A photograph of two people, a woman and a man, standing in a restaurant. The woman is on the left, wearing a dark dress, and the man is on the right, wearing a dark suit. They are both smiling. The restaurant has a rustic feel with brick walls, wooden pillars, and large windows. There are tables with white tablecloths and blue and white striped napkins. The lighting is warm, with pendant lamps hanging from the ceiling.

On a once-neglected 1930s piazza named for Emperor Augustus, a food megaplex

Roman rebels  
Alessandra Marino  
and Alessandro  
Tudini of 'Gusto.

BY  
ELIZABETH HELMAN  
MINCHILLI

RECIPES BY  
MARCO GALLOTTA

PHOTOGRAPHS BY  
AKIKO IDA +  
PIERRE JAVELLE

# the **best** food piazza in **Rome**

called **'Gusto** has become a **mandatory** stop for absolutely anyone who **loves to eat.**

WALK DOWN ANY STREET OR ALLEYWAY IN ROME after noon, and you are likely to see at least one person digging into a scoop of gelato. But take a stroll around Via del Corso, Rome's main shopping strip, and the person you pass will probably be spooning cheese out of a paper cup. Gorgonzola to go? In a city that prides itself on tradition, this is just the latest rule breaker from Alessandra Marino and her husband, Alessandro Tudini, the owners and creative forces behind 'Gusto, Rome's only food emporium.

When Marino and Tudini launched 'Gusto in 1998, it included a serious restaurant, a wine bar, a pizzeria and a cookbook and kitchenware shop, all housed in a 7,500-square-foot space off the huge, marbled 1930s Piazza Augusto Imperatore. Since then they've added an osteria (a neighborhood trattoria), a cheese shop and a wine shop. And they're planning to launch a café sometime next year.

Meanwhile, American architect Richard Meier is busy redesigning the west side of the piazza, linking the historic Ara Pacis, a monument to peace, with the mausoleum of Augustus, who ruled imperial Rome until his death in

A.D. 14. When Meier completes the project, he will have turned much of the piazza into a pedestrian zone, undoubtedly bringing more visitors to 'Gusto.

As 'Gusto continues to expand in ways its founders couldn't have imagined, Marino recalls the impulse that led her to launch it in the first place. "If I meet someone for a drink after work," she says, "and we are comfortable and having fun, how annoying is it that we have to get up and go looking for a restaurant if we are hungry!" The idea of a bar that is also a restaurant simply did not exist in Rome before 'Gusto came along. "But at 'Gusto we have everything, even live music," she says.

Every part of 'Gusto challenges the Roman orthodoxy in some way. Consider the Osteria, which Marino and Tudini opened two years ago on Via della Frezza, on the side of the 'Gusto complex that does not face the piazza. On the one hand, the place sounds quite old-fashioned, with

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its menu of *nonna*-style dishes: delicate little meatballs with sage, tonnarelli *cacio e pepe* (pasta with pecorino, Parmesan cheese and black pepper), eggplant parmigiana. "I wanted to return to the idea of home cooking and re-create all the dishes I remember from childhood," Marino says. But quite unconventionally, the Osteria also offers *cicchetti*, inspired by the snacks, usually cheese or salami, served in Venetian bars. Indeed, customers can order almost anything on the menu—including pastas and entrées—in *cicchetti*-size portions.

Then there's the glass-enclosed Formaggeria (cheese shop) tucked into a corner of Osteria, with windows that open directly onto the street. Along the shelves of the compact space are about 300 cheeses, which change according to the season. "Although Italy is a country with fantastic cheeses, in Rome it's strangely difficult to get anything other than very local cheeses," says Marco Gallotta, the executive chef at 'Gusto (whose delicious recipes follow). But the buyers for the shop search out rare choices such as aged Ragusano from Sicily, and raw-milk robiola and artisanal Gorgonzola, both from Piedmont.

