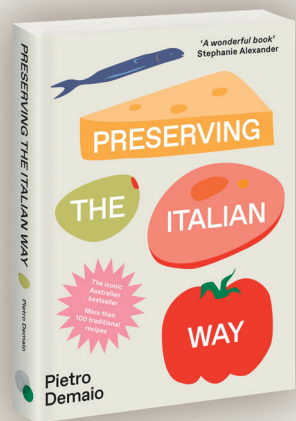


PRESERVING THE ITALIAN WAY

Pietro Demaio

Nonna lacono's tuna in oil

*Tonno sott'olio della Nonna
lacono*



When I think of this recipe, I go back to Sant'Angelo on the isle of Ischia. It is a balmy spring evening in 1996 and we are on the balcony of Il Pescatore, the restaurant owned by our dear friend Assunta lacono. Looking out on the marina full of small colourful fishing boats, the sun setting bright red over the 'Torre', a small peninsula winding round in front of the piazza, embracing the fishing boats and protecting them from harm like a loving mother. My children are eating their frappé and I am sitting, writing down recipes from Nonna lacono and sipping a *limoncino* (see page 247). At that moment, who cares if we never go back home!

Nonna was a restaurateur all her life and the matriarch of the lacono family. She was amazing in her youthful attitude, and intensely interested in us as a family and as Italians from a far-off country.

You will need a very fresh and very large tuna for this. If you can, fish one out of the Pacific Ocean or Great Australian Bight yourself! The best varieties are the albacore (*Thunnus alalunga*) or yellowfin (*Thunnus albacares*).

Otherwise, go to a fish market and choose a good-sized fresh tuna. I love going to a fish market – it's fantastic seeing so much fresh fish at incredibly good prices. The hard thing is getting it home in the car. Take at least one friend, maybe two or three, with you if you're buying a 50 kg tuna.

Once, when making this recipe in Italy with my friend Mimmo, we went to the fish market early in the morning to pick up a tuna. The fishmonger gave us an enormous polystyrene box with the tuna on ice. It looked like a coffin!

And so, out of the market and into the mists of the early morning Mimmo and I emerged, carrying the tuna in its coffin and laying it reverently on the back seat of the car. We got a lot of stares! The only thing missing was the *Godfather* theme!

50 kg fresh albacore or yellowfin
tuna, cleaned and gutted, cut
into 10 cm thick slices

5 kg table salt
light olive oil, to cover
garlic cloves, finely sliced
lemons, sliced
dried bay leaves
small red chillies (optional)

Special equipment
large cauldron
wide-necked preserving jars

