



Summer festivals in Eastern Pennsylvania celebrate the area's Italian culture—and food.



Old World habits foster healthy hearts and wonderful Italian food in the hill country of Pennsylvania.



Oven Fries with
Crisp Sage Leaves
(recipe on page 247)



A stone church bell tower stands against a cloudless summer sky. A tenor croons at an outdoor festival, accompanied by ripples of laughter and the gentle *clack* of bocce balls rolling across a lawn. The aroma of roasting *porchetta* (roast pork) wafts through the streets. This could be any picturesque town in Italy's Veneto or Puglia region but is, instead, a community nestled in the hills of Eastern Pennsylvania.

Every summer since 1893, the Big Time festival has celebrated the cultural heritage—faith, fellowship, and food—that shapes the Italian-American community of Roseto, Pennsylvania.

The festival encompasses the feast day of Our Lady of Mount Carmel, patron of the local Roman Catholic church perched atop the highest hill in town. During the long weekend, relatives and friends catch up, and visitors are welcomed

celebration of heritage

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into the community. Everyone delights in classic festival fare—*pizza frita* (a disk of fried dough), sausage-pepper sandwiches, cannoli—and the timeless diversions of amusement rides and fireworks. It's capped off on Sunday afternoon, when the festival's newly crowned queen leads a procession of the faithful down Garibaldi Avenue behind a float bearing a statue of Our Lady of Mount Carmel.



New World—New Italy

The Big Time is just one of the summertime religious and civic celebrations that attract thousands of locals and returning natives to the Italian-American hill towns of Northampton County, Pennsylvania. Between the foothills of the Pocono Mountains and the waters of the Delaware River, this region attracted many Italians around the turn of the 19th century to work in slate quarries and textile mills. A world removed from the gritty streets of an urban Little Italy, the area offered grass instead of concrete, trees instead of high rises, and mountain streams in place of gushing fire hydrants.

The established residents—most of English, German, and Welsh background—considered all these newcomers “Italian.” But the immigrants identified themselves by their native region, be it Marche, Veneto, or Sicily. Transplants from Roseto Valfortore in the Puglia region created a New World Roseto in the Pennsylvania hills under the spiritual and civic leadership of Roman Catholic priest Father Pasquale de Nisco. The new Rosetans brought Old World habits—in particular a strong sense of community—that helped them become models for healthy living. In the early 1960s, Stewart Wolf, M.D., then chair of medicine at the University of Oklahoma, launched a multidecade study to determine why Rosetans experienced a much lower incidence of death from heart disease than individuals in surrounding communities. Wolf’s surprising conclusion credited Rosetans’ healthy hearts to their strong social relationships.

Two books about the study, *The Roseto Story: An Anatomy of Health* (1979) and *The Power of Clan: The Influence of Human Relationships on Heart Disease* (1993), focused international media attention on the town. The BBC even filmed a documentary. *The Roseto Story* was





Tomatoes Roasted with Rosemary and Lemon

Proof that simple foods are often best, this colorful multipurpose combination of tomatoes, herbs, and lemon smells almost as good as it tastes. To serve over pasta, cook 12 ounces dried pasta; drain and return pasta to pan. Stir in 3 cups of the roasted tomatoes; cook over low heat until liquid thickens. Serve with grated Parmesan cheese.

- ¼ cup chopped fresh flat-leaf parsley
- 1 tablespoon chopped fresh rosemary
- 1 tablespoon extravirgin olive oil
- 2 teaspoons grated lemon rind
- ½ teaspoon salt
- ½ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
- 4 pounds plum tomatoes, quartered lengthwise
- 3 garlic cloves, minced

1. Preheat oven to 400°.
2. Place all ingredients in a large bowl, and toss well to combine. Place tomato mixture in a 13 x 9-inch baking dish. Bake at 400° for 30 minutes, stirring every 10 minutes. Remove mixture from oven.
3. Preheat broiler.
4. Broil tomatoes for 10 minutes or until they begin to brown. Remove from oven; stir gently to combine. Yield: 10 servings (serving size: ½ cup).

NOTE: Place chilled tomatoes in heavy-duty zip-top plastic bags; freeze for up to 3 months.

CALORIES 53 (34% from fat); **FAT** 2g (sat 0.3g, mono 1.1g, poly 0.4g); **PROTEIN** 1.7g; **CARB** 9g; **FIBER** 2.2g; **CHOL** 0mg; **IRON** 1mg; **SODIUM** 134mg; **CALC** 15mg

reissued this spring in paperback by the University of Oklahoma Press.

