

# Sense of place

Recipes KATIE PARLA

Photography ED ANDERSON

Calabrian  
sesame-nut  
brittle

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In her latest cookbook, *Food of the Italian South*, author Katie Parla shines a light on a venerable food culture that has long been overlooked.

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## SPEZZATINO AL L'UVA

### Pork cooked with grapes

SERVES 6-8

“The foothills east of the Apennines in Molise grow Tintilia, an indigenous red grape known for its low yield and pleasant notes of red fruit and spices,” says Katie Parla. “Each year, the majority of the harvested grapes are pressed to make wine, with the remainder reserved for jams and savoury dishes like this stew, which is made only at harvest time. The slight sweetness of the grapes mingles beautifully with the savoury pork and herbaceous notes of the bay leaves. Season the pork 24 hours in advance.”

- 2 tbsp extra-virgin olive oil
- 1 kg boneless pork shoulder, seasoned with salt 24 hours ahead, cut into 5cm cubes
- 1 garlic clove, crushed
- 250 ml dry red wine
- 2 fresh bay leaves
- 1 litre (4 cups) pork or chicken stock
- 180 gm (1 bunch) red grapes, halved, seeds removed

1 Heat olive oil in a large heavy-based frying pan over medium heat. When the oil

begins to shimmer, add the pork, in batches if necessary, and cook, turning, until browned on all sides (7-8 minutes). Remove with a slotted spoon and transfer to a plate.

2 Reduce heat to low. Add the garlic and stir until just golden (1-4 minutes). Add the wine, then increase the heat to medium and scrape up any browned bits from the bottom of the pan. When the scent of alcohol dissipates and the liquid has nearly

evaporated (2-4 minutes), add the bay leaves.

3 Return the pork to the pan and add enough stock so the meat is mostly submerged. Season to taste with salt and cook, stirring occasionally, for 1½ hours or until the pork is fork-tender, adding the grapes at the 1¼-hour mark (they should be soft). If the sauce is becoming too dry, add a bit more stock (you may not need all the stock). Serve.

## GIURGIULENA

### Calabrian sesame-nut brittle

MAKES ABOUT 20

“The eighth-century Arab conquest of the south brought new ingredients and sweets to the Italian peninsula,” says Parla. “One, called cupetta in the Benevento and Salentino dialects, and giurgiulena in Castrovillari, Calabria, is made with sugar, honey and sesame seeds. This long-lasting nut brittle was traditionally served around Christmas, spooned onto washed orange leaves, but today it is sliced into bars. The sprinkles add a festive flair common to the sweets of the south. This recipe is from La Locanda di Alia in Castrovillari, Calabria, where Daniela Alia makes them for the holiday season.” Pictured p96.

- Unsalted butter, for greasing
- 100 gm white sugar
- 450 gm (1¼ cups) honey (I like orange blossom honey)
- 450 gm sesame seeds
- 125 gm raw almonds
- Finely grated zest of 1 orange
- 1 tsp ground cinnamon
- 2 tbsp coloured sprinkles

