	

## METHOD

Cut the potatoes into slices of 1 cm; cut the slices into sticks of 1 cm and finally the sticks into cubes. Dice the carrots like potatoes and boil the two vegetables separately. Drain the potatoes and carrots al dente and spread them on a tray, keeping them apart. Boil the peas in boiling salted water and drain them when boiling.

Also spread out on a tray. All vegetables must cool down and dry well so as not to release moisture and water down the salad. Boil 4 eggs for 10 minutes from boiling. Once cold, shell them, and mash by hand into small pieces. Cut the gherkins into small cubes. Put the cold vegetables, boiled eggs, gherkins, mustard and mayonnaise in a bowl. Stir carefully until the mayonnaise is distributed evenly adding the seasoning and lemon juice.



# Crespelle al prosciutto

- crepes with ham -

## INGREDIENTS

10 crepes  
10 slices of Italian ham “Prosciutto cotto”  
150 gr. fresh mozzarella  
150 gr. dry mozzarella  
30 gr. Parmesan cheese  
310 gr. béchamel  
60 gr. butter  
Salt to taste  
Grounded pepper to taste

## METHOD

In a bowl mix the fresh mozzarella and dry mozzarella cut into small pieces, half of the grated Parmesan cheese, season with salt and pepper. Stuff the crepes with 1 thin slice of ham, one table spoon of mozzarella filling and one spoon of béchamel. Close in half-moon shape and apply light pressure, fold in half until a fan is formed. Grease a baking sheet well with little butter, arrange the crepes overlapping them slightly. Add the remaining butter in flakes and sprinkling of remaining grated Parmesan cheese. Bake in a preheated oven at 220 ° for about 15-18 minutes until they are well browned. Serve it hot.



# Crema Pasticciera Classica

- custard cream -

## INGREDIENTS

8 eggs yolks  
170 gr. caster sugar  
65 gr. flour 00  
1 l. milk full fat  
1 vanilla pod  
1 lemon - zest

## METHOD

In a saucepan mix the eggs yolks with the sugar, using a wooden spoon, gradually add the flour, stirring constantly until the mixture is blended. Pour the boiling milk into which you have put the vanilla and grated lemon peel. Place on the heat, continue stirring, simmer for 3-4 minutes. Do not exceed 82 ° C temperature. The correct temperature is 84-85 ° C, but it is advisable not to exceed 82 °, because the cream will continue to cook even once removed from the heat. In this way you will get a smooth pastry cream without unpleasant hints of cooked egg. Pour it into a bowl and let it cool turning it from time to time, so that the film does not form on the surface of the pastry cream.



# Stages

Let's be realistic, no one likes to work without a pay-check especially if the work is surrounded of heat, fire, pressure and shouting. A decades ago been in the kitchen was very much different of now; work in the kitchen was like to be recruit in the army: discipline, respect, commitments, sacrifice, long hours and heat lot of heat everywhere. My first approach with the restaurant was in a small traditional family Osteria, the owner was the host and the wife was the chef; 8am the duty starts and my first daily task was to cook the potatoes, yes.. cook the potatoes for the gnocchi considering that every day in this establishment the homemade food was done fresh from A to Z. Ingredients were harvested from the surrounding farms and meat from the town butcheries, everyday I was making gnocchi, fresh pasta, bread, ravioli and I was the only in charge to clean the canned salted anchovies. I hate salted anchovies, as I was cleaning 5 kilograms a day and it takes 2 hours of my time considering at my young age and my first experience. To clean the anchovies, you need to open the can, remove with your hand the sea salt and then gently wash it under running water removing at the same time carefully the head and with your finger you need to remove the meat from the back bone till the end of the tail, all this under running water and without braking the fish.

My sacrifice were paid off because my pain was creating one of the most attractive dish of the restaurant “Alici con bagnetto verde”.

My favorite part of the day was the time to making the baked puff pastry with mozzarella cheese and ham; rolling the puff pastry was something new for me because I was used to roll only short crust dough so the new feeling of soft and buttery dough was exacting me like a new toy for Christmas as a kid. Rolled out the pastry with little flour, then I was laying it in the baking tray then overspread with sliced hard mozzarella, fresh sliced cooked ham called “Prosciutto Cotto”, cover all with an other sheet of pastry, prick with a fork, brush with wished whole eggs and bake in the oven. The result was just amazing, crunchy puff pastry with cheesy mozzarella and flavored ham; definitely it’s my favorite snack.