Medical sociologist John G. Bruhn, Ph.D., who coauthored the study, recalls the community, family, and dining table as pillars of the Rosetan lifestyle. "Sharing food was important, particularly the Sunday noon meal after church. People would eat for hours, enjoying wine with the meal. I don't think I ever saw a meal without salad on the table. They would laugh, share, and celebrate life," Bruhn says. "Most people cultivated gardens, walked everywhere in town, and contributed to the welfare of the community."

Cultivating Community

With their backyard vegetable gardens, compact fruit orchards, and grape arbors, the original Rosetans reaped self-sufficiency along with tomatoes, melons, and home-pressed wine. "Not only did the father hope for a bountiful harvest to feed the family, but it was spiritually uplifting and relaxing for him to return to the earth," writes Anna Marie Ruggiero in *The Roseto Cuisine Cookbook*, which blends a heartfelt history of the town with traditional recipes. It's a practice that Ruggiero, a writer and former teacher, still follows. Most summer mornings, she can be found tending her large plot adjacent to Ruggiero's Market at the corner of Dante Street and Front Street. She often gives away vegetables to the market's customers. "Italians like vegetables," she says.

Her nephew, David Ruggiero, who runs the family grocery, seems unconcerned that his aunt's generosity will damage the bottom line. "People come in every day to pass the time, catch up on town gossip. The market is an important part of the community," David says. These bonds of shared custom nurture Roseto's people.

David Ruggiero, below, and his Aunt Anna Marie keep Roseto's traditions going strong.

Pickled Hot Peppers
(recipe on page 246)



Family and community ties help keep this Italian-American town healthy and happy.



Kale with Garlic and Hot Red Pepper

Anna Marie Ruggiero prepares robust greens in this simple Italian manner. Washed, chopped, bagged kale makes the side dish as easy as it is tasty. Serve with Roast Pork Porchetta-Style (page 246).

- 2 cups water
- 1 (1-pound) bag chopped kale
- 2 teaspoons olive oil
- 3 garlic cloves, minced
- $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon salt
- $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
- $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon crushed red pepper

1. Bring 2 cups water to a boil in a large Dutch oven. Add kale; cover and cook 2 minutes or until bright green and wilted. Drain kale in a colander,

pressing until barely moist.

2. Place pan over low heat. Add oil and garlic; cook 4 minutes or until garlic is just beginning to brown, stirring occasionally. Stir in the kale, salt, black pepper, and red pepper. Increase heat to medium-high, and cook 3 minutes or until tender, stirring constantly. Yield: 6 servings (serving size: $\frac{2}{3}$ cup).

CALORIES 54 (35% from fat); FAT 2.1g (sat 0.3g, mono 1.2g, poly 0.4g); PROTEIN 2.6g; CARB 8.2g; FIBER 1.6g; CHOL 0mg; IRON 1.4mg; SODIUM 229mg; CALC 107mg





No Passport Required

The Italian-American communities of Pennsylvania's hill towns hold religious and civic celebrations throughout the summer. Of course, Italian treats are available at all of these festivals.

St. Anthony's Festa, June 11–13, in Easton, includes a street procession followed by the distribution of hundreds of loaves of bread to honor the Franciscan patron of this parish.

Heritage Days, July 11–August 22, in Easton, features bocce ball tournaments in the Villa Tempo Italiano.

The Big Time, July 21–24, in Roseto, sets the standard for area festivals honoring Italian food and entertainment.

St. Rocco's Festival, August 12–15, in Martin's Creek, is where you can sample *crespelle*, deep-fried dough rounds dusted with powdered sugar or wrapped around sausages.

Holy Cross Festival, September 10–12, in Easton, celebrates its 93rd year with a special mass, a rosary in the park, Italian fare, games, and fireworks.

Italian Stuffed Summer Vegetables

A variety of vegetables makes for a pretty presentation, but this can be made with all bell peppers or squash. If you use only bell peppers, which have no interior flesh, add equal amounts of additional breadcrumbs and tomatoes until you get enough filling. Using soft breadcrumbs adds to the melt-in-your-mouth texture of the tender vegetables. Because they are covered while baking, the vegetables keep moisture in, resulting in tender and delicate flesh.

