



The best ravioli is made in stages and eaten leisurely.

filling. As Batali said one day over coffee, you could use anything braised, anything soft.

"Ravioli are just a delivery system for leftovers," he said, sitting amid the chaos that is Babbo in the morning, tables stacked in corners, bags of bread lined along the walls. "Ravioli were invented to get rid of leftovers. Take a short rib, if you have one, or last night's pot roast. Grind it with the vegetables, which makes it lighter."

More stipulations. There are far more pasta machines in the United States than you would think, most of them residing, tarnished and dusty, in kitchen cabinets above refrigerators, obscured from view by boxes of cereal. But there is no need to make the pasta for the ravioli here in a machine. You can roll it out in portions with a pin on a floured counter and do just as well with less frustration. The mandarins of gastronomy will tell you this leads to better "mouth feel" anyway, the pasta picking up the texture of wood on the counter and the rolling pin and providing hidden crannies for the sauce.

There is likewise no need to make all parts of the dish in one day. In fact, sauce and filling each benefit by resting before use, their flavors maturing together in repose.

At Babbo, the ravioli are made in the morning, then frozen and stored in baggies until they're served that night or the next. It's a technique worth aping, even if you don't have a freezer set to 24 degrees below zero, as Batali does.

And so, you could braise a piece of brisket or a couple of short ribs after work on Friday night, then grind it down on Saturday morning, adding seasoning as you go. "You don't want it salty," Batali said, and then paused to offer the sort of mischievous smile that, in college kids, generally presages the offer of drugs or a morning beer. "But you want it up there." You could sauté your chicken livers at around the same time, make the paste that will become your sauce and enjoy a little bit of it for lunch, on toast. You could make the pasta after lunch and let it rest as you take a nap.

All that's left is to roll the stuff out and cut it into squares, which is easier work than you'd think. Then assemble the ravioli, cover them carefully and put them in the freezer. (Order a pizza for dinner.)

Working the things for friends the following night is the payoff of a few minutes. Boil water. Melt butter in pan. Add chicken livers. Cook ravioli in water. Apply sauce to these in the same manner you would mix vinaigrette into a salad. Serve, passing cheese on the side.

"It works," Batali said when I ran through my recipe with him, "it is true." Religions have been built on less.

Pasta Dough for Ravioli

- 2 cups all-purpose flour, or more as needed
- 1 teaspoon kosher salt
- 3 large eggs
- 2 large egg yolks
- 2 tablespoons olive oil.

1. Combine flour and salt in a large bowl, making a well in the middle. In a small bowl, beat together the eggs, egg yolks and olive oil, then pour into the well in the flour. Mix with the fork until the flour begins to clump together. When the mixture becomes too hard to stir with a fork, use your hands. Knead dough in the bowl or on a lightly floured board until it is quite stiff and no longer sticky. Sprinkle with a little flour. Cover with plastic or a cloth, and let it rest for about 30 minutes.
2. Lightly sprinkle a wooden board with flour. Cut off one-third of the dough; keep the rest covered while you work. Roll the dough lightly in flour, then flatten it into a rectangle about the width of your hand. Roll a rolling pin over the dough up and down, left and right. Flip the dough over about every two dozen rolls. If the dough sticks, dust with more flour. Repeat until the pasta is roughly 24 inches in length and 8 inches wide. Dust with flour and set aside; repeat with remaining dough.
3. To form jackets for ravioli, cut each sheet of dough into rectangles about 24 inches long and 4 inches wide, trimming edges neatly.

Chicken Livers Toscani

- 7 tablespoons olive oil
- 1 medium red onion, chopped
- 1 pound chicken livers
- 2 tablespoons capers, rinsed
- 2 anchovy fillets, rinsed
- 1 large pinch red pepper flakes, or to taste
- 1 cup red wine
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper.

Heat 4 tablespoons oil in a sauté pan over medium heat. Add onion and sauté until soft, about 10 minutes. Add livers, capers, anchovies and pepper flakes, and cook until livers are lightly browned. Add wine and cook until only a few tablespoons of liquid remain, about 15 minutes. Transfer mixture to a food processor, and add remaining 3 tablespoons oil. Pulse until mixture is blended but still lumpy. Transfer to a small bowl, and adjust salt and pepper to taste. Refrigerate until needed. *Makes about 2 cups.*

Faux Babbo Ravioli

- 3 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
- 1 medium white onion, chopped
- 1 celery stalk, chopped
- 1 pound beef brisket cut into 1-inch cubes (or short ribs)
- 1 cup red wine, plus more as needed
- ½ cup chopped fresh or canned tomatoes, plus more as needed
- 1 large pinch chopped fresh rosemary
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper
- Pasta dough for ravioli (see recipe)
- 5 tablespoons unsalted butter
- Chicken livers Toscani (see recipe)
- 1 handful Italian parsley, chopped
- ½ cup grated pecorino Romano cheese.

1. Preheat oven to 400 degrees. Place a large, ovenproof skillet over medium heat and add the oil. Add onion and celery and sauté until softened, about 10 minutes. Increase heat to high and (working in batches, if necessary) brown beef on all sides. Add the wine and deglaze the pan. Add tomatoes and rosemary. Season with salt and pepper. When the mixture returns to a boil, cover and place in oven until meat is fork-tender, 45 minutes.
2. Remove pot from oven and allow to cool. Skim off excess fat, transfer to a food processor, and pulse until smooth. If the mixture seems dry, add a tablespoon of wine or 1 or 2 tablespoons of tomatoes. Taste and adjust seasoning.
3. Cut sheets of pasta into 4-inch squares. Place 1 tablespoon beef filling into the center of each square. Wet edges of pasta with warm water, and bring two opposite corners of each square together to form a triangle. Press edges to seal. Put finished ravioli on a cookie sheet, cover with plastic and place in freezer until needed.
4. Bring a pot of salted water to a boil. Heat butter in a large sauté pan until it browns but does not burn. Add about half the chicken livers Toscani and sauté for 1 minute. Add 3 tablespoons of the salted water to loosen the sauce. Reduce heat to low and keep warm.
5. Add the ravioli to the boiling water and cook until they float to the surface, about 3 minutes. Using a slotted spoon, transfer ravioli to pan of chicken liver sauce. Add parsley and ¼ cup grated pecorino. Toss lightly. Divide ravioli on four warm plates. Spoon extra sauce over each serving and top with cheese. Serve immediately. *Serves 4.* ■