

Ciao Time

Sites can help you make your own La Festa Italiana

Italians have made tremendous contributions to the world over the centuries. In the world of art, Michelangelo gave us David and Da Vinci gave us the Mona Lisa. In science, Marconi gave us the radio and Volta invented the battery. Columbus opened the New World to Europe and Marco Polo opened the Far East (not to mention that game kids play in pools). They gave us the music of Pavarotti, the fashion of Gucci, the speed of Ferrari and the beauty of Sophia Loren.

As significant as all of these contributions are, they all pale in comparison to the food. Prosciutto, lasagna, fettuccine Alfredo, porketta, gnocchi, marinara, chicken cacciatore — just saying the names is enough to make your mouth water.

Fortunately, La Festa Italiana is taking place downtown this weekend, so you don't have to just read about Italian food, you can actually partake of some of the best in the valley. Unfortunately, the festival only lasts a few days, leaving everyone wanting more after the last tent pulls up stakes.

So if you can't get your fill of tortellini, linguini and cannolis, here are a few websites with Italian recipes you can make at home.

The Italian Chef

ITALIANCHEF.COM

This site features a very well-done recipe blog with impressive, color pictures of the dishes. After the picture, most of the blog posts have an introductory paragraph, followed by the ingredients and finally the instructions for preparing the dish.

In addition to the blog, there's a link that takes you to a page with dozens of recipes for sauces, appetizers, pasta dishes, pizza, beef, seafood and more. These recipes have the same format as the blog, minus the pictures.

There's also a "Features" section with articles and recipes, a cookbook review section and a restaurant review section. You can sign up for an electronic newsletter from the site if you're interested, and there's an "About" section, as well as a contact section.

As a nice bonus there's a travel section with links that allow you to book hotels and rent cars in Italy, or order Italian travel brochures. The site has a nice design with easy navigation and a sensible organization of the content.

Italian Food Forever

WWW.ITALIANFOODFOREVER.COM

This is a well done site by a woman, Deborah Mele, who appears to have a lot of resources and a lot of time on her hands. It's a combination of pages and a blog, with luscious color photos of the dishes she prepares.

In the blog you have to wade through stories of her travels around Italy and her daily trips to the market for fresh ingredients before you actually get to the recipes, but you do eventually get there. The "Recipes" link will take you directly to the instructions and ingredients without all the fluff.

There are cookbook reviews, travel journals, photo galleries, related links, and a newsletter subscription option. The "Glossary" link is a nice feature, filled with definitions of Italian cooking terms.

This site has a nice, clean design with good organization and navigation. It's obviously a labor of love for this woman, and a lot of her personality is revealed in the writing. It sometimes borders on being pretentious, but there's lots of good content, and the photos alone are worth a visit.

Italian Recipes

RECIPESITALIAN.COM

This last site is not as elaborate as the first two, but it has something they don't — videos of the recipes being made. It's divided into two main areas, one with video recipes, and the other with just written instructions. There are no photos of the finished dishes or the preparation steps with the recipes.

The videos are short and easy to follow, with good image and sound quality. The measurements, however, are given in metric units, but most of them have conversions in parenthesis.

The design of the site is not as nice as the first two, but the organization and navigation are easy to follow and there are hundreds of recipes.

If you're into cooking or Italian food, then all of these sites are worth a visit. Do yourself a favor though and visit La Festa Italiana first. That way you don't have to do all the work to enjoy the chow. Ciao.

KEVIN O'NEILL is a graphic artist for The Times-Tribune. Share your favorite websites with him at koneill@times-shamrock.com.

If you go

What: La Festa Italiana

When: Saturday, Sept. 4, and Sunday, Sept. 5, from noon to 11 p.m., Monday, Sept. 6, from noon to 9 p.m.

Where: Lackawanna County Courthouse Square

Details: A celebration of Italian culture and cuisine, more than 70 vendors will offer a variety of foods and displays, as well as continuous live entertainment. Admission is free.



KEVIN O'NEILL

InSites

KEVIN O'NEILL / STAFF ARTIST

