



Soffritto

Can you say So-FREE-toe?

by Pamela Manley

Not a word that most people hear at the dinner table in the United States unless you are from an Italian or Latin culture. *Soffritto*, loosely translated as “lightly fried” or “under fried”, the soffritto is a base for a number of ethnic dishes.

Traditionally a sautéed mixture of ham, onions and herbs, the soffritto varies among cultures with differing ingredients. Origins of the soffritto (also spelled sofrito) can be traced to the cuisines of Italy, Spain and Greece. Families in each region hold dear their own secret recipe for soffritto.

Cookbook author, Benedetta Vitali, demonstrates that an entire book can be devoted to the subject. The cover of her book (which is pictured above)

displays a beloved rustic, Tuscan scene much like the writings in her book. The soffritto may be a simple yet flavorful base for countless savory dishes, but Vitali holds the combination to a personal degree. She writes, "Use the recipes as indications, and trust your instincts to fill in the blanks." This is not awkward pen-play by an author devoid of culinary passion.

And it is that passion that is passed along from generation to generation.

In my experience in an Italian-Continental American restaurant, the soffritto consisted basically of julienned strips of imported pancetta, diced onions, aromatic minced garlic and freshly chopped herbs. Pancetta was engineered into small, thin pieces to assist the rendering of flavorful fat until the remaining meat was crisp and the color of golden maple. By rendering in this manner, the cut also allows

for a pleasing texture to the tongue in the end product.

However, once the fat had been rendered (sometimes with the aid of extra virgin olive oil), the onions and herbs were added. The mixture then was vigorously sautéed until the onions became clear.

In the recipe that follows, the soffritto is prepared for a classic Minestrone soup. Once the onions are translucent, carrots are added and followed by the addition of celery. Both are allowed to cook until they are just beginning to tenderize. The use of celery is classically Italian. The Spanish sofrito normally omits celery and includes annatto seeds.¹

So when enjoying your favorite Italian, Greek or Spanish dish,

¹

<http://eat.epicurios.com/dictionary/food/index.ssf?TERM=sofrito>; 1995 based on THE FOOD LOVER'S COMPANION, 2nd edition, by Sharon Tyler Herbst.

remember the foundation that is the soffritto.

Minestrone

by Chef Dann Reid
Andrew's 228

2 1/2 pounds pancetta -- cut into thin strips
2 1/2 pounds zucchini -- cut in 1" cubes
6 pounds savoy cabbage -- cut in 1" cubes
2 pounds onion -- cut in 1/4" cubes
2 pounds carrot -- cut in 1/2" cubes
14 cloves garlic -- minced
14 stalks celery -- cut in 1/2" cubes
1 1/2 ounces fresh parsley -- chopped fine
1 ounce fresh thyme -- chopped
1 ounce fresh oregano -- chopped
1 ounce fresh sage -- chopped
1 ounce fresh rosemary -- chopped
1 ounce fresh basil leaves -- chiffonade
2 gallons chicken stock -- heated
6 pounds tomatoes, canned -- diced
32 ounces red beans -- cooked
8 ounces extra virgin olive oil

Render pancetta in a medium-sized stockpot until it begins to turn a golden brown and crisps.

Add onion, garlic and herbs. Cook until onions are completely translucent.

Add carrots. Cook for about 5 minutes, stirring.

Add celery. Cook for another 5 minutes, stirring.

Add cabbage. Cook (stirring/tossing) until it begins to wilt.

Add 8 quarts stock. Bring to a boil.

Add zucchini. Bring to a boil.

Remove from heat and cool.

Per Serving (excluding unknown items): 137 Calories; 5g Fat (30.6% calories from fat); 9g Protein; 15g Carbohydrate; 6g Dietary Fiber; 11mg Cholesterol; 1402mg Sodium. Exchanges: 1/2 Grain(Starch); 1 Lean Meat; 1 Vegetable; 1/2 Fat.

Advertisement



Tallahassee has a new reason to stay downtown after hours. Just a stone's throw away from the Capital Building and City Hall is Andrew's 228, the newest venture of longtime Tallahassee restaurateur Andrew Reiss. Formerly Andrew's 2nd Act, 228 is now open after a year-long renovation project. The result is a casual, bistro-style restaurant which combines Southern hospitality with urban-chic.

Chef Dann Reid prepares 228's signature blend of Creative American and Italian Cuisine. The menu and daily



specials are complimented by a full bar, desserts and coffees, and a wine list that is both comprehensive and comprehensible. Open for lunch and dinner, 228 can accommodate parties from 2 to 36 (reservations are recommended for small and required for large parties). Welcome to Andrew's 228 where guests come for dinner and stay for an evening!

Andrew's 228

228 South Adams Street
Tallahassee, Florida 32301
(850) 222-3444
(850) 222-2433 fax
www.andrewsdowntown.com