

Anatomy of a mixed deep-fry



When I first met Davide Scabin twelve years ago, I dubbed him the “Almese Martian” for his approach to cooking that was both alien and cybernetic. He was working in the mountains of Almese at the time, a short distance from Musiné (where UFOs really do land). He was a kind of alchemist that stood between traditional Piedmontese cooking and the Starship Enterprise of new flavours, or ‘creative’ cooking as it was known at the time.

Today, Davide, twice Michelin-starred and one of the World’s 50 best chefs, has not yet lost his taste for games or for risk taking, teasing, rituals and provocation. They are all ingredients that are ideally combined in a single event, such as this mixed deep-fry.

The beginning is classic, or from the point of view of the Piedmontese, ancestral. It brings to mind a fritto misto, a mixed deep-fry, a traditional and enchanting kind of cooking that is centuries old. It was prepared in times gone by with strutto (pork fat) and was originally a way of using the poorest cuts that could not be conserved after the pig was butchered.

Scabin is like a crooner of American ballads, a star who has experimented with all styles and who has finally recorded an album for himself and others. A food crooner, Davide in his own unmistakable way uses knowledge and flavours that are in his blood, in his soul and in his DNA.

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STORY by GUIDO BAROSIO
PHOTOGRAPHY by BOB NOTO

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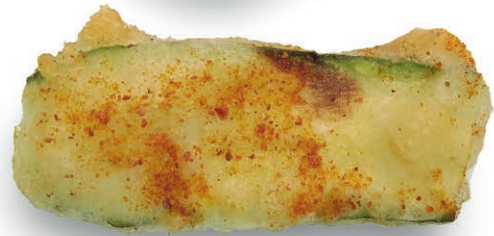
Trout with almonds in cabbage leaf

Blanch the cabbage leaf and toast the shelled almonds in salted butter. Form parcels by rolling the cubes of trout sprinkled with almonds in the cabbage leaf.

Dip in a batter of sparkling water, flour, egg and salt.

Fry in extra virgin olive oil at 170 degrees.

Close the parcel at the very last minute so that the almonds remain crunchy inside.



Zucchini and tomato

Dry the tomatoes in the oven at 70 degrees for 12 hours then grind them to a powder.

Slice the zucchinis lengthways.

Dip in a tempura batter of beer, ice, egg white, soft flour and rice flour.

Fry in vegetable oil at 180 degrees.

Dust with the tomato powder.

I suggest a double frying to obtain an even crunchier result.



Udder

Boil in water with milk, onion, cloves, white wine and black pepper.

Cooking should last about 3-4 hours, according to the dimensions of the udder.

Dip in flour, egg and bread crumbs.

Fry in extra virgin olive oil at 180 degrees.

This is an ingredient that is very difficult to find.

The best quality is usually where the cow has not been milked before being butchered and it is thus full of milk.



Veal in pork net with foie gras

Wrap the cubes of veal and foie gras in the pork net, forming small parcels.

Brown in a pan with butter, sage, garlic and rosemary.

It's important to brown on high heat without burning the butter.



Apple and sage

Peel the apples and cut in eight pieces.

Dip in the 'Combal' batter' with sage chiffonade. Fry in vegetable oil at 160 degrees.

Use semi-ripe golden delicious apples for a fresher taste.



Chicken Marsala quenelle

Make a mousse with chicken and divide into sticks.

Dip in flour, egg, Marsala and bread crumbs.

Fry in extra virgin olive oil at 180 degrees.

Once fried, the crunchy stick should be very soft inside.



Semolina with raisins and pork sausage

Cook the semolina flour in milk, adding aniseed, white pepper, raisins and the pork sausage in pieces. Spread in a layer of about 2 cm thick, let it cool and cut into squares 2.5 cm a side.

Dip in flour, egg and bread crumbs.

Fry in extra virgin olive oil at 170 degrees.

After frying dust with nutmeg powder.

Frog's legs and polenta

Cook the polenta in salted water, spread in a layer 2 cm thick, let cool, cut into sticks and toast in a pan.

Roll the frogs' legs in toasted polenta flour.

Fry in extra virgin olive oil at 180 degrees.

The frogs' legs must be marinated in milk, garlic and parsley at 40 degrees for half an hour before rolling in the polenta.

Villeroy lamb

Make a béchamel sauce adding chopped parsley and bay leaf.

Sauté the lamb cutlets quickly in a pan and let cool.

Glaze them with the béchamel.

Roll in flour, egg and bread crumbs.

Brown in extra virgin olive oil and butter.

It's important to add ice-cold butter when cooking the cutlets to avoid burning them.

Brains

Blanch in court-bouillon with vinegar and bay leaf.

