

# Passatelli in brodo

Passatelli in brodo

Preparation time: 30 mins

Cooking: 2 mins

Difficulty: Medium

In my opinion this recipe is the work of a genius! There's nothing that could give you a better example of how Italians can reinterpret recipes, just changing the method you process the ingredients rather than changing the ingredients. A while ago I published a great recipe called "zuppa pavese", whose bulk ingredients were bread, egg and Parmesan cheese. Pavese comes from Pavia, a beautiful city south of Milan. Now, just move 300 km East, in the Romagna region of Italy, and you have the same bulk ingredients, processed in a different way, to make this wonderful dish called "passatelli". Passatelli (plural word) means literally "to pass them through", which recalls the act of making them using a kind of potato press specifically designed for passatelli. Passatelli are usually eaten "in brodo" (with stock), but can also be eaten dry, topped with a "ragu di carne" (meat sauce) or "ragu di pesce" (a sauce made with fish). The recipe belongs to the "cucina povera" (the cooking of the poor people), when people used to make ends meet with what they have got and where inventiveness played a big role to make the dishes more attractive. I got the recipe during a recent trip to Italy, in Romagna, where I also managed to speak with the locals and understand the variation on the theme you may find from family to family.

SERVES 4

Ingredients:

- 200 g (7 oz) Breadcrumbs (from stale bread)
- 200 g (7 oz) Grated Parmesan cheese
- 4 Eggs
- 1 tsp (almost level) Nutmeg
- Lemon zest from a ¼ of the lemon
- Salt and pepper to season
- 3-4 litres of chicken stock

Note 1: breadcrumbs should be made using stale bread that has become hard enough to be grated. Use bread that has been made without the adding of olive oil, otherwise you will end up with baby food once the passatelli are put into the boiling stock.

Note 2: when in Italy, I have found out that some people, especially restaurants, add some flour to keep the passatelli mixture together. Purists told me that adding flour is a short-cut for those who cannot make passatelli or for restaurants that cannot afford having problem with the mixture, just minutes before the service.

Directions:

First, reduce the bread in fine breadcrumbs and grate the Parmesan cheese.

Break the eggs into a large bowl.

Season with salt.

Season with pepper.

Whisk the eggs for few seconds and set the bowl apart.

Then, take a second bowl and add the breadcrumbs into it.

Add the nutmeg.

Stir to evenly distribute the nutmeg.

Add the Parmesan cheese.

Add the lemon zest.

Stir to evenly combine all the ingredients. I will call this mixture "dry mix";.

Gradually, add the dry mix to the eggs. Stir with a wooden spoon while doing so.

Once all the eggs have been absorbed into the dry mix, start working the mixture with your hands.

It's a bit like working a pasta dough with your hands. Work the dough for few minutes, until you think all the ingredients are well combined.

The final result should be a compact ball, slightly harder than a pasta dough.

Wrap the ball with cling film. This will help to retain the moisture, while you are getting ready for the next stages.

Don't put the ball in the fridge; just leave it in a cool place for the time necessary to get ready with the tool to make the passatelli and also to prepare the stock in which you will cook them.

This is the tool you need. It's a kind of potato press, but with wider holes (4 mm diameter). In Romagna region of Italy, locals use a different traditional tool called "ferro per passatelli" that does the same job. Now, there are two schools of thought: one that says to make the passatelli and let them dry onto a working surface before throwing them into the boiling stock and one that says to press the passatelli directly over the boiling stock and let them fall straight into the boiling stock. I will describe both.

Unwrap the ball, and make a couple of smaller balls with it, so that they can easily fit inside the tool for passatelli.

Press all the balls through the tool and cut the passatelli when they are about 4 cm long.

Gently, separate them over a working surface so that they dry evenly and let them dry for an hour or two depending on the ambient temperature. I found it useful to dry them onto a parchment paper, so that when it is time to put them into the pan, I let them slide directly from the paper.

Meanwhile, you should have prepared your chicken stock. Besides this, I also prepared a ragu&rsquo; di carne, to show the dry version of this dish.

Bring the stock to a gentle boil, put the dried passatelli into the pan and then lower the heat to a simmerring point. The passatelli will be ready when they are all afloat. Leave them into the pan for an extra minute and then take them out with a slotted spoon.

Serve the passatelli in a bowl filled with the same stock you used to cook the passatelli.

Buon appetito!

These are the passatelli in their dry version, topped with a ragu&rsquo; di carne.

Here, the picture shows the second method of making passastelli. Press them through, directly over the pan and when they are about 4 cm long, cut them with a knife. I have found this method less forgiving because if you don&rsquo;t get the right consistency of the ball mixture, the risk is that they will break once in contact with the boiling stock (this is why some people add flour into the mixture). For this method, you may have to try it few times before you nail it.