



A traditional Italian Christmas celebration is centered around a family feast on Christmas Eve. Christmas Eve Baccala Napolitana is an iconic dish with its roots buried deep in the past.

(Baccalà - Salted Cod)

HOW TO PREPARE YOUR BACCALÀ

(1) When you pick out a piece of baccalà remember that the color of the meat should be close to white and the skin light colored. Stay away from meat with a yellow hue.

(2) If sold whole, try to buy a long, thick fish; if possible it should be a bit more than one-inch thick in the middle of the filet.

(3) Prior to soaking, cut your baccalà into large pieces. Cutting the fish before soaking helps speed up the re-hydration process.

(3) At least two days prior to cooking begin soaking your salted baccalà in fresh water (for at least 36-48 hours). First wash the pieces thoroughly, washing off all the salt on the surface, and then completely submerge in any container that will hold a lot of water; change the water at least three times a day (every eight hours or even more frequently). While soaking, keep the baccalà in a cool place. Refrigeration is not necessary.

(4) Just before cooking, peel off the skin and remove any bones? a pair of small pliers will be very helpful for this.

Ingredients:-

1/2 teaspoon cracked anise seed

1 teaspoon mace

2 bay leaves

1 teaspoon Sea Salt

1 teaspoon coarse black pepper

1 teaspoon red pepper flakes

1 1/2 pounds potatoes, washed

1 onion, peeled

1/3 cup pitted olives

1/4 cup Capers in Salt, soaked and drained

5 cloves garlic

1/3 cup Extra Virgin Olive Oil

2 pounds baccalà, prepared

1 can Crushed Tomatoes

2 bay leaves

1/2 cup Plain Breadcrumbs

1/2 cup grated Parmigiano-Reggiano

2 cups white wine

Method:-

(1) To make the spice mixture, combine all of the dried spices with the exception of the bay leaves in a bowl.

(2) Slice the potatoes and onions and place in a large mixing bowl.

(3) With a food processor, pulse the olives, capers and garlic briefly?until roughly chopped. Add to potato and onion mixture. Add 3 tablespoons of the spice mixture and about 1/4 cup olive oil.

(4) Preheat the oven to 350°F.

(5) Assemble the dish in a large casserole dish. First, layer 1/2 of the potato and onion mixture on the bottom of baking dish. Next, top with 1/2 of baccalà, then a half can of tomatoes. Sprinkle 1 tablespoon of spice mixture, bay leaves, breadcrumbs and Parmigiano over tomatoes.

(6) Repeat layering with remaining ingredients, including the white wine. Top with remaining cheese, breadcrumbs and any spice mixture. Drizzle with remaining olive oil.

(7) Cover and bake.

(8) Cook for about 1 1/2 hours covered, then uncover the dish and lower heat to about 300°F, cooking for another 30 minutes.. Depending on how you like the dish (with more or less liquid) you can let the dish cook longer.

(9) Remove from the oven and let it set covered for at least 45 minutes before serving.