- 1 large red bell pepper, halved lengthwise
- 2 large yellow squash, halved lengthwise (about 1 pound)
- 1 large zucchini, halved lengthwise (about ½ pound)
- Cooking spray
- 3 ounces Italian bread
- 2 garlic cloves, minced
- 1½ cups chopped peeled plum tomato
- ½ cup (2 ounces) finely shredded Parmesan cheese, divided
- ¼ cup chopped fresh parsley
- ½ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
- ¼ teaspoon salt

1. Preheat oven to 375°.
2. Discard seeds and membranes from bell pepper. Carefully scoop out squash and zucchini pulp, leaving shells intact. Finely chop pulp; set aside. Place bell pepper halves, squash shells, and zucchini shells, cut sides up, in a 13 x 9-inch baking pan coated with cooking spray. Coat shells with cooking spray.
3. Place bread in a food processor; pulse 10 times or until crumbs measure 1½ cups. Heat a large nonstick skillet over medium heat. Coat pan with cooking spray. Add chopped pulp and garlic; cook 4 minutes or until moisture evaporates, stirring frequently. Add tomato; cook 2 minutes or until tomato begins to soften, stirring frequently. Remove from heat. Stir in the breadcrumbs, ¼ cup cheese, parsley, black pepper, and salt. Divide mixture evenly among prepared bell pepper halves, squash shells, and zucchini shells; sprinkle evenly with ¼ cup cheese. Cover pan with foil, and bake at 375° for 40 minutes or until shells are tender.
4. Preheat broiler.
5. Remove foil; broil 4 minutes or until

cheese is lightly browned. Yield: 8 servings (serving size: 1 stuffed shell).

CALORIES 80 (23% from fat); FAT 2g (sat 1.1g, mono 0.6g, poly 0.3g); PROTEIN 4.5g; CARB 10.9g; FIBER 2.3g; CHOL 4mg; IRON 0.9mg; SODIUM 242mg; CALC 90mg

Beet and Red Onion Salad with Ricotta-Provolone Topping

Inspired by a recipe in Anna Marie Ruggiero's *The Roseto Cuisine Cookbook*, this version has less oil. To avoid ruby-red hands, peel beets under running water. Prepare and chill the salad a day or two ahead to allow the flavors to meld. Let stand at room temperature for 15 minutes, and prepare cheese mixture and chop basil right before serving.

- 2½ pounds small beets
- 2 tablespoons red wine vinegar
- 2 teaspoons extravirgin olive oil
- ½ teaspoon salt
- ¼ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
- 1½ cups thinly sliced red onion
- ½ serrano chile, seeded and thinly sliced
- ½ cup part-skim ricotta cheese
- ¼ cup (1 ounce) finely shredded sharp provolone cheese
- 2 teaspoons hot water
- ⅓ cup thinly sliced fresh basil

1. Leave root and 1 inch of stems on beets; scrub with a brush. Pierce each beet 2 times with a sharp knife. Place beets in a large heavy-duty zip-top plastic bag, and seal halfway. Microwave at HIGH 20 minutes or until tender, rotating bag every 5 minutes. Remove bag from microwave; cool to room temperature. Remove beets from bag; reserve liquid in bag. Peel beets, and cut into ¼-inch-thick slices.
2. Combine reserved liquid, vinegar, oil, salt, and pepper in a large bowl, stirring with a whisk. Add beets, onion, and serrano; toss gently to coat.
3. Combine ricotta, provolone, and hot water, stirring well. Sprinkle salad with basil; top with cheese mixture. Yield: 6 servings (serving size: 1 cup salad, about 1 tablespoon basil, and about 1 tablespoon cheese mixture).

CALORIES 159 (29% from fat); FAT 5.1g (sat 2.1g, mono 1.7g, poly 0.3g); PROTEIN 7.2g; CARB 23.2g; FIBER 6.2g; CHOL 11mg; IRON 1.9mg; SODIUM 424mg; CALC 135mg

PLEASE SEE PAGE 246 FOR MORE RECIPES



Roast Pork Porchetta-Style ▲

Porchetta (por-KETT-a), a roast suckling pig seasoned with rosemary and garlic, is served at many Italian gatherings in the Roseto area sliced, heaped on buns, and moistened with tasty pan juices. Home cooks may be challenged to go “whole hog” as the Italian festival chefs do, so this recipe calls for a more manageable pork loin. Use fennel or rosemary in this family-style roast.

- 2 tablespoons crushed fennel seeds
- 1 teaspoon salt
- ½ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
- 5 garlic cloves, minced
- 1 (3½-pound) boneless pork loin roast, trimmed
- Cooking spray
- 1 cup dry white wine

- 1.** Preheat oven to 350°.
- 2.** Combine first 4 ingredients. Make 12 (1½-inch) slits along 1 side of roast, and stuff slits with fennel mixture. Place the roast, slit side down, on a shallow roasting pan coated with cooking spray. Rub remaining fennel mixture over the top of the roast.
- 3.** Bake at 350° for 1 hour and 10 minutes or until a thermometer registers 155° (slightly pink). Transfer roast to a

serving platter. Add wine to pan, scraping pan to loosen browned bits. Pour wine mixture into a saucepan. Bring to a boil over medium-high heat. Reduce heat, and simmer until reduced to ⅔ cup (about 8 minutes). Remove from heat. Pour accumulated juices from serving platter into wine mixture. Serve wine mixture with pork. Yield: 10 servings (serving size: about 4 ounces pork and about 1 tablespoon wine mixture).