After done the perp for the line chefs and having settled the lunch appetizer buffet we was ready for the service and I was ready for my daily war, for me it was like a war I and II combined together in one spot. I never saw it before in my life, such speed, activity, focus, shouting, pressure, adrenalin, punctuality; everything was to fast and I can’t understand anything. The owner host was a big, a very big man and every time he was entering the kitchen to ask something during the service I was shaking like my anchovies under the running water. As they say after the storm the peace, and for me every war was a storm. The service was done and our job start now, how come the job start now after already 6 hours of duty? Yes, now we need to fix the mess in the kitchen, brush the pots, clean the dishes, wipe the glasses, clean the stove, mop the floor and throw the garbage. And finally after 8 hour of duty the work is done for today.



Done? Hallo? Tonight we are open and costumers need to eat again! One hour of beak and then we need to start from the scratch with fresh gnocchi, fresh pasta, anchovies, bake puff pastry, etc.. but for dinner, we were serving something special, something not available for lunch and it's called " Ganassino brasato" a melt mouth veal cheek served with polenta. This piece of art require from 4 to 5 hours of slow cooking, so every morning we were cooking it and only the night costumer can delight it with a glass of local farmer red wine. 2 am the day was done, now we can relax and enjoy with all the crew some smiles, personal chats and a bites from our work (included the ganassino). Time to time I remember the stages adventures, piece of life dedicated on owning a new job, a new experiences, a new opportunity, a new challenges; all has been paid off as the time invested for free money made me the culinary coach of today.



# Alici al bagnetto verde

- anchovies with green sauce -

## INGREDIENTS

400 gr. can salted anchovies

220 gr. parsley

2 clove of garlic

125 ml. extra virgin olive oil

200 ml. white vinegar

## METHOD

In running water desalinate, clean and divide anchovies into fillets; wash then with water and vinegar, dry one by one and place in a container. Clean the parsley and keep only the tenderest leaves; with the parsley leaves and the garlic, make a very fine mixture chopped by hand knife then add the oil, stirring with a fork. Pour the sauce over the anchovies and let it rest in the fridge for a few hours. Enjoy it with a fresh grilled rustic sliced bread.



# Pasta sfoglia al prosciutto e formaggio

- Puff pastry with ham and cheese -

## INGREDIENTS

500 gr. puff pastry  
280 gr. mozzarella  
180 gr. Italian ham “prosciutto cotto”  
180 gr. emmental cheese  
1 egg yolk for brushing

## METHOD

Roll out the puff pastry and divide it in two sheets. Then place one on a baking sheet lined with parchment paper and cover it with the sliced mozzarella, add on top the sliced emmental and in the end the sliced ham. Cover with the second sheet of puff pastry, make holes on the surface with the prongs of a fork and brush with the egg yolk. Cook in a preheated oven at 180 degrees for 20/30 minutes till reaches the gold color. Let it rest for few minutes and serve. This is absolutely my favorite snack and can be use as a appetizer or as a finger food.



# Ganassino brasato

- braised veal cheek -

## INGREDIENTS

4 veal cheek	150 gr. onion
60 gr. flour 00	30 ml. extra virgin olive oil
150 gr. carrot	200 gr. celery
100 gr. butter	2 juniper berries
220 ml. glass of red wine	1 bay leaf
Veal broth	Salt to taste
Grounded pepper to taste	

## METHOD

Season the veal cheek and then floury it, add the olive oil to a non-stick pan and fry the cheek; when is browed color in all the surface then remove and keep it on side. Wash and clean all the vegetables, cut the celery, carrot and onion into small cubes. In a large saucepan over medium heat, gently fry the vegetables with the butter and spices. Add the veal cheek into pot and add a little stock at a time and slow cook over a very low heat for at least 4 to 5 hours. Remove the veal cheek and blend the vegetable sauce, reduce it over a high heat until the sauce is smooth and velvety. Adjust on seasoning and serve your ganassino with polenta or mushed potatoes.