

# Tastes of Italia

THE BEST IN ITALIAN COOKING

JUNE 2015

**MAMMA MIA!**  
HOW AN ITALIAN  
MOM INSPIRED  
THE LOVE OF  
FOOD

**ITALIAN WINES  
GROWN  
UNDER THE  
SHADOW OF  
MT. ETNA**

**SECRETS OF  
AN ITALIAN  
CHOCOLATE  
WHIZ**

**PLUS**

**SEASONAL TREATS  
FOR EVERY TABLE**

## *Mary Ann Esposito*

Celebrating 25 years of her  
iconic television cooking show

JUNE 2015



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# Tastes of Italia

MAY/JUNE



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# For The Love

Turin, or Torino as it is known in Italian, is home to some



# of Chocolate

of the most famous versions of the universal indulgence.

*Text and Photography by Lauren Birmingham Piscitelli*

**C**ioccolato. Chocolate. No matter what language you speak, chocolate is universal. Imagine deep dark Italian chocolate, white chocolate, too, made with fresh edible violets, roses, vanilla beans, blueberries, ginger, cardamom, coconut, mint, chili peppers, oranges or lemons.

I am about to taste a cioccolato fondente viola, or dark chocolate bar, which has been infused with fresh violet petals, as I learn about the city of Turin, or Torino, as it is known by its Italian name. Turin is not only the capital of Piedmont, it's the birthplace to some of Italy's most famous chocolate.

It's a city that is brimming with chocolate! Artisans, large or small, roast and blend their own cocoa beans—turning them into pralines, bars, pastries and beverages. And it's easy to see and sample endless varieties of decadent chocolate, because at any one of the city's cafés, chocolate cakes, cookies, bars and beverages are there for the tasting.

Turin's cafes are elegant, Old World, and abundant—each serving bicerin, the local drink made by layering chocolate, milk and espresso in a small round glass. Bicerin, which is the word for small glass in Piemontese dialect, has been around about 300 years and has never gone out of style. Locals claim the first bicerin was created at Caffè Al Bicerin in the 18th century, while others insist it was invented at the Caffè Fiorio in early 1700. Whichever it may be, I invite you to step into any of the city's landmark cafés—Caffè San Carlo, Baratti & Milano, Mulassano, Torino, Abrate, Platti to Stratta—and sip one yourself. Each barista makes them differently, which is just another reason to try more than one.

To learn more about Turin and its chocolate culture, I am on my way to meet second-generation chocolate maker, Antonio Marino. Antonio is an artisan chocolatier who turns natural cocoa beans into bars, pralines and beverages, as he carries on his family's chocolate business at Cioccolateria Marino.

Young and vivacious, he tells me about how chocolate became so famous here.

"The story of Turin and chocolate started circa 1560, when the House of Savoy was transported from Chambéry, France to Turin, Italy, and Emanuele Filiberto of Savoy served





## NATIVE SOIL

a symbolic cup of piping hot chocolate to celebrate the occasion. During that time, there was new construction in the city—made in beautiful Baroque style, and with it came the development of chocolate. At the time, chocolate artisans of Turin experimented their craft mixing cocoa, vanilla, water and sugar into a creamy paste in the early 17th century, thus transforming chocolate into bars, cioccolatini, pralines, spreads and creams,” he says, recapping the story of Turin’s chocolate evolution.

Antonio’s chocolate business keeps traditional recipes and brings new ideas to the test kitchen. For example, he has created sweet and sour combinations, adding fruits and salts, while always using high quality fresh fruit, spices and herbs in the recipes. The chocolate is infused with natural flowers, fruits, sea salt and even chili pepper.

ural cocoa beans then adding essential oils, dried fruit, nuts and herbs. They also make pralines, the triangle shaped gianduiotti (made with chocolate and Piedmontese hazelnuts, the candy is created by grinding the hazelnuts into a paste and blending it with the chocolate). This method was practiced during war times when chocolate was scarce and supplies were in demand. The addition of nuts made the chocolate go further.

Antonio shows me Christmas chocolate that includes elegant gift boxes of pralines, religious mangers and Christmas tree ornaments—all made in chocolate. For Valentine’s Day the chocolatiers create hand-crafted jewelry boxes, purses and high heeled shoes—made in white, milk and dark chocolate. Easter, another important Italian holiday, has the Marino family creating chocolate eggs of all sizes wrapped in colorful foil along

with specialties like traditional Gianduiotto. Gianduiotto, first created by Michele Prochet circa 1865, has the shape of a peaked rooftop and is made with cocoa, sugar and hazelnut paste.

