

Brodetto all'Anconetana

probably one of the best-kept secrets of the Ancona district ...let's unveil it together.

An excellent second course, not to mention a stand-alone summer dish, brodetto is a characteristic local fish soup. Tradition demands 13 different species of fish from the area. Some people associate this quantity with the number of people who sat down to the Last Supper, others would have it derive from the number of mouths of the Fontana del Calamo (also known as the "13-spout Fountain"), so dear to Ancona people's hearts.

Unlike other well-known Italian soups, this one is served very thick, usually in soup plates, with slices of toasted bread. There are those who say that the secret of brodetto is jealously guarded by the master-chefs in Ancona, to the point where they make their own assistants swear never to reveal their most personal variations, on pain of an unconventional encounter with the frying-pan.

Ingredients: Fish of various kinds (cuttlefish, shrimp, scampi, cod, red mullet, sole, gurnard, turbot, scorpion-fish, calamari), salt, an onion, two cloves of garlic, oil, vinegar, parsley, pulped tomatoes, tomato purée; slices of home-made bread.

Preparation: clean and wash the fish, put it on a plate and salt it. Finely chop the onion and fry till golden in a glass of oil with the two cloves of garlic, crushed. Then add half a glass of vinegar. As soon as the vinegar has evaporated, add some chopped parsley, some pulped tomatoes and a little tomato purée, diluted with lightly salted water. Add the cuttlefish, which must cook for a good quarter of an hour on a low heat and with the pan covered, then when the sauce begins to reduce, move the cuttlefish to one side of the pan and add the rest of the fish.

The brodetto must cook for more than a quarter of an hour on a low heat, and anyway till the sauce thickens. Arrange slices of bread on each plate and pour the brodetto over them.