

Matteo Beligoni


CUCINA DELLA NONNA

Matteo Beligoni, part of the San Carlo restaurant management team, remembers happy summers, and his grandmother's panna cotta.

This recipe is on the menu at all San Carlo restaurants, which are based in Birmingham, Leicester, Bristol, Manchester, Liverpool and Signor Sassi opposite Harrods in London's fashionable Knightsbridge Green. The San Carlo Group is a family business founded by Carlo Distefano in 1992, and Signor Sassi was acquired by the group in 2007. Visit www.sancarolo.co.uk or www.signorsassi.co.uk

I was born and brought up in the bustling city of Milan, but as a young boy I had the wonderful opportunity to spend my summer holidays in the countryside with my Nonna Francesca. She lived in Varese – about 50 miles outside of Milan – and her house was near the end of a long, winding road which ran down to a little farm.

Each evening I would run down to the farmyard to watch the cows being milked. The farmer was very generous and always gave us extra milk to take home. This was a delight to Nonna Francesca who would use it to make wonderful cheeses and puddings – including my favourite, vanilla panna cotta.

It seemed such an easy dish to make, but nothing has ever tasted quite as good as hers – perhaps it was something to do with the milk! Often we would search the hedgerows for summer berries which she would lightly poach and serve with the panna cotta. From that day to this, it remains my favourite desert and always reminds me of my childhood in the country. 



Vanilla panna cotta with raspberries

SERVES 4  Preparation 20 minutes, plus setting  Cooking 15 minutes



- 275ml whole milk
- 275ml double cream
- 45g caster sugar
- 1 vanilla pod, split lengthways, seeds scraped out and kept
- vanilla essence
- 3 sheets of gelatine
- for the raspberry sauce*
- 50g fresh raspberries
- 15g caster sugar
- 25ml water

Soak the gelatine sheets in a bowl of cold water, until completely soft. Place the milk, cream, sugar, vanilla pod and seeds in a large saucepan and simmer until almost boiled.

Pass the milk mixture through a fine strainer. Squeeze any excess water from the gelatine, then add to milk. Stir until completely dissolved. Place the bowl inside a larger bowl of iced water to accelerate the setting process. Stir occasionally. When the mixture starts to thicken, divide between four moulds. Cover with clingfilm and place in the fridge for 3 hours.

Meanwhile make the raspberry sauce. Put the raspberries, sugar and water into a blender and blend to a puree. Pass through a fine sieve and set aside. Remove the panna cotta from the mould and serve with the raspberry sauce.