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**RECIPES
AND
STORIES
FROM
ITALY'S
ADRIATIC
COAST**



Brodetto di pesce di osteria

Osteria fish stew

If there is one dish that you find along the entire coast of the Adriatic, it is 'brodetto' (which translates as the slightly less romantic 'fish stew'). Brodetto comes from the word 'brodo', meaning broth, as it always has lots of pan juices.

Brodetto varies from town to town, using different types of seafood and accompanying ingredients. This one is based loosely on one in Carla Virili's book Saperi d'Ancona (Flavours of Ancona), which shares the stories and recipes from the women who ran osterie in Ancona, serving home-cooked meals and wine for the locals.

This recipe is like Irma's, who ran an osteria in the middle of the port of Ancona, with tables for patrons in a vine-covered garden. She suggests adding the squid or cuttlefish at the same time as the onion base. This means that rather than remaining obstinately rubbery, the squid yields and becomes tender after the longer cooking time. At Irma's osteria, plates would arrive back in the kitchen almost clean, as the sauce on the plate had been completely mopped up by appreciative patrons. I think you will also want to mop your plate clean when you try this brodetto.

Use whatever seafood is fresh, and use several kinds. If in doubt, ask your fishmonger what he would recommend to make a brothy fish stew.

1 kg (2 lb 3 oz) your favourite seafood (squid, mussels, clams, prawns (shrimp), monkfish/stargazer, sea bass)
3 tablespoons virgin olive oil
1 brown onion, diced
1 clove garlic, finely chopped
1 teaspoon chilli flakes (or to taste)
3 tablespoons white wine vinegar
large pinch of saffron threads dissolved in 1 tablespoon water
1 x 400 g (14 oz) tin good-quality tomatoes
3 tablespoons flat-leaf parsley leaves
sea salt and freshly ground black pepper
crusty bread, to serve

See pages 16–17 for instructions on how to clean the various types of seafood; larger fish should be purchased already filleted, with skin removed. Remember that if you are including clams you'll need to allow 3 hours of soaking time. As a general rule, aim to have everything in bite-sized pieces, although I would recommend leaving prawns whole and still in their shell.

Heat the olive oil in a large frying pan with a lid over medium–low heat. Add the onion, garlic, chilli and any cephalods (squid, octopus, cuttlefish). Cook for about 10 minutes, stirring occasionally, until the onion is translucent. Increase the heat to medium–high and add the vinegar. Cook for a few minutes, then add the tomatoes, including the juice in the tin, breaking up any whole tomatoes with a wooden spoon. Bring to a simmer, then cover, reduce the heat to medium–low and cook for about 15 minutes.

Once the tomato sauce has thickened, add half the parsley and then start adding the fish, larger pieces first (monkfish/stargazer, sea bass), then the cleaned mussels or other large bivalves. Prawns and small bivalves such as clams should be added last. Cook for 10–15 minutes until the fish is cooked through, the bivalve shells have opened (discard any closed ones) and the crustaceans have changed colour. Taste the sauce and add salt and pepper if needed. The dish should be quite soupy but if there is too much liquid in the pan, increase the heat briefly and simmer uncovered to allow the excess to evaporate. Scatter on the remaining parsley before serving.

Serve directly from the pan with plenty of crusty bread to mop up the pan juices. You could also serve it with soft polenta (see page 14).

SERVES 6