Roll in flour, egg and bread crumbs.

Brown in extra virgin olive oil and butter.

The brains can be divided into little pieces by separating the lobes by hand, without using a knife.

Braised artichokes with Barolo

Braise the artichoke with Barolo wine from Piedmont.

Dip in the 'Combal' batter.

Fry in vegetable oil at 180 degrees.

Roman artichokes are preferable, using only the heart.

Fennel and hazelnuts

Boil the sliced fennel in salted water.

Dip in flour, egg white and hazelnut flour.

Fry in clarified butter at 160 degrees.

Dry the fennel well before dipping in the flour.



Snails in persillade

Blanch the snails in broth and then cook them in butter, parsley, garlic and chilli, Make skewers with them.
Dip in flour, egg and bread crumbs.
Fry in extra virgin olive oil at 170 degrees.
The skewers can also be toasted in a non-stick pan with just a little extra virgin olive oil.

Veal cartilage

Cut into pieces of about 10 centimetres.
Dip in flour, egg and bread crumbs.
Brown in extra virgin olive oil and butter.
This is a very delicate ingredient and should only be used if very fresh (within 24 hours of being butchered).
Keep in iced water before dipping in batter.

Jerusalem artichoke with juniper

Boil in broth that has been reduced with juniper.
Fry in vegetable oil at 170 degrees.
When boiling the Jerusalem artichokes making sure they stay crisp.

Rabbit livers

Clean the livers dividing the three lobes.
Flour.
Brown in butter, sage and garlic.
When cooked they must be absolutely pink!

Onion and anchovies

Cook the whole onions in the oven at 180 degrees.
Let cool and cut into segments, filling with pieces of anchovies that have been marinated with garlic.
Dip in the 'Combal' batter.
Fry in extra virgin olive oil at 180 degrees.
The onion should melt in the mouth, so don't be afraid to lengthen the cooking time in the oven.

Semolina with cocoa

Cook the semolina flour in milk and sugar with cocoa and rum.
Spread in a layer 2 cm thick, let cool and cut into squares of 2.5 cm per side.
Dip in flour, egg and bread crumbs. Fry in vegetable oil at 180 degrees.
The end result should have a bitter taste so it's important to use a high quality cocoa powder.



Veal's head croquette

Boil the head in broth, leave to cool and then shred the meat with a knife.
Roll in flour, egg, bread crumbs and toasted corn flour.
Fry in extra virgin olive oil at 180 degrees.
It's important that the proportion of face meat to muscle is 2 : 1.

Kidney

Brown the kidneys in butter, sage and garlic.
Let cool and slice.
Dip in the 'Combal' batter with parsley and gin.
Fry in extra virgin olive oil at 180 degrees.
Use young veal kidneys or the pieces of kidney could have a very intense odour after frying.

Sweet rice with Alchermes

Cook like a risotto, substituting broth with milk, stirring vigorously at the end with butter and Alchermes.
Dip in flour, egg and breadcrumbs.
Fry in extra virgin olive oil at 170 degrees.
Don't serve too hot.

Cabbage and Gorgonzola

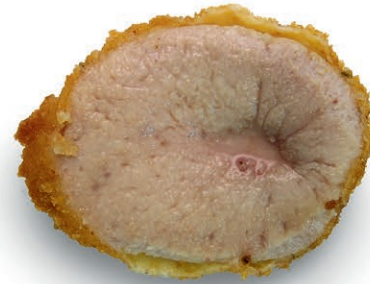
Boil the cabbage in salted water, prepare a ganache of gorgonzola and glaze the tips of the cabbage.
Dip in flour, egg, breadcrumbs and black pepper.
Fry in clarified butter at 180 degrees.
Frying must be very quick to avoid the gorgonzola leaking out.

Batsoa'

Boil the veal's feet in broth and vinegar.
Cool and cut in strips.
Dip in flour and egg with vinegar, rosemary and breadcrumbs.
Fry in extra virgin olive oil at 160 degrees.
The name is derived from the French 'Bas de soie' (silk socks), so you can imagine the consistency in the mouth after frying!

Quails with black truffles

Make a sauce with black truffles and demi-glaze.
Fill the quail's breast and thighs with the sauce once it has cooled.
Dip in the 'Combal' batter with chopped spring onions.
Fry in half extra virgin olive oil and half vegetable oil at 180 degrees.
I suggest filling the quails with the black truffle sauce the day before frying to give an ever greater flavour to the meat.



Potato soufflé

Make a soufflé base with a purée of Ratte potatoes and fluffy beaten egg whites.
Form sticks.
Blast chill to minus 18 degrees.
Dip in flour, egg and breadcrumbs.
Fry in extra virgin olive oil at 180 degrees.
Flour just before frying and serving.