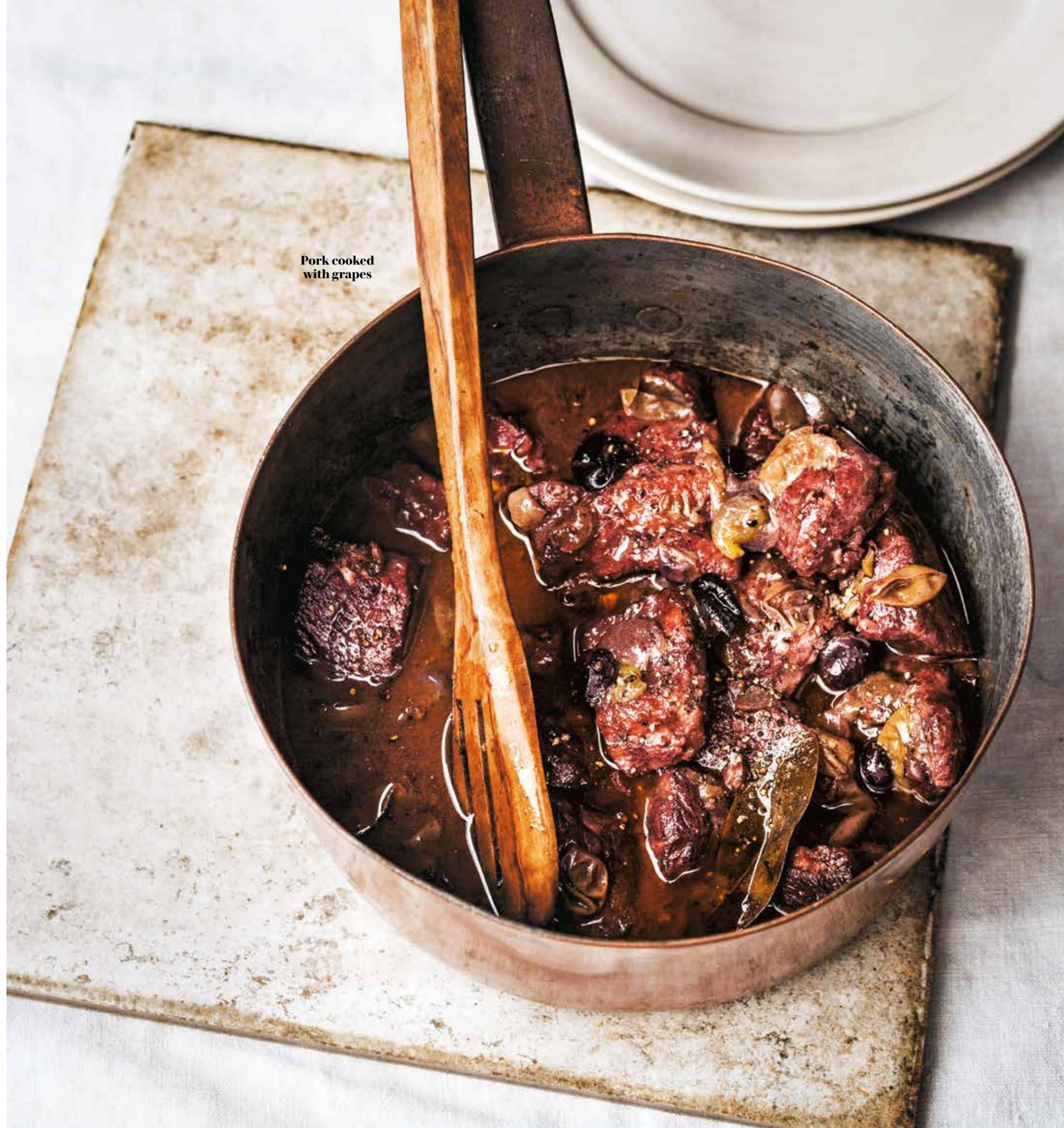
1 Grease and line a large oven tray with a sheet of baking paper, then grease the paper.

2 In a large deep saucepan, stir sugar and honey over medium heat. When the sugar has dissolved into the honey, add sesame seeds and cook, stirring frequently, until the seeds turn a shade darker (7-15 minutes). Add the almonds and continue to cook, stirring frequently, for another 2-5 minutes.

3 Remove the pan from the heat. Immediately stir in the orange zest and cinnamon, and set aside until the mixture is cool enough to handle.

4 Carefully pour the mixture onto the prepared tray. While the mixture is still warm, use a heatproof spatula to flatten it to 1.5cm thickness. Scatter the coloured sprinkles over the top and lightly press them in with your fingertips. While still warm, cut brittle into 5cm diamonds on a diagonal with a small sharp knife. Leave to cool completely. Giurgiulena will keep stored in an airtight container at room temperature for several months. >

Pork cooked with grapes





Cauliflower, olive, pepper and caper salad

INSALATA DI RINFORZO

## Cauliflower, olive, pepper and caper salad

SERVES 6

“This Neapolitan holiday staple, also called burdiglione, traditionally is served on Christmas Eve to provide rinforzo (reinforcement) to a lean, fish-based meal,” says Parla. “In Naples, the pepper of choice is the pappacella, a squat, flattened pepper.”

**QUICK-PICKLED VEGETABLES**

- 750 ml (3 cups) white wine vinegar, plus extra to taste
- 60 gm (¼ cup) fine sea salt, plus extra to taste
- 60 gm white sugar, plus extra, to taste
- 3 fresh bay leaves
- 1 tsp whole black peppercorns
- 3 carrots, cut into 1cm-thick rounds
- 2 red or yellow capsicum, cut into 2.5cm squares
- 2 celery stalks, cut into 1cm-thick pieces
- 1 small red onion, halved, thinly sliced

**SALAD**

- 1 small cauliflower, separated into florets
- ½ cup olives, rinsed, pitted and halved lengthways
- 2 tbsp capers, rinsed
- 6 salted anchovy fillets (see note), cleaned, cut into 5mm pieces
- ¼ cup flat-leaf parsley, coarsely chopped
- 2 tbsp white wine vinegar
- 60 ml (¼ cup) extra-virgin olive oil

**1** For the quick-pickled vegetables, combine the vinegar and 750ml water in a saucepan and bring to a simmer over low heat. Add salt and sugar. When

both have dissolved, taste the brine; it should taste balanced, like something you would put on your salad. Adjust to taste, then add bay leaves, peppercorns, carrots and capsicum. Return to a simmer and cook for 2 minutes. Add celery, return to a simmer and cook for another 1 minute, then add onion and cook for another 2 minutes. Drain, transfer to a large bowl, and set aside to cool.

