

The Veal Cutlets of Trattoria Battibecco

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One of my favorite eating places in Bologna is Trattoria Battibecco, an understated, elegant establishment that serves terrific food. The chef-owner is Nico Costa, a fifty-something dynamo who cooks like an angel. His wife, Giuliana, tends to the front of the house and pampers her clients just like a doting mother would. When I asked Nico if he could contribute a recipe for my new book, he gladly gave me this one, which, he said, was his adaption of the classic cotoletta alla Bolognese. His variation takes a thick slice of milk-fed veal, dredges it in grated Parmigiano, dips it in beaten eggs, coats it with bread crumbs, and fries it until crisp. He then covers it with prosciutto di Parma and fontina cheese and simmers it for a few minutes in a reduction of cream, butter and broth until the cheese is melted. A luscious, delicious Bolognese dish that takes only a few minutes to prepare.

This dish is very rich and good. If you're counting calories this is not an everyday dish. Special occasions it's great. I've made this recipe numerous times. My spin is to beat the veal just a little thinner and not to cook it quite as long. I find the bread crumbs and cheese can burn if you brown the veal too long. Recipe calls for 2 minutes per side, I use 1 – 1 ½ minutes to side. Just be careful don't burn the bread crumbs or cheese.

Serves 4

1 pound boneless veal loin, cut into 4 thick slices
1 cup freshly grated Parmigiano-Reggiano
1-1/2 cups fine dried bread crumbs
2 large eggs, beaten in a bowl with a pinch of salt
1/3 cup extra-virgin olive oil
2 tablespoons unsalted butter
1/4 cup heavy cream
1/4 cup chicken broth
4 thin slices prosciutto di Parma (about 1/4 pound)
4 thin slices Fontina cheese (2 to 3 ounces)

1. Place the veal slices between 2 pieces of plastic wrap. With a meat mallet, pound the slices until they are approximately 1/4 inch thick.

2. Spread the Parmigiano and bread crumbs on 2 sheets of aluminum foil. Coat the veal slices with the Parmigiano, pressing the cheese into the meat with the palms of your hands. Dip the cutlets quickly into the beaten eggs, then coat with the bread crumbs. Press the crumbs into the meat with your hands. Place the cutlets on a large platter and refrigerate, uncovered, for 1 hour.
3. Heat the oil in a large nonstick pan over medium-high heat. When the oil is nice and hot, add the cutlets without crowding. Cook, turning once, until they have a nice golden crust, about 2 minutes on each side. Drain on paper towels.
4. Discard the oil in the skillet, wipe it clean with paper towels, and return it to medium-low heat. Add the butter, cream, and broth, season lightly with salt, and simmer until it begins to thicken, 1 to 2 minutes.
5. Meanwhile place a slice of prosciutto and a slice of Fontina over each cutlet. Add the cutlets to the simmering sauce, prosciutto-fontina facing up. Cover the skillet and cook for a minute or two until the cheese is melted.
6. Place the cutlets on serving dishes. If needed, reduce the sauce over high heat until thick. Dribble a little sauce over each cutlet and serve hot.