

Santini's *bass note*



Santini's restaurant in Belgravia was one of Frank Sinatra's all-time favourites. Here, the multi-talented **Laura Santini** chooses her favourite recipes, especially for Essence.



LAURA SANTINI is a writer who cooks. Much of her passion for food comes from her Italian grandmother and from her international parents. Laura's father Gino ran a hotel in Venice where he met her British-born mother. The family moved to UK in the Seventies and in 1984 her parents launched Santini Belgravia, which, as every London cabbie will tell you, is famed for being Frank Sinatra's all-time favourite.

Santini celebrates 25 years this year and remains synonymous with authentic Italian food, premium quality ingredients and simple understated designer surroundings.

After leaving university where she read Italian and English, Laura began cooking for Justin de Blank at his National Gallery restaurant. The kitchen led Laura to a career in PR with Lynne Franks followed by another change, this time working for MTV Europe.

In 2002, Laura returned to London to run Santini following her father's retirement. Her task was to take the restaurant into the future without losing past values. Now she plans to step back a bit and pursue her writing, television and food consultancy work. Her first book, *Easy Tasty Italian*, is published by Quadrille this month.

Branzino Santini (Sea Bass Santini)

This lightly-poached sea bass with a fresh herb and balsamic dressing is one of my father's signature dishes and a constant favourite at Santini. It is delicious with new potatoes or lentils.

Ingredients (serves 4)

4 large branzino (sea bass) fillets, each about 200–225g

For the poaching liquid

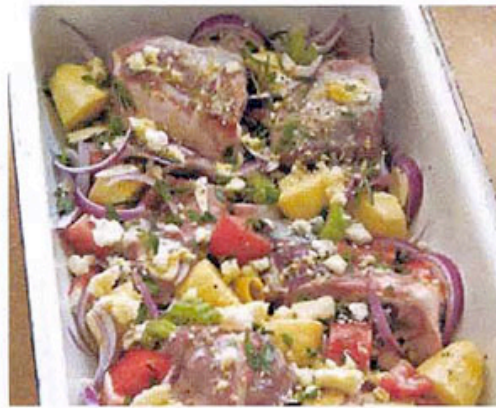
1 onion, quartered
1 carrot
1 celery stalk
Half a lemon
Splash of white wine
1 bay leaf
1 sprig of parsley
8 black peppercorns
Salt

For the Santini sauce

250ml extra virgin olive oil
Good squeeze of lemon juice
75ml balsamic vinegar
1 large sprig of rosemary
Bunch of chives
Bunch of parsley
Bunch of sage
2 garlic cloves, very finely chopped
Half tsp Aromat seasoning dissolved in 1 tbsp water
Worcestershire sauce to taste
Salt flakes and freshly ground black pepper

Method

Make the sauce the day before. Mix the oil, lemon juice and balsamic vinegar. Strip the leaves from the rosemary stalk and finely chop all the herbs together. Add these, together with



the garlic, to the sauce. Mix in the dissolved Aromat and a generous dash of Worcestershire sauce, then season to taste with salt and pepper. Leave in a cool place for at least 24 hours.

This dish requires the fish to be lightly poached and then dressed with the sauce. Find a large shallow pan or fish kettle in which to poach the fish (something you can easily lift the fish out of without breaking it).

Put enough water in the pan to cover the fish, add all poaching liquid ingredients and bring to the boil. Adjust the saltiness, if necessary. When it is boiling, lower the heat to a gentle simmer and place the fish fillets in the water. Poach for about 5 minutes, until the fillets are still firm but cooked and white with no translucency. Carefully remove the fillets from the water and place on a serving plate.

Stir the sauce to mix all ingredients together and spoon over the sea bass.

Roasted Lamb with Tomato and Pecorino

Ingredients (serves 4-6)

800g lean lamb shoulder on the bone, cut into large 8cm pieces
3-4 large potatoes, cut into chunks for roasting
400g ripe tomatoes, deseeded and chopped
1 tbsp fennel seeds
2 red onions, sliced
1 celery stalk, sliced
3 garlic cloves, thinly sliced
Handful of chopped parsley
Sprig of rosemary (leaves only)
Handful of chopped fresh oregano
Salt flakes and freshly ground
Black pepper
60g pecorino cheese, finely grated
150ml olive oil
Juice and a piece of zest from 2 lemons
Handful of chopped fresh mint, to serve

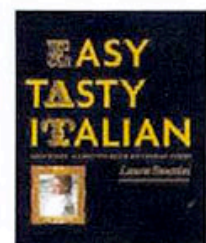
Method

Preheat the oven to 180°C/gas mark 4. Place all the ingredients, except the cheese, oil, lemons and mint, flat in a large roasting pan.

Generously douse in olive oil and lemon juice, season with salt and pepper, and mix together well with your hands. Sprinkle with pecorino cheese and splash with oil.

Bake in the oven for about one hour 20 minutes. During cooking you can baste with a splash of wine (red or white) and or a splash of stock. If the meat looks as if it is burning at any time, cover it with foil. Serve sprinkled with the mint.

Two or three chopped anchovies and/or a handful of black olives can be added for extra flavour. ●



Santini

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