**2** For the salad, fill a bowl with ice and water. Bring a large saucepan of salted water to the boil. Add the cauliflower and onion for about 3 minutes and celery for about 2 minutes. Use its shape (about 8 minutes). Drain and immediately plunge

cauliflower into the ice bath and cool. Drain and transfer to the bowl with pickled vegetables. Add olives, capers, anchovies and parsley. Pour the vinegar and olive oil over and toss to coat. Season to taste. Refrigerate for at least 1 hour or up to 2 days for flavours to develop before serving.

**Note** Simmer each vegetable separately for more control over the final product. You want them to be al dente but cooked through. Cook carrots and capsicum for about 5 minutes, celery for about 3 minutes and onion for about 2 minutes. Use anchovy fillets in oil if salted anchovies are unavailable.

POLLO ALLA POTENTINA

## Potenza-style chicken with herbs and wine

SERVES 4-6

“Potenza is the capital of Basilicata, the region of my maternal ancestry,” says Parla. “Season the chicken 24 hours ahead.”

- 3 tbsp (¼ cup) pork lard or extra-virgin olive oil
- 1 whole chicken, seasoned with salt 24 hours ahead, cut into 8 pieces
- 1 onion, halved and thinly sliced
- 2 garlic cloves, crushed
- 1 tsp peperoncino or chilli flakes
- 125 ml dry white wine
- 4 tomatoes, coarsely chopped
- 5-6 basil leaves

**1** Melt the lard in a large heavy-based frying pan over medium heat. When shimmering, add chicken skin-side down, and cook, turning once, until golden on both sides (8-10 minutes), adjusting heat if necessary. If chicken skin sticks, do not force turning; it will release from the pan when it is ready. Remove chicken from pan.

**2** Reduce heat to low. Add onion and garlic, and season with salt. Cook, stirring occasionally, until soft and translucent (15 minutes). Add peperoncino and cook until fragrant (about 1 minute). Add wine, increase heat to medium and scrape any browned bits from the side and bottom of pan. When alcohol scent dissipates and liquid has nearly evaporated (about 3 minutes), add tomato and basil. Season with salt.

**3** Return chicken, except breasts, to pan and add enough water to cover it halfway. Cook, stirring occasionally, until tender but not falling off the bone and sauce is reduced (30 minutes). Reduce heat to low. Return breasts to pan. Cook until the internal temperature of breasts reaches 60°C (5-10 minutes), adding a little water if sauce becomes too dry. Serve. ►



## FOCACCIA PUGLIESE

# Olive and tomato flatbread

MAKES 3 FLATBREADS

“Just as Naples is the capital of Italy’s thick-rimmed wood-fired pizza pies,” says Parla, “Bari and its surrounding towns are home to a beloved regional flatbread, focaccia Pugliese.” Pictured p97.

- 350 ml filtered water
- 200 gm bread flour, plus extra for dusting
- 300 gm (2 cups) farina di semola rimacinata (see note)
- 100 gm riced boiled potato, cooled
- ½ tsp dried yeast
- 1 tsp white sugar
- 160 ml (⅔ cup) extra-virgin olive oil, plus extra for greasing
- 500 gm cherry tomatoes
- About 30 black olives
- 1 tbsp dried oregano

**1** Combine the water, both flours, potato, yeast, sugar, 50ml olive oil and 2 tsp sea salt in an electric mixer fitted with the dough hook. Knead on low speed for 2 minutes, then increase speed to medium and knead for another 18 minutes until dough comes together and becomes smooth and slightly sticky.

**2** Gently turn out dough onto a lightly floured surface and, using a dough scraper or knife, cut it into 3 equal pieces weighing about 330gm each. Shape each piece into a ball and place each separately on three deep plates generously greased with olive oil. Brush lightly with olive oil and cover with plastic wrap. Set aside at room temperature until almost tripled in size (2-3 hours).

**3** Pour 2 tbsp olive oil into a 23cm-25cm ovenproof frying pan (see note), tilting pan to coat the base and 2.5cm up the side. Turn out a dough ball into the pan. Using greased fingertips, gently push and stretch dough into the shape of the pan, taking care not to tear it.

**4** Gently press a third of the tomatoes, cut-side down, and about 10 olives into the dough, distributing them evenly. Cover the pan with a clean tea towel and leave dough to rise at room temperature for 20 minutes.

**5** Meanwhile, preheat the oven to 220°C with the rack in the centre position. Remove the tea towel and sprinkle about 1 tsp oregano over the dough. Season to taste with salt and drizzle 2 tsp olive oil over the dough, distributing it evenly.

