

ANCHOVIES—THE OTHER WHITE MEAT



CRAIG RICHARDS

As a chef, there are certain ingredients that you're drawn to that tend to seep their way into a lot of your food. If you're not careful, they can take over and you end up having to personally ban yourself from using them for a while (I had this problem with aged balsamic vinegar

not too long ago). Recently, my ingredient addiction has been anchovies. Anchovies have received a bad rap over the years, with memories of stinky pizza coming to most people's minds. But often, when people rave about an Italian dish, it's the subtle flavor of anchovy that really pushes the dish into the "I can't get enough of it" stratosphere.

At La Tavola, we use anchovies mostly in seafood dishes like our cacciucco, or our steamed mussels. But they also find their way into a salsa verde we might pair with our market fish or even into non-seafood preparations when we are looking for that briny, salty flavor to enhance other ingredients. We mix it with ricotta cheese along with heavy cream, a healthy pinch of black pepper and chili flake to bake on bruschetta before topping it off with marinated cherry tomatoes. We



might make an anchovy vinaigrette to put on warm broccoli rabe that's been sautéed with garlic and Calabrian chilies. We also make an anchovy soffritto that is composed of garlic, capers and parsley that we caramelize in a pan to use as a flavor base before adding other ingredients. And who can forget the wonderfully salty and sour, silver-marinated anchovies that we put into salads that I can eat like candy? Like I said, I have to hold myself back sometimes.

I've never personally had them on pizza, but anchovies make a great building block for a lot of Italian food. And the next time you're having a memorable Italian meal, it's probably because of those little, misunderstood, flavorful fish. **SP**

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KEY INGREDIENTS

CACCIUCCO TUSCAN

FISH STEW SERVES 4

INGREDIENTS:

20 cleaned mussels
16 cleaned clams
12 pieces, peeled and deveined shrimp
¹⁶/₂₀ size
1 pound fish filets cut into 1-ounce pieces
8 ounces cleaned squid
12 ounces white wine
4 ounces soffrito (see recipe)
4 cloves garlic, sliced
1 teaspoon chili flake
8 ounces marinara (see recipe)
16 ounces clam stock (see recipe)
Chopped parsley (good pinch per dish)
2 ounces butter
Canola oil
Olive oil

INSTRUCTIONS:

In a large saute pan, heat 1 tablespoon of canola oil over high heat. Add garlic, soffrito and chili flake and cook until garlic begins to turn brown. Add mussels and clams and cook for 1 minute. Add white wine, marinara and clam stock. Bring to a boil, and add fish filets, shrimp and squid. Cover and cook until mussels and clams open, and fish is just cooked. Add butter, parsley and a drizzle of olive oil to finish. Season to taste.

SOFFRITO

INGREDIENTS:

2 small cans OR 1 large can anchovies
¹/₂ bunch parsley
2 tablespoons chili flake
8 cloves garlic
¹/₂ cup capers

INSTRUCTIONS:

Blend all ingredients well in blender.

CLAM STOCK

INGREDIENTS:

6 cups clam juice
5 tablespoons garlic, chopped fine
1 teaspoon chili flake
¹/₂ tablespoon mixed herbs (oregano, thyme, parsley)
1 cup white wine

INSTRUCTIONS:

Saute garlic with chili flake and mixed herbs in canola oil over high heat until garlic is slightly toasted. Add clam juice and white wine. Reduce by ¹/₃.

MARINARA

INGREDIENTS:

1 can of tomatoes, imported Italian
¹/₂ onion, finely diced
2 cloves garlic, finely sliced
1 cup chili flake

INSTRUCTIONS:

Saute garlic and chili flake until golden brown. Add onions and 1 tablespoon salt. Cook until onions are very translucent. Add to tomatoes, bring to a simmer, and cook for about 1.5 hours or until raw flavor is cooked out of tomatoes. Season to taste with salt.

