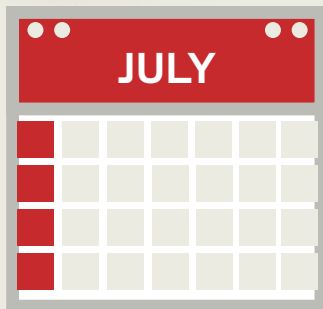
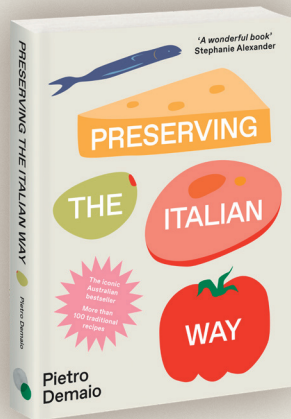


PRESERVING THE ITALIAN WAY

Pietro Demaio

Calabrese salami

Salame del Calabria



Calabrese salami is distinctive because of the additions of Hot Chilli Paste (see page 122) or powder, Capsicum Paste (see page 122) and fresh fennel seeds. These give the salamis their characteristic colour and flavour.

Did you know that chillies have preservative qualities? A fact that any Calabrese will demonstrate due to their great skin and youthful looks from a life of eating hot chillies!

lean pork meat and soft fat from the back of the pig (see pages 187–188; 80% meat and 20% fat)

sea salt

freshly ground black pepper

fennel seeds

chilli powder

Capsicum Paste (see page 122)

red wine or grappa (optional)

pre-soaked lamb's bungs (see page 190)

Special equipment

meat mincer

string

large safety pin

size 14 elastic netting

meat hooks

Remove and separate the meat as described on pages 187–188.

Pass the lean meat through the meat mincer on the coarse setting (the grid with four holes). As you mince the meat, mix in some fat from along the spine (which is very soft and has no fibre/sinew). The final salami mixture needs to be four parts lean meat to one part fat. A variation is to add fat in small cubes at the mixing stage (see below) rather than mince it with the meat. This (ironically) makes the salamis leaner and firmer to cut.

The amount of added fat will vary depending on the leanness of the pig. If the pig is particularly lean, you may have to get extra fat from the butcher. If the pig is fatty (as seen by the thickness of the layer of fat along the back, which is ideally 1.5–2 cm thick), then you won't need to add as much fat, as there will be plenty in the meat off the chest and abdomen.

Mix the minced lean meat and fat well, then spread out flat on a large, plastic-covered table.

For every 1 kg of mince, add 28–30 g of sea salt, 3 g of freshly ground black pepper, 1 g of fennel seeds and up to 1 g of chilli powder (this will vary according to your taste). Next, add 30 ml of capsicum paste and 20 ml of red wine or grappa (if using) per 1 kg of meat.

The capsicum paste is prepared in late summer (see page 122). If you don't want to make the capsicum paste, you can substitute sweet paprika instead at a rate of 10 g per 1 kg of meat, or buy a commercially made capsicum paste. The capsicum paste (or paprika, if that's what you end up using) produces beautiful red oil when you cut the mature salami.

Mix well with your hands, kneading the mince with the heel of your palm at least three or four times, from one side of the table to the other. When you're finished, the mince should feel sticky and very well combined. Leave for a minimum of 4 hours to allow the spices to flavour the mince.

To test for flavour, take a small amount of the mince and fry in a dry frying pan. When cooked, taste it. It should be relatively salty and have a pronounced flavour of fennel and chilli. If not, add more of each and mix again. This is the first reward for your unsuspecting helpers, so make a big ceremony of it. Throw in a glass of good wine and you may have a chance of redeeming yourself, as you all sit round with the freshly cooked salami mince and some crusty bread.

Leave the mince on the table overnight, covered well with a cloth. At this stage, all your friends, and particularly your children, will have remembered some essential previous engagement and make their excuses. It's understandable – the next job is a smelly one and I would not test even the closest friendship with it! So, farewell your friends and prepare the bungs ready for the next day (see overleaf).