Another classic is the Baci di Cherasco, which literally translates to Cherasco Kisses. They are made with dark chocolate and hazelnuts from the Tonda Gentile delle Langhe region. Alpinos are another favorite, which take their name from the hats worn by Italian military and are filled with a creamy liqueur. There is the Cremino, a multi layered chocolate and hazelnut cream square that was first made by Aldo Majani in Bologna. Originally, it had four layers of chocolate and hazelnut cream; today it’s layered with three.

“In the early 1900s chocolatiers started blending cocoa with vanilla, water and sugar and making the mixture into solid bars. This

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“IN THE EARLY 1900s, CHOCOLATIERS STARTED BLENDING COCOA WITH VANILLA, WATER AND SUGAR AND MAKING THE MIXTURE INTO SOLID BARS. THIS WAS THE START OF THE FIRST CHOCOLATE BONBONS, PRALINES, TRUFFLES AND CHOCOLATE CREAMS. THE FIRST COCOA FIRST ARRIVED IN TURIN FROM SPAIN IN THE 16TH CENTURY,” HE EXPLAINS.

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He goes on to say, “These are the key ingredients that give our chocolate a unique and one-of-a-kind taste. I recently blended 71 percent cocoa with grappa, and the taste is extremely smooth. We have combined lemons with sea salt, dark chocolate with Prosecco, and even chocolate with rose petals,” he says.

Cioccolateria Marino was started by his mother Carmen, (from Sicily), and father, Giuseppe (from Calabria). The couple had first met in Torino while working for a chocolate maker in 1967. Eventually they ventured on their own in 1981 and created Cioccolateria Marino. The couple worked day and night through the years to make their business a success. Today, along with their two sons, Salvatore and Antonio, they have taken the chocolate making business to new heights. They attend trade shows, create seasonal items for Christmas, Easter, Valentine’s Day and are always trying new combinations.

Today Cioccolateria Marino creates over 52 types of chocolate, roasting their own nat-

with traditional Easter animals such as cows, sheep, rabbits and ducks. The family also has a secret recipe for a liquid chocolate Gianduiotto, perfect for garnishing ice cream, cakes, caffè and cocktails. Each piece of chocolate is made under strict control at the Fabbrica del Cioccolato Marino, located at via Tirreno, 3 in Turin.

“We are always busy; however, just before Christmas it is crazy busy and it all starts with the Cioccoshow Bologna in November. We have participated in this event for the past few years and it is a huge success. This trade show in particular is an important one, because Bologna is home to Italy’s gastronomy, and it’s what Turin is to coffee and chocolate.” He passes me a piece of dark chocolate with lemon and sea salt, as he emphasizes their secret ingredient for success: keeping Old World chocolate traditions and revisiting them with modern touches.

Antonio emphasizes that although new generations have continued making chocolate, the classic way of making it remains

was the start of the first chocolate bonbons, pralines, truffles and chocolate creams. The first cocoa first arrived in Turin from Spain in the 16th century,” he explains.

Today Torino continues to play an important part in Italy’s chocolate production, and Antonio and his family are a proud part of it. They have worked on a gluten-free chocolate, and even have come up with a new combination of Prosecco and dark chocolate called cioccolata italiana con bollicine.

Turin, once the pulse of Europe’s political center, was Italy’s first capital city in 1861. It was home to the House of Savoy, Italy’s royal family and they loved chocolate. The royal family does not rule any longer; however, the Royal Palace still stands and is a UNESCO landmark—and in cafés throughout the city, everyone is still drinking bicerins.

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**BUDINO** is similar to pudding and works especially well with chocolate.

**NATIVE SOIL**



**TRUFFLES** stacked high in  
Cioccolateria Marino.



**CHOCOLATE** salumi is often given as a gift.

# The Recipes

## Bicerin

- $\frac{1}{3}$  cup high quality cocoa powder, or dark chocolate shavings
- $\frac{2}{3}$  cup water
- Sugar, to taste
- $\frac{2}{3}$  cup of chilled heavy cream
- 2 long shots of espresso, about  $\frac{1}{3}$  cup each

Prepare espresso using an espresso maker. If you don't have one, prepare strong coffee in a regular coffee maker.