Tongue

Boil the tongue in broth. Let cool and cut into cubes.
Grill on low heat with a tiny bit of oil.
I suggest cooking it over a piece of oven paper.

Testicles

Blanch in court-bouillon with bay leaf.
Dip in flour, egg, breadcrumbs and crushed black pepper corns.
Fry in extra virgin olive oil at 180 degrees.
Cut into slices of no more than 7-11 millimetres.

Rabbit with herbs

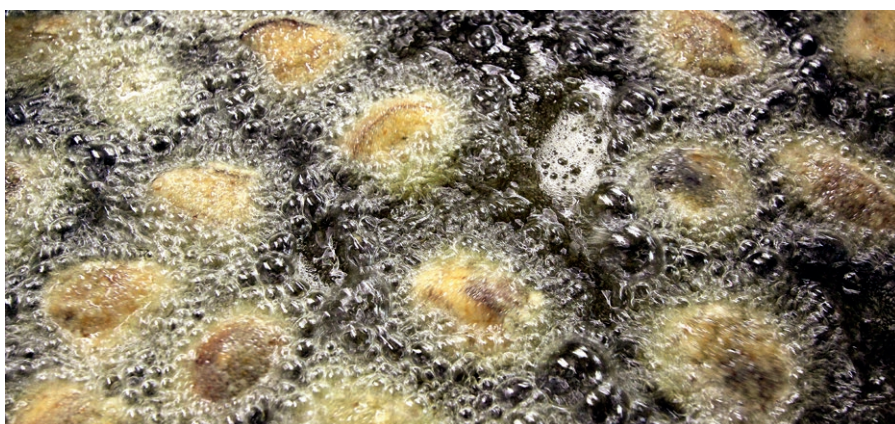
Cook the rabbit for 4 hours at 60 degrees.
Cut into pieces.
Dip in the 'Combal' batter with chopped rosemary, marjoram, thyme and sage.
Fry in extra virgin olive oil at 180 degrees.
There mustn't be any bones in the rabbit, this could be very dangerous.

Pumpkin and cinnamon

Cook the pumpkin laid over cinnamon sticks in the oven at 180 degrees.
Let cool and cut into 2 cm cubes.
Dip in the 'Combal' batter with powdered cinnamon.
Fry in extra virgin olive oil at 170 degrees.
I suggest using long pumpkins.

Amaretti and black pepper

Prepare the amaretti biscuits according to recipe.
Dip in the 'Combal' batter with ground black pepper.
Fry in clarified butter at 170 degrees.
Dip the amaretti one by one in the batter to avoid them flaking.
It's important to make the amaretti with a soft and not dry dough.



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The ritual, because it's all about rituals (with only three performances), begins on Sunday. It starts at 5pm like a kind of merenda sinoira (which literally means dinner-snack), a tradition of old-fashioned Piedmontese neighbourhoods.

David explains: "It superimposes two great traditions of this area, that of a unique special dish that we couldn't put on the menu of a restaurant like ours if we do it like it should be done, and that of the traditional afternoon snack, a food ritual that comes from the Piedmontese countryside on festival days.

I like the timetable. You get up late, you eat something quick and then you go to the cinema, the theatre, to a football game, and then – it won't be that much later – you enjoy a food ritual at the best hour of the day. No one can deny it is "the least vegetarian dish of all time". It's lightened by the sweet batter and some fragrant seasonal vegeta-

bles, but it contains every possible offcut (sweetbreads, testicles, brains, kidneys, veins, tongue, meatballs of offal, udder) that sound like the list of a contemporary sorcerer's apprentice.

The difficulty factor is extreme. Each piece must be fried separately, ingredient by ingredient and rigorously in the pan in order to give it the right golden shade. For some pieces oil is used, for others butter, for others again a mixture of the two. Work commitments and a necessarily minute attention to each detail means this "evening" inevitably falls on the day when the restaurant is closed - Sunday.

Duration of the event?

About three and a half hours, with the sequence of frying well timed so that each piece follows another without haste, leaving time and space for curious discussion, appetite and being satiated. An experiment to repeat?

"I don't know, we'll see. It's a lot of work. The first time the 36 different fries were a challenge

for the staff. But after that frying times became more harmonised and we started to have fun with it. We'll think about it.

On the same day and at the same time I definitely want to explore some other universal dish like bollito misto (mixed boiled meat), paella or the real merenda sinoira with all the possible condiments and vegetables...". The stuff of Martians, these five o'clock taste events are a way of increasing informal moments shared at the table without giving a damn about time passing, a challenge that merits not just a wave but many cheers.

Guido Barosio