CALORIES 250 (33% from fat); FAT 9.2g (sat 3.1g, mono 4.2g, poly 1g); PROTEIN 34.4g; CARB 1.5g; FIBER 0.5g; CHOL 94mg; IRON 1.7mg; SODIUM 318mg; CALC 47mg

Pickled Hot Peppers

These peppers are full of flavor and fire. They go perfectly with roast pork, as shown above. The recipe can easily be doubled.

- 1 cup sliced seeded Hungarian wax chiles (about 5 ounces)
- ¾ cup white vinegar
- ⅛ teaspoon kosher salt
- ⅛ teaspoon sugar

- 1.** Combine all ingredients in a clean, hot jar. Cover jar with metal lid; screw on band. Refrigerate overnight. Yield: 1 cup (serving size: 1 tablespoon).

NOTE: Store peppers in refrigerator for up to 3 weeks.

CALORIES 3 (0% from fat); FAT 0g; PROTEIN 0.1g; CARB 0.6g; FIBER 0g; CHOL 0mg; IRON 0.1mg; SODIUM 16mg; CALC 2mg

Oven Fries with Crisp Sage Leaves

As beautiful to look at as they are great to eat, these golden slices of potato are scented and subtly flavored with crisp cooked sage. They are an incredible snack or a perfect savory side to any meal, from chicken to filet mignon. You can double this recipe and use two baking sheets. For even browning, rotate the baking sheets halfway through the first 40 minutes of baking.

- 2 small baking potatoes (about 1 pound)
- 1 tablespoon extravirgin olive oil
- ½ teaspoon kosher salt
- 12 sage leaves

1. Preheat oven to 400°.
2. Cut each baking potato lengthwise into 6 equal slices. Place potato slices in a large bowl, and drizzle with olive oil. Sprinkle with salt; toss well to coat potato slices. Remove potato slices from bowl. Reserve remaining olive oil and salt in bowl; set aside. Arrange potato slices in a single layer on a baking sheet.
3. Bake at 400° for 40 minutes or until the potato slices are golden brown on the bottom. Remove potato slices from oven (leave oven at 400°).
4. Add sage leaves to reserved olive oil and salt in bowl. Gently rub sage leaves along bottom of bowl, coating both sides with olive oil and salt. Working with one potato slice at a time, lift potato slice from baking sheet with a thin spatula. Lay 1 sage leaf on baking sheet, and cover with potato slice, browned side down. Repeat with remaining potato slices and sage leaves.
5. Bake at 400° for 10 minutes. Remove from heat. Using a thin spatula, carefully turn potato slices over with leaves on top. Bake at 400° for an additional 10 minutes or until bottoms begin to brown. Serve immediately. Yield: 3 servings (serving size: 4 potato slices).

CALORIES 205 (21% from fat); FAT 4.7g (sat 0.7g, mono 3.3g, poly 0.4g); PROTEIN 3.5g; CARB 38.2g; FIBER 3.6g; CHOL 0mg; IRON 2.1mg; SODIUM 326mg; CALC 15mg

Peaches Chilled in Red Wine

Use a fruity bottle of Dolcetto or Valpolicella for this dessert. Serve with a dollop of ricotta sweetened with powdered sugar and vanilla extract.

- 2 cups thickly sliced peeled ripe peaches (about 1 ¼ pounds)
- ¾ cup fruity Italian red wine
- 1 ½ teaspoons sugar
- Mint sprigs (optional)

1. Combine peaches, wine, and sugar in a bowl, stirring gently. Cover and chill 2 hours, stirring occasionally. Spoon ⅓ cup peach mixture into each of 6 small bowls. Garnish with mint sprigs, if desired. Yield: 6 servings.

CALORIES 49 (2% from fat); FAT 0.1g (sat 0g, mono 0g, poly 0.1g); PROTEIN 0.5g; CARB 7.7g; FIBER 1.1g; CHOL 0mg; IRON 0.2mg; SODIUM 2mg; CALC 5mg



*Certified Culinary Professional Sharon Sanders publishes a free monthly newsletter about Italian food and life from her Web site www.simpleitaly.com. She is the author of *Cooking Up an Italian Life*.*