Spaghetti alla Bottarga

The first time I tasted Spaghetti alla bottarga was in 1998 in Milan at a restaurant James Irvine took me to called the Calaluna.

It's a typical Italian dish (Sardinian) served with salted and cured fish eggs called bottarga. Best use bottarga from Sardegna. Bottarga, made of tiny golden fish roe cured in sea salt, adds the taste of the sea to this quick and easy pasta dish.

SERVINGS: 4 PEOPLE

INGREDIENTS

1 oz bottarga, grated (6 Tbsp), or sliced + more to garnish

6 Tbsp extra virgin olive oil (high quality)

2 cloves of garlic, chopped or finely sliced

2 scant pinch of peperoncino (less than ¼ tsp powdered or crushed red pepper)

16 oz pasta (long-dried pasta such as spaghetti, spaghettini or linguine; or fresh tagliolini or tagliatelle)

a pinch of parsley (optional), minced

METHOD

1. Bring a large covered pot of salted water to boil.

2. Meanwhile, finely grate the bottarga into a large heatproof bowl, and toss with 4 Tbsp of olive oil. Stir 2 Tbsp of the hot pasta water into the bottarga mixture, and set aside.

3. Add the pasta to the boiling water and cook, stirring occasionally, until al dente, tender yet still firm to the bite.

4. Meanwhile, in a saucepan or small skillet, sauté the garlic, and peperoncino if using, with 2 Tbsp olive oil over medium heat until the garlic just starts to colour. Be careful not to let it brown. Remove from heat and add to the bowl with the bottarga.

5. When the pasta is ready, reserve around 1 cup of the pasta water, then drain the pasta and toss with the bottarga. If it seems a little dry to you, add more of the starchy hot pasta water a spoon at a time, and toss until the sauce coats the pasta well. Sprinkle with a touch of parsley.

6. To serve, garnish each plate of pasta with more grated bottarga, plus a few thin slices if you like. Serve more bottarga to be grated at the table.

7. Enjoy immediately while hot.

Buon Appetito, Theo