

Alla's beef carpaccio with crisp twice-cooked potatoes and sauce Gribiche

8 – 10 serves

The original version of Carpaccio, named after the Renaissance Italian painter, made its debut at Harry's Bar in Venice. As a very young woman I perched there, transported by the unwavering attention of the wonderfully smooth waiters, while spending my precious dollars on outrageously expensive, but most elegantly presented carpaccio, chicken sandwiches and of course Bellinis. In our version, fried crisp potatoes, moist beef, crunchy salad and a creamy sauce garnish, make for a more-ish combination. Being basically a dish of thinly sliced raw beef requires the meat to be completely sinew-free and tender. Fillet is by far the easiest cut to use as it fulfils both prerequisites. The flavour, however, may not be as good as other cuts (but those might require more trimming and can be considerably less tender).

750 g piece eye fillet, well-trimmed

100 ml extra virgin olive oil

8 medium-sized firm radishes, sliced and stored in iced water

70 g rocket leaves

2 tablespoons Basic Vinaigrette (see below)

Crisp Twice-cooked Potatoes (see below)

150-180 ml Soft Egg Gribiche (see below)

Fresh parmesan for serving (optional)

Carpaccio

Chill the eye fillet in the freezer until firm and very cold but not frozen. Cut the fillet into ½ cm slices and divide these among six or eight 30 cm squares of greaseproof or silicon paper that have been brushed with olive oil. The sliced of beef should be pushed together but not overlapping and should roughly form a circle. Place a second square of paper on top of each portion of meat and using a flat-surfaced mallet gently pound the meat to flatten it to about a quarter of its thickness. Do not tear the meat. Smooth over lightly with a rolling pin and refrigerate the parchment packets of meat for at least 2 hours.

Remove the beef from the refrigerator, peel off the top layer of the paper and turn the carpaccio out onto individual plates. Drain and dry the radish slices, combine them (or the fried artichoke slivers if using) with the rocket and the vinaigrette and toss well. Brush the carpaccio on the plates with some extra-virgin olive oil. Sprinkle radish or artichoke slices and rocket leaves over the beef. Scatter the warm crusty potatoes over the surface. Place intermittent dollops of soft egg Gribiche all over the plate. Shave over fine slivers of parmesan, if using.



Basic Vinaigrette (makes more than you will need for this recipe)

120 ml extra-virgin olive oil

120 ml grapeseed or other neutral-flavoured oil

60 ml red wine vinegar

Salt and freshly ground pepper

If desired you can combine all the ingredients and emulsify with a hand-held blender for immediate use or combine them with a whisk and store in a bottle in the refrigerator. Shake well before using.

Crisp Twice-Cooked Potatoes

These potatoes are delicious cooked at the last minute and scattered through a warm salad. They are a good way to use left-over boiled potato.

1 kg non-waxy potatoes

Oil for cooking

Salt and freshly ground pepper

Simmer the potatoes gently in their skins until tender. Allow them to cool then peel and cut into 2-2 ½ cm dice. Heat the oil in a heavy-based frying pan, preferably large enough to accommodate all the potato dice snugly into a single layer. Have the oil to a depth of 2 cm and when it is hot, add the potato dice and allow it to cook, sizzle and colour thoroughly. Resist the impulse to fiddle before attempting to turn and colour the other side. When you do, the side already coloured should be crusty and crunchy. Repeat the cooking process on the second side then remove the potatoes from the pan with a slotted lifter.

Depending on the potato variety used, there may be delicious small crunch well-coloured bits of broken off potato as well as the dice. Drain the lot on several layers of kitchen paper and season well.

Soft Egg Gribiche

Makes 500 ml.

This is not the classic vinaigrette with hard egg chopped into it but rather a creamy sauce.

1 soft boiled egg

Salt

1 tbsp tarragon vinegar or sherry vinegar

1 tbsp Dijon mustard

1 large shallot finely diced

1 tsp finely chopped tarragon

1 tsp finely chopped dill

1 tsp finely chopped flat parsley

1 tbsp capers

Up to 400 mls mild olive oil

Peel egg and put into a bowl together with salt, mustard and shallot. Break it up with a whisk and stir the ingredients together. Add vinegar and combine. Stabilize your bowl on a damp tea towel on your work bench. Begin adding oil in a drizzle, continually whisking. When you have added ¾ of the oil. Stop and taste the sauce which should be thick and shiny. Adjust with salt. If the balance of acid is right to your taste do not add any more oil without adding additional vinegar. Stir through the herbs and capers.