

Panzanella

Traditionally, the Tuscans would bake bread just once a week – often in a central oven so each household would “brand” their dough to distinguish it from that of their neighbours. Tuscan bread is unsalted. There are several theories as to the reason for this: Firstly, salt was a luxury and therefore used sparingly; secondly, much of Tuscan cuisine – the pecorino cheeses and cured meats – are salty and therefore unsalted bread complements it; thirdly, salt attracts moisture and mould, therefore, by leaving it out of the dough the bread would last longer.

Tuscans are a frugal people and nothing is wasted in their cuisine. There are numerous ways to use up the staler bread and Panzanella is one of the most delicious. It makes an excellent one-dish summer lunch.

This is the traditional recipe, you can add other ingredients if you wish.

Ingredients (serves 4-6)

500g day-old Tuscan bread (look for a dense, unsalted white bread)
500g ripe tomatoes
1 red onion
1 small cucumber (optional)
Handful of basil
Salt and Pepper
Good quality olive oil



Mick's picnic: Mystical Maremma May 2008

- Remove the crusts from the bread and break it into large chunks.
- Soak bread a little water for 5-10mins.
- Meanwhile, chop the tomatoes, cucumber and onion and place in a serving bowl.
- Squeeze the water out of the bread - it's important to remove as much moisture as possible to prevent the salad from going soggy.
- Crumble the bread into the tomato and onion mixture (it will look a little like couscous, although don't worry if you have bigger chunks).
- Season well with salt, pepper and olive oil and leave in a cool place to absorb the flavours
- Before serving, add the torn basil leaves and mix together

Wine suggestions and notes

Any dry white or rosé wine will compliment this tasty salad. For something unusual from the Maremma region we recommend an **Ansonica Costa dell'Argentario DOC**. The Argentario coastline is one of the most beautiful areas of Tuscany, covering in part the territories of the municipalities of Manciano, Orbetello and Capalbio as well as all of Monte Argentario and the Isle of Giglio. But it is also the name of a white wine that has been forever produced on the legendary promontory of Monte Argentario, the hills of the Costa d'Argento, and the Isle of Giglio. Only recently, Ansonica earned its much deserved D.O.C. appellation.

A ride across this beautiful land takes one through a hilly coastline dotted with ancient villages and historical sites: Capalbio with its Etruscan, Roman and medieval ruins; Ansedonia, a modern village built near what was an ancient Roman settlement; Porto Santo Stefano and Porto Ercole with their medieval fortresses; and the Isle of Giglio with its stunning wilderness. The vineyards on both the promontory and the island are carved out of terraces that while making it difficult for the farmer to tend to the grapes, provide the best conditions for quality produce. The same quality, however, is also reached at the vineyards along the hilly coast, thus justifying the D.O.C. appellation.



As to the Ansonica grapes, not much is known about their origin. Most people argue that they come from Sicily, but some claim that their roots can be traced back to Normandy. What's sure is that this grape has been grown from times immemorial in Sicily, in Sardinia, on the Isle of Elba and the Argentario, but also that there is no historical evidence of how it reached places that are so distant from one another.

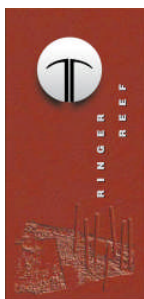
In each one of these places, Ansonica took its own course: in Sicily it became the island's third most widely grown grape variety, in Sardinia it has all but disappeared, on the Isle of Elba it is used as table grape, and at Argentario it has been used to produce a wine with such distinctive character - not at all similar to its Sicilian namesake - as to deserve its own specific appellation.

Stockists and further information

It is difficult to find Ansonica Costa dell'Argentario DOC outside Italy although Everywine in the UK has one example worth looking out for.

Australia

In the absence of Ansonica we recommend matching your Panzanella to a crisp **Rosé**. There are many excellent varieties to be found in Australia. One of our favourites is from a small vineyard in North East Victoria – [Ringer Reef](#)



2008 Rosé: This wine is a blend of 30% Sangiovese grown by Gina and Marco Martinelli at Cheshunt South in the upper King Valley and 70% Merlot from the Ringer Reef vineyard at Porepunkah. The wine was fermented in older American oak and bottled in May 2008. A very attractive salmon coloured wine, it shows clean fresh almost strawberry like fruit with good weight on the palate and a soft mouth filling finish.



Ringer Reef Winery, Porepunkah

UK

Everywine stocks **La Parrina ANSONICA Costa dell'Argentario (Bianco) DOC – 2007**

Food and Wine Events in East Anglia



Born and educated in London, Sue Humphrey has lived in Norfolk for thirty years. From an early age her father encouraged her interest in food, and many a happy Sunday afternoon was spent in the kitchen together perfecting the art of the Victoria Sponge cake!

Occasionally wine was served at the dinner table and Sue was allowed a very small glass, but not without first evaluating its aromas and flavours. From such beginnings, passions develop... After many years experience in private catering and the retail wine trade, Sue decided it was time to start her own business.

She conducts wine tastings, for groups and organizations, which are informal and informative in style and with the emphasis on the enjoyment of food and wine matching. Sue also offers private catering – celebrations being a speciality.

For more details please contact Sue at:

[Food and Wine Events](#)

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Dedicated to the search for quality, sustainable practice and integrity of provenance in food and wine. Delivery is national and overnight for a flat fee of just £6.50. Most of Rare & Organic's products are sourced directly from Italian producers but they have a growing range from other countries, including France and Britain - always bought directly from the producer. [Rare & Organic](#) was founded by Cinzia Long and James MacNay on the simple principles that when a small producer becomes organic he does so out of passion: and that the producer who cares the most is the best.

Rest of the World

We are always interested to hear from people who can recommend a wine merchant with a quality selection of Italian wines.