The Formaggeria's cheeses are aged in the cellar, also home to 'Gusto's school, informally known as *la scuola*, where people can take classes or come for tastings. "I hate it when an overly didactic waiter intimidates a customer

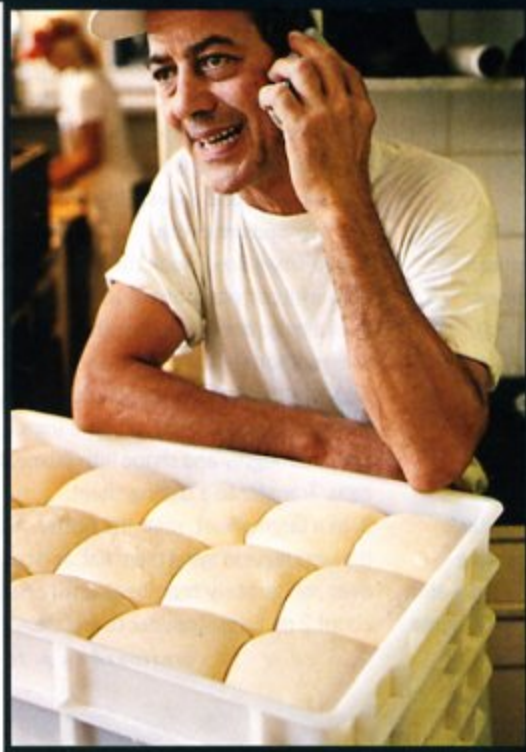
with too much information about a particular cheese or wine," says Marino. "The classes are for anyone who wants to learn more outside the framework of a meal."

**f**rom the beginning, the serious restaurant at 'Gusto has been known for its wine list, with more than 1,200 labels, including many hard-to-find Italian regional choices. So it made sense when Marino opened an *enoteca* (wine shop) too. Like the Formaggeria, the Enoteca is small but there's a lot going on. Customers seated on barstools at a wooden counter can consult a massive list with exhaustive information on each wine, including grape variety, provenance and vintage as well as comments by the wine director. In addition to these bottles, the Enoteca sells a vast selection of accessories, plus what must be one of the largest selection of wine books in Rome.

"When we opened 'Gusto in 1998, the piazza was dead," Marino recalls. "There was no reason at all for anyone to go there." Now 'Gusto attracts stylish young Romans from all over the city with its hip dining spots. After centuries of neglect, Emperor Augustus is finally getting the attention he would have believed he deserved.



Challenging Roman provincialism are 'Gusto's unusual cheeses, unusual wines, unusual breads (one made with squid ink!) and unusual pizzas.





Pizza  
Margherita  
Neapolitan  
style—with  
buffalo  
mozzarella.

VEAL MEATBALLS *continued*

4. Dust the meatballs lightly with flour and shake off the excess. Add the meatballs to the skillet and cook them over moderate heat until browned all over and cooked through, about 12 minutes. Transfer to a platter and keep warm.

5. Add the wine to the skillet and simmer over moderately high heat, scraping up the browned bits on the bottom of the skillet, until almost evaporated, 5 minutes. Add the vegetable stock and simmer until slightly reduced, about 2 minutes. Transfer the meatballs to a platter and pour the pan sauce over them. Garnish with the fried sage leaves and serve.

**NOTE** These meatballs are also delicious when made with ground pork or a mixture of ground pork and veal.

**MAKE AHEAD** The uncooked meatballs can be refrigerated overnight.

**WINE** The light, mild veal and the slightly bitter sage are best matched with the dry, savory, spicy flavors of a medium-bodied Sangiovese-based wine. Try the 2001 Lungarotti Rubesco or the 2002 Isole e Olena Chianti Classico.

**Cannelloni with Ricotta, Shrimp and Leeks****ACTIVE: 30 MIN; TOTAL: 45 MIN**

4 SERVINGS

Gallotta's unorthodox take on cannelloni pairs a chive-flecked ricotta filling with an intensely flavored topping of leeks and shrimp that are sautéed in olive oil, then flambéed with Armagnac. He rolls the sheets of pasta dough so thin, you can practically see through them.

