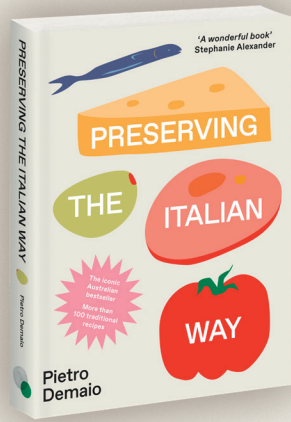


# PRESERVING THE ITALIAN WAY

Pietro Demaio

## Boneless prosciutto

*Prosciutto senza osso*



A less traditional but much safer way of making prosciutto is to remove the bone (as well as the artery and vein attached to the bone). This means that there is less chance of spoilage from the blood left in the vein. It is also easier when you want to slice the prosciutto, because there is no bone to cut through.

Trim the meat to the exposed round knob on the end of the leg bone (following the general prosciutto instructions, see page 202). Trim the skin slightly. Place the leg on the bench and you will notice that the bone is closer to one edge than the other. Place the leg so that the bone is furthest away from you, then cut the skin just above the bone from the ankle to the end of the bone. Cut down the length of the bone and around it, making sure that you have removed the vein and artery, and then remove the bone and blood vessels together. You will now have a leg that is sliced open. Cover the meat surfaces and the exposed ends of the leg liberally with a mixture of rock salt and table salt. You can also add spices to the salt mix at this stage if you want. Some suggestions are:

- \* freshly ground black pepper (Abruzzi)
- \* freshly ground black pepper mixed with dried chilli flakes (Calabria)
- \* freshly ground black pepper mixed with finely chopped fresh garlic, rosemary and sage (Tuscany)
- \* white pepper, ground nutmeg, ground allspice and ground cloves mixed with salt (Tuscany)

For a 10 kg prosciutto, leave under salt for 7–8 days on a slightly inclined board (for example, a wooden chopping board on an angle in the sink) to allow drainage. Because the leg has been opened it will salt more quickly than a whole leg. Hold the prosciutto up by the ankle and shake off the excess salt. Cover the exposed surfaces with your chosen mix of spices.

Hang to dry at approximately 16°C, with a humidity of approximately 70–80 per cent. You can fold the cut meat back to recreate the shape of the leg, but if you do this, you will need to place a clamp on the leg to ensure that the cut surfaces are pressed tightly against each other.

Allow to hang for 8–12 months. You will notice that a white mould will form, mixed with the spices. This mould is normal; just cut the surface off before slicing to serve.

