

Mangia Bene, Viva Bene

By FRANK ZEOLI



Christmas Fish



Christmas at my grandmother's house was the most special time of the entire year. She had a record player in the living room that held 30 LPs and she would play it all the time. The house was filled with Christmas favorites from Dean Martin, Perry Como, Connie Francis and, my grandmother's favorite singer, Jerry Vale. Every time I hear Christmas songs by these artists, I can see my grandmother sitting on her living room floor wrapping Christmas gifts in front of the tree.

The food was memorable too. She made so many things on Christmas Eve, however the dish I remember the most was something I never ate, but now as an adult, I wish I had. **Christmas Fish**, as I would call it, was one of her staples. I now know the real name was **Cod Puttanesca**. She always tried to get me to eat it and I would not touch it. It had two things I hated, olives and fish. It's funny that after she died white fish and olives became two of my favorites. It seems she has more powers in the after-life than I thought.

Her version of the dish not only contained olives but it also had artichokes. She never cooked with capers so I did not include them here but they do well in the dish, if desired.

Enjoy her recipe for Christmas Fish.

Prep Time: 20 Minutes

Ingredients

- 4 cloves of garlic
- 2 T of Olive Oil
- 2- 28 oz cans of plum tomatoes, *pureed with an immersion blender or crushed with your hands like my grandmother would do.*

Cook Time: 60 Minutes

- 1 can of artichoke hearts, cut in half (8 to 10 artichokes)
- 1/2 cup of Kalamata olives
- 4 cod fillets
- 8-10 fresh basil leaves, torn
- Salt & Pepper to taste

Instructions

1. Preheat the oven to 350 degrees.
2. Mince the garlic.
3. In a medium sauté pan, add the olive oil and sauté the garlic on medium high heat for about 1 minute. Add the tomatoes, salt, pepper, and basil and bring to a boil. Lower the heat and simmer for 30 minutes.
4. On a separate plate, season the fish with salt and pepper.
5. Add the fish to a baking dish and pour the tomato mixture over it. Make sure the fish is completely covered.
6. Bake the fish for about 25 minutes or until the fish cooks through.

Transfer the fish to a platter and spoon some of the sauce over the fish.

Buona Natale!



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