**6** With greased fingertips, press into the dough around the tomatoes and olives to form dimples.

**7** Place pan over medium-high heat. When oil starts to bubble and crackle, cook for another 3 minutes. Check the underside of the dough by gently lifting it with a spatula, it should be a very dark golden colour. If it has not browned, cook for another 30 seconds to 1 minute.

**8** Transfer pan to the oven and bake until the focaccia has a dark golden, crisp crust (13-17 minutes); focaccie brown unevenly, so having darker spots mixed with lighter parts is normal. Transfer the focaccia to a wire rack and allow to cool for 5 minutes before slicing.

**9** Repeat with the remaining dough, cooling the pan and allowing the oven to return to the desired temperature before baking the next focaccia.

**Note** Farina di semola rimacinata is a fine durum wheat flour also known as semolina flour. It’s available from Italian delicatessens. To get the unique texture of focaccia Pugliese, you need to bake it with intense heat from underneath. Since these conditions are difficult to replicate in a home oven, you will get the best results by using a heavy-based ovenproof frying pan. If you have three, you can prepare the focaccie simultaneously. Otherwise, bake one and refrigerate the remaining covered dough balls until you are ready to bake them, to prevent overfermenting at room temperature.



Paccheri with capers, olives, anchovies and fried breadcrumbs

## PACCHERI ALLA CILENTANA

# Paccheri with capers, olives, anchovies and fried breadcrumbs

SERVES 4-6

“The first time I drove along Cilento’s Tyrrhenian Coast, I was astounded by the natural spectacle of the place,” says Parla. “Caper plants cling to sheer cliffs around one turn, while the next revealed olive orchards teetering on impossibly vertical terraced farmland. Cilento’s verdant beauty is occasionally interrupted by a tiny village where fishermen cast their nets into some of Italy’s most pristine waters, raising wriggling anchovies from the Tyrrhenian Sea. This dish is an homage to Campania’s most unspoiled coastline. The pane grattugiato fritto makes more than you need but can easily be halved, or stored in an airtight container at room temperature for up to 2 days. ‘Frying’ the breadcrumbs in the oven helps them stay crisp.”

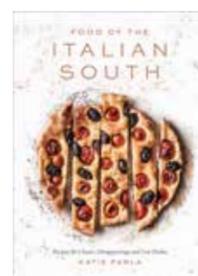
- 60 ml (¼ cup) extra-virgin olive oil, plus extra for drizzling
- 2 garlic cloves, thinly sliced
- 4 salted anchovy fillets (see note), cleaned
- 110 gm (¾ cup) Gaeta olives (see note), rinsed and pitted
- 55 gm (¼ cup) capers, rinsed
- 450 gm dried paccheri (see note)
- PANE GRATTOGIATO FRITTO
- 220 gm (about 8 slices) dry rustic bread with crusts, torn into bite-sized pieces
- 60 ml (¼ cup) extra-virgin olive oil
- 2 tsp dried oregano or chopped fresh flat-leaf parsley

**1** For pane grattugiato fritto, preheat oven to 120°C. Toss the bread, olive oil and oregano in a large bowl until well combined. Spread the bread mixture on a rimmed oven tray and bake until crisp and completely dry (20-25 minutes). Remove from the oven and allow to cool. Transfer to a food processor and pulse until broken down to the size of coarse coffee grounds. Makes 2 cups.

**2** Heat olive oil in a large frying pan over low heat. When the oil begins to shimmer, add garlic and anchovies, and cook until the garlic begins to turn golden and the anchovies have melted into the oil (about 2 minutes). Add the olives and capers and cook, stirring, for another minute. Turn off the heat and let the ingredients bloom in the hot oil.

**3** Meanwhile, bring a large saucepan of salted water to a rolling boil over high heat. Add the paccheri and cook until al dente (8-10 minutes). Drain, reserving pasta water, and add the pasta to the pan with the olives and capers, stirring to coat. Add some pasta cooking water as needed to loosen the sauce. Season with salt. Plate, and sprinkle each portion with the fried seasoned breadcrumbs and drizzle with olive oil.

**Note** Salted anchovies are available from select delicatessens. Substitute anchovies in oil. Gaeta olives are available from select delicatessens. I can’t overstate the importance of using high-quality olives. With the south’s simple recipes, each flavour is conspicuous; the reason such basic recipes are so good is that they rely on ingredients at their peak. In Italy, it’s not a luxury to have a family olive grove and plenty of home cooks have access to hand-harvested and naturally cured olives. Avoid canned or pre-sliced olives. If you don’t have a good Italian deli in your neighbourhood, look for purveyors of Greek, Turkish, North African or Middle Eastern foods. If you can only find seasoned olives, rinse them before using, or cure your own. Paccheri is available from select delicatessens; substitute rigatoni or other tubular pasta. ●



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