About 15 minutes before making this chocolate caffè recipe, place a stainless steel cocktail shaker or jar in the freezer. Fill 2 (4-oz.) glasses or coffee cups with hot water.

In a small saucepan combine chocolate with  $\frac{2}{3}$  cup of water and melt over medium heat. Simmer, stirring occasionally until chocolate coats a spoon. This will take about 10 minutes. Add sugar to taste and turn off the heat.

Empty the glasses and wipe dry. Remove shaker or jar from freezer, add cream and shake vigorously for 1 minute.

Add a shot of espresso and the chocolate mixture to each glass or cup. Carefully spoon the cream over the top of each glass.

Serve immediately.

Makes 2 servings.

## Budino Gianduja Sweet

- 2 cups whole milk
- 2 cups heavy cream
- $\frac{3}{4}$  cup granulated sugar, divided
- 12 egg yolks
- 4 sheets or 1 tablespoon of unflavored powdered gelatin
- 12 ounces gianduja chocolate, chopped
- 2 teaspoons of pure organic vanilla extract or the contents of 1 fresh vanilla bean
- 1 cup lightly sweetened whipped cream, optional
- $\frac{1}{2}$  cup chopped and toasted hazelnuts, optional

In a saucepan, bring milk to a boil, add the cream and half of the sugar. Meanwhile, whisk together the remaining sugar and egg yolks until the mixture is smooth. Soak the gelatin sheets in a bowl of cold water.

Once the milk mixture is scalded, temper the yolk mixture by adding the milk mixture until everything is combined.

Return to the stove and cook over medium heat, stirring. Heat the mixture to 175°F, or until it coats the back of a spoon. Remove from heat.

Add gelatin to the mixture and stir well until dissolved.

Strain half the mixture over finely chopped chocolate and slowly whisk together until the mixture combines. Strain the remaining half of the mixture over the chocolate mixture and

whisk together. Add and combine the vanilla.

Pour into serving dishes and refrigerate to set, about 5 hours. Garnish with whipped cream, hazelnuts or fresh strawberries.

Makes 8 (6-oz.) servings.

Note: Gianduja can be purchased at some Italian markets or online.

## Chocolate-Hazelnut Fritters

- 12 hazelnuts or raisins that have been soaked in rum.
- $1\frac{3}{4}$  cups all-purpose flour
- 2 teaspoons baking powder
- $\frac{1}{4}$  teaspoon salt
- 1 large egg
- $\frac{1}{3}$  cup sugar
- $\frac{1}{3}$  cup whole milk
- 2 tablespoons unsalted butter, melted and cooled
- Canola oil for deep frying
- 2 ounces milk chocolate, cut into chunks
- Confectioners' sugar for dusting

Preheat the oven to 325°F. Spread the hazelnuts in a single layer on a nonstick pan and toast, stirring a few times until their color deepens and the skins begin to crack and loosen, about 10 minutes. When done, remove from the oven and remove the skins from the nuts. (Some skins will remain). Set aside.

In a large bowl, whisk together the flour, baking powder, and salt. In a separate bowl, whisk together the egg and granulated sugar until thick and creamy. Beat in the milk and butter until combined. Pour the liquid ingredients over the flour mixture and stir with a wooden spoon just until blended.

Pour the canola oil to a depth of 3 inches into a deep, heavy frying pan and heat to 370°F. Line a platter with paper towels—once fried, the fritters will go here.

When the oil is ready, scoop up a rounded tablespoonful of the dough and press a piece of the chocolate and hazelnut in the center. Then with a second spoon shape the dough over the filling to enclose it completely. Push the dough off the spoon into the hot oil, being careful not to splash.

Repeat to make a few more fritters, being careful not to crowd the pan. Fry the fritters, turning them once, until nicely browned, about 2 minutes. Using a netted fry spoon, transfer the fritters to the towel-lined platter and let drain. Repeat the process until the dough has been fried.

Transfer the fritters to a serving platter. Using a sieve, dust them generously with confectioners' sugar.

Best when served warm.

Makes 12 fritters.

Note: The hazelnuts can be rolled in sugar and cinnamon before being put inside the dough. And raisins soaked in rum can be used as the center if you like.