**1 pound fresh ricotta (2 cups)**

**1 tablespoon minced chives**

**Salt and freshly ground pepper**

**2½ tablespoons unsalted butter, softened**

**1 tablespoon freshly grated Parmesan**

**¼ pound thin sheets of fresh pasta (see Note)**

**2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil**

**2 medium leeks, white and tender green parts only, sliced crosswise ½ inch thick**

**8 large shrimp—shelled, halved lengthwise and deveined**

**1 tablespoon Armagnac or other brandy**

1. Preheat the oven to 350°. In a small bowl, blend the ricotta with the chives and season with salt and pepper. Spread 1 tablespoon of the butter in a 9-by-13-inch baking dish. Sprinkle the Parmesan over the bottom of the dish.

2. Bring a medium saucepan of salted water to a boil. Have ready a large bowl of cold water. Cut the pasta sheets into eight 6-inch squares. Add the sheets to the boiling water and cook them until tender, about 2 minutes. Using a slotted spoon or a Chinese wire skimmer, transfer the sheets to the bowl of cold water and let cool. Spread the sheets on paper towels and pat dry.

3. Transfer the pasta sheets to a work surface. Spread ¼ cup of the ricotta filling at one edge of each pasta sheet and roll up loosely to make flattened cylinders. Transfer the cannelloni to the prepared baking dish and spread ½ tablespoon of the butter over them. Bake the cannelloni for about 12 minutes, or until heated through.

4. Meanwhile, in a medium skillet, heat the olive oil. Add the leeks, season with salt and pepper and cook over moderately low heat, stirring occasionally, until softened, about 8 minutes. Increase the heat to moderate. Add the shrimp, season with salt and pepper and stir occasionally until the shrimp are cooked, about 3 minutes. Add the Armagnac and carefully light it with a long-handled match. When the flames die down, swirl in the remaining 1 tablespoon of butter. Spoon the leeks and shrimp over the cannelloni and serve.

**NOTE** If your fresh pasta sheets are not delicately thin (¼ to ½ inch thick), run them through a pasta machine adjusted to the thinnest setting.

**MAKE AHEAD** The assembled cannelloni can be refrigerated overnight.

**WINE** Bright, bold Arneis, a dry white from Piedmont, has the lively citrus flavors to combine well with the shrimp and leeks. Look for the 2003 Bruno Giacosa Roero or the 2002 Ceretto Blangé.

**Roast Rack of Lamb with Walnut Sauce****ACTIVE: 50 MIN; TOTAL: 1 HR**

4 SERVINGS

At *Gusto*, Gallotta often transforms familiar Mediterranean flavors into something new. For this dish, he accompanies New Zealand lamb (which is meatier than Italian lamb) with a luscious, silky Northern Italian-inspired sauce made with walnuts that are simmered in milk, then pureed and enriched with butter.

**1 cup shelled walnuts (3 ounces)**

**1½ cups milk**

**1 medium Yukon Gold potato (6 ounces), peeled and cut into 1-inch cubes**

**¼ cup extra-virgin olive oil**

**1 large shallot, finely chopped**

**1 green bell pepper, cut into 1-inch pieces**

**1 pound eggplant, peeled and cut into 1-inch cubes**

**2 medium zucchini, cut into 1-inch cubes**

**¾ cup vegetable stock or low-sodium broth**

**2 tablespoons coarsely chopped basil**

**2 frenched 8-rib racks of lamb (1¼ pounds each)**

**1 tablespoon unsalted butter**

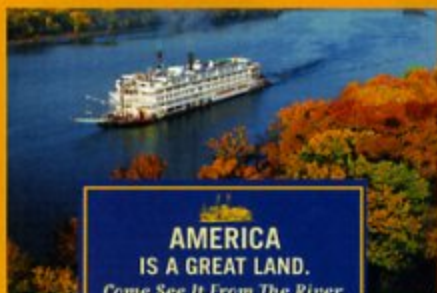
1. Preheat the oven to 450°. In a small saucepan, combine the walnuts and the milk and simmer over low heat until the milk has reduced slightly, so it just covers the walnuts, about 20 minutes. Cover and keep warm.

2. Meanwhile, in a small saucepan, cover the potato with water and bring to a boil. Cook over moderately high heat until just tender, about 6 minutes. Drain well.

