

Veal Campagnola

They say the way to a man's heart is through his stomach. Well here it is! Tried, tested and 19 years later, still successful! This is the first meal I ever cooked my husband, an old favourite in my family and one I have been cooking since I was a teenager. Succulent pieces of veal in a rich tomato sauce, topped with spinach and a molten mound of mozzarella sitting on a bed of gorgeous buttery risotto milanese. Simply yum.

Prep time: 20 Minutes
\$\$ Low to Medium Budget

Cooking time: 30 Minutes

Serves 2 for a romantic dinner.....

Olive oil for frying

2 pieces of veal leg steak, lightly pounded*

1 tbs of plain flour

250gm of frozen spinach, thawed and all the water squeezed out

2 cloves of garlic

1/2 tsp of dried oregano

1/2 cup of dry white wine

1 x 400gm tin of tomato puree

1/2 tsp of sugar

4 thick slices of mozzarella cheese

Sea salt and cracked pepper

For the Risotto:

2 tbs of olive oil

1 small brown onion, finely diced

1 clove of garlic

1 pinch of saffron threads

1 cup of arborio rice

1 cup of dry white wine

3 cups of chicken stock (low sodium)

40gms of butter, chopped into smaller pieces

1/2 cup of grated parmesan cheese

Sea salt and pepper

To make the risotto, heat the oil in a large heavy based saucepan. Gently fry the garlic, saffron and onions until the onion is soft and translucent.

Pour in the rice and fry for approximately 1 minute before adding the wine and allowing the rice to absorb all the liquid. Pour in the stock 1 cup at a time and use the same method. I never stand and stir the whole time, I just have the heat at a very gentle temperature and allow the rice to gently absorb all the liquid, stirring occasionally so it doesn't stick. After about 20 minutes the rice should be tender but still have a little bite to it. At this point, stir through the butter and parmesan, pop the lid on and set aside until ready to serve.

To prepare the veal place the flour on a large plate and season with a little salt and pepper. Lightly coat the veal on both sides and shake off any excess flour.

Heat a large heavy based pan. Pop in the oil and lightly fry the veal pieces for 1-2 minutes or until just cooked. Set aside on a piece of kitchen paper.

In the same pan gently fry the garlic for about 30 seconds before adding the oregano and wine. Reduce for a minute or so and add the tomato puree and sugar and stir well to combine. Reduce the heat to low and allow to simmer for 5 minutes.

Take the pan off the heat and lay the veal in the sauce. Top each slice with half the spinach and season with salt and pepper. Lay the 2 slices of mozzarella on top of the spinach and place a lid on the pan. Turn the heat on, on low and allow the cheese to melt. You can place it under a grill if you like to make the cheese more golden, but it is equally nice just melted.

Place a generous amount of the risotto on two serving plates and using an egg flip, gently place a piece of veal (with spinach and cheese) on top of the risotto. Spoon some of the remaining sauce around the veal and serve with a crisp green salad. Any remaining sauce is delicious for lunch with any remaining risotto.....if there is any remaining!

* I think it is essential to buy "real" veal and not the cheap substitute "yearling" which is often sold these days. It is tough as old boots. "Real" veal should be pale in colour and divinely tender. Ask the butcher to pound it out for you or place the veal between 2 sheets of cling wrap and pound it gently on both sides with a meat mallet.