

Valdichiana Aglione Sauce

A gentle Tuscan sauce, made the old-fashioned way

Aglione is one of the great symbols of the Valdichiana. My version stays close to the old country recipe: only ripe fresh tomatoes, never passata, for a lighter sauce that lets the natural sweetness of aglione shine.

INGREDIENTS · SERVES 4-6

- 4-5 cloves of Valdichiana aglione
- 1 kg ripe fresh tomatoes
- Extra virgin olive oil
- Fine salt
- Freshly ground black pepper
- Fresh basil

METHOD · TAKE IT SLOWLY

1 PREPARE THE AGLIONE

Lightly crush the cloves with the side of a knife.

Why? Do not chop aglione too finely. Crushed cloves slowly melt as they cook, creating the natural creaminess that gives the sauce its body.

2 STEW GENTLY WITH A LITTLE WATER

Add a drizzle of olive oil to a wide pan, then add the aglione and a few tablespoons of water. Cook over the lowest heat.

Why? This is the heart of the recipe. Aglione must never fry aggressively: the water keeps the heat gentle, so it softens and releases its sweetness without turning bitter.

THE INNKEEPER'S NOTE

Aglione is not ordinary garlic. It is milder, sweeter and easier on the palate; give it time and it will become creamy all by itself.

Slow Cooking, True Flavour

Fresh tomatoes, patience and a final handful of basil

3 ADD THE FRESH TOMATOES

Cut the tomatoes into small pieces and add them straight to the pan.

Why? Fresh tomatoes bring brighter aromas and a natural acidity that balances the sweetness of aglione. That is what makes the sauce feel fresh, clean and elegant.

4 COOK SLOWLY

Let the sauce simmer very gently for 30–40 minutes, stirring from time to time.

Why? Slow cooking lets the tomatoes lose their water gradually while all the flavours come together without being forced.

5 FINISH THE SAUCE

Season with salt and freshly ground black pepper. Turn off the heat, then add plenty of torn basil and one last drizzle of extra virgin olive oil.

Why? Basil and good olive oil belong at the end, when their perfume can stay bright and unmistakable.

AT THE TABLE

Serve the sauce traditionally with handmade pici. Finish the pasta directly in the pan with a spoonful of its cooking water, so every strand gathers the creamy sauce.

OSTE PAOLO'S TIP

“Never hurry aglione with a high flame. Let it cook slowly, almost until it becomes a cream. Only then will the fresh tomatoes, basil and extra virgin olive oil tell the true story of Valdichiana.”