3. In a large skillet, heat 2 tablespoons of the olive oil. Add the shallot and cook over moderate heat until softened, about 3 minutes. Add the green pepper and cook, stirring, for 4 minutes. Add the eggplant and 1 tablespoon of the olive oil. Cover and cook, stirring a few times, until the eggplant is just tender, about 4 minutes.

*continued on p. 168*

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*ROAST RACK OF LAMB continued*

4. Add the zucchini and the vegetable stock to the skillet, cover and cook for 3 minutes, stirring once. Gently stir in the potato and basil, season with salt and pepper and stir again. Cover the skillet and remove it from the heat.

5. In a large ovenproof skillet, heat the remaining 1 tablespoon of olive oil until shimmering. Cut each lamb rack in half and season with salt and pepper. Add the lamb racks to the skillet, meaty side down, and cook them over high heat until richly browned on the bottom, about 4 minutes. Turn and cook on the bony side for 2 minutes. Transfer the skillet to the oven and cook the lamb for about 15 minutes, or until an instant-read thermometer inserted in the center of the meat registers 135° for medium-rare. Transfer the lamb racks to a carving board and let them rest for 10 minutes.

6. Transfer the walnuts and milk to a blender and puree. Return the walnut sauce to the saucepan and reheat over moderate heat. Stir in the butter and season with salt and pepper. Reheat the vegetables, if necessary. Carve the lamb into chops and serve with the walnut sauce and vegetables.

**NOTE** The creamy walnut sauce would also be wonderful with veal or chicken.

**MAKE AHEAD** The recipe can be prepared through Step 4 up to 4 hours ahead.

**WINE** Pungent lamb always goes best with a generous but well-structured red wine. Look for a soft, earthy Montepulciano d'Abruzzo such as the 2001 Valle Reale, or a Cabernet blend such as the 2001 La Carraia Fobiano.

### Classic Tiramisu

**TOTAL: 25 MIN PLUS OVERNIGHT**

**RESTING**

**6 SERVINGS**

Although Gallotta takes liberties with Roman recipes at *Gusto*, he also respects the classics. At the Osteria, he serves tiramisu at its most timeless: tender coffee-infused cookies in incredibly rich mascarpone cream with a gentle dusting of cocoa powder.

- ½ cup heavy cream
- 2 large eggs, separated
- ⅓ cup plus 1 tablespoon of granulated sugar
- ½ pound mascarpone (1 cup)
- 1 cup strong brewed espresso at room temperature
- One 7-ounce package dry ladyfingers, preferably Italian *savoirdi* (see Note)
- ¼ cup unsweetened cocoa powder, for dusting

1. In a medium bowl, whip the heavy cream until it is firm and refrigerate. In a large bowl, beat the egg yolks with the ⅓ cup of sugar until light in color. In another bowl, using a whisk or an electric handheld mixer, beat the egg whites until they hold soft peaks. Add the remaining 1 tablespoon of sugar to the whites and beat until they're firm and glossy. Using a rubber spatula, fold the whipped cream into the beaten yolk-and-sugar mixture, then fold in the mascarpone and one-third of the beaten egg whites. Gently fold in the remaining egg whites.

2. Pour the espresso into a shallow bowl. Dip both sides of half of the ladyfingers in the espresso and use them to line the bottom of an 8-by-10- or 8-by-11-inch glass or ceramic baking dish. Spoon half of the mascarpone mixture over the ladyfingers and spread it in a smooth, even layer. Dip both sides of the remaining ladyfingers in the espresso and arrange them on top. Spread the remaining mascarpone mixture over the ladyfingers in a smooth, even layer. Cover and refrigerate the tiramisu overnight.

3. Just before serving, sift the cocoa powder over the top of the tiramisu. Cut the tiramisu into squares and serve.

**NOTE** *Savoirdi* ladyfingers can be found in Italian specialty food shops.

**MAKE AHEAD** The tiramisu can be refrigerated for up to 2 days.

**WINE** A plump, concentrated sweet Muscat with hints of caramel and candied orange will blend best with this creamy dessert. Try a Passito di Pantelleria such as the 2003 Donnafugata Ben Ryé or the 1999 De Bartoli Bukkuram. ●

#### PORK CARNITAS continued

6. Brush the tortillas lightly with oil, then stack and wrap them in foil. Heat the tortillas in the oven until warm. Drain the pork on paper towels. Serve the carnitas, encouraging guests to fill the tortillas with the Requeson, meat and guacamole. Serve the orange salsa on the side.

**NOTE** Tamarind concentrate is used in Latin and South Asian dishes to add a slightly sweet and sour flavor. It is available at most Latin and Indian markets.

**MAKE AHEAD** The recipe can be prepared through Step 3 and refrigerated overnight. Reheat the carnitas in a 325° oven.

## Greece

### Braised Lamb Shanks with Trahana Pasta and Ricotta Salata

**ACTIVE: 45 MIN; TOTAL: 3 HR 30 MIN**  
6 SERVINGS

*Trahana* pasta, made with goat's-milk yogurt, has a slight tartness that's great with this rich oven-braised lamb from chef Pano Karatasos of Kyma in Atlanta. If you can't find it at a Middle Eastern market, substitute couscous and add an extra squirt of lemon juice.

- 6 lamb shanks (1 pound each)
- Salt and freshly ground pepper
- ¾ cup extra-virgin olive oil
- 3 tablespoons unsalted butter
- 1 extra-large white onion, chopped
- 8 large garlic cloves, thinly sliced
- 12 thyme sprigs
- 1½ quarts chicken stock or low-sodium broth
- 3 large shallots, finely chopped
- Two 28-ounce cans Italian pureed tomatoes
- 1 cinnamon stick
- 3 cups sour *trahana* pasta (see Note) or couscous
- ¼ cup plus 2 tablespoons minced dill
- ¼ cup plus 2 tablespoons minced flat-leaf parsley
- ¼ cup plus 2 tablespoons snipped chives
- ¼ cup fresh lemon juice
- ¾ pound ricotta salata, shredded

1. Season the lamb shanks with salt and pepper. In a very large skillet, heat 2 tablespoons of the olive oil. Add the shanks and cook over moderately high heat until browned, about 10 minutes. Transfer the lamb shanks to a medium roasting pan.

2. Preheat the oven to 325°. Melt the butter in the skillet. Add the onion, garlic and 8 of the thyme sprigs and cook over moderate heat, stirring occasionally, until the onions are softened, about 7 minutes. Scrape the onions into the roasting pan and add the stock. Cover the pan with foil and braise the shanks in the oven for 2½ hours, or until the meat is very tender.

3. Transfer the lamb to a large ovenproof platter. Strain the braising liquid into a bowl through a fine sieve and skim off the fat. You should have 7½ cups; if necessary, add more water. Cover the lamb shanks with foil and keep warm in the oven.

4. Meanwhile, in a medium saucepan, heat ¼ cup of the olive oil. Add the shallots and the remaining 4 thyme sprigs and cook over moderate heat, stirring occasionally, until the shallots are softened, about 7 minutes. Add the tomato puree and cinnamon stick and cook over moderate heat until the sauce is very thick and reduced to 3 cups, about 30 minutes. Season with salt and pepper. Discard the cinnamon stick and thyme sprigs.

5. In a large saucepan, bring the braising liquid to a boil. Add the *trahana* and bring to a boil, stirring constantly. Reduce the heat to low, cover and cook for 10 minutes or until all of the liquid has been absorbed; stir occasionally. Transfer the *trahana* to a bowl and stir in the tomato sauce, dill, parsley, chives and lemon juice. Fold in half of the cheese and the remaining ¼ cup plus 2 tablespoons of olive oil and season with salt and pepper. Mound the *trahana* on a large platter. Sprinkle the remaining cheese on top. Arrange the lamb shanks on top of the *trahana* and serve.

**NOTE** *Trahana*, a Greek pasta made from bulgur wheat, has a grainy appearance similar to couscous. There are two types, sweet and sour. The sour variety is mixed with thick goat's-milk yogurt before it is

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