

# Pollo a bucafino

*A chance encounter leads to discovering a new dish from a traditional Sicilian speciality*

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I sat with my father, Bruce, over a plate of his latest creation, pollo a beccafico, as he recounted the story of his discovery of this dish. He's always had a knack for adapting recipes based on meals he's enjoyed while eating out.

The dish's inception arose from a recent tour of Sicily. My dad shares many voyages with my mom, and, as epicures, food is a major motivation. On this trip, their good friend Celia accompanied them. Despite her Sicilian heritage, she had never been to Europe. While Mom and Dad usually travel alone, Celia's outgoing nature added a new dynamic to this trip.

In Sicily, this band of travelers stayed in agriturismos, farmhouse apartments, and took full advantage of the kitchen facilities, local ingredients, and fresh fennel growing wild all around the island.

In the off season, Capo d'Orlando, on Sicily's northern coast, can be a mundane beach resort. Deciding to tour the town instead, they came across a small shop called "Amy's New York Pastry." A New York pastry shop in Sicily? Normally this is the kind of place my dad would skip. "I think I can spot a tourist trap, not worth going into. But our friend was curious as usual and entered with us dutifully following."

As it turned out, there really was an Amy from New York, now living in Sicily. They chatted a while and sampled some pastries. Having not yet selected a place to eat that evening, Amy happily made a suggestion with instructions to mention her name.

At first glance, this was a run-of-the-mill establishment on the waterfront. But mentioning Amy's name



*Fresh sardines at an Sicilian fish market*

brought them a flurry of attention. The owner helped select a full Italian meal: antipasto, primo, secondo, capped off with a complimentary limoncello, liquor made from the abundant Sicilian lemons.

"The highlight of the meal, at least for me, was sarde a beccafico," fresh sardines stuffed with sultanas, pine nuts and fennel. "When I returned to the states, I wanted to recreate this dish from my memory. Finding whole sardines difficult to locate, I substituted chicken breasts." And thus, pollo a beccafico was born.

One of the best culinary experiences on this Sicilian vacation may have been missed, if not for Celia and Amy from New York.



## Pollo a bucafino

4 chicken breasts.  
1/3 cup sultanas  
1/3 cup pine nuts  
1/3 cup bread crumbs  
2 tbl spoons fresh fennel  
or tsp ground fennel  
1 egg  
Parmagiano cheese  
1/4 cup chicken stock  
tbl butter  
salt and pepper

Place the sultanas, pine nuts, bread crumbs and fennel in a mixing bowl. Mix, then blend in the egg.

Butterfly the chicken breasts and pound them flat. Put equal amounts of the stuffing mixture in the center of each chicken breast. Close them and secure with toothpicks. Brush with olive oil. Salt and pepper to taste.

Broil in a preheated oven 7 - 9 minutes per side depending on size.

Near the end of the cooking, sprinkle each piece with freshly grated parmigiano and set



under broiler until the cheese begins to brown.

Place the chicken breasts on a serving platter. Put a quarter cup of chicken stock and tbl

spoon of butter in the pan. Place over moderate heat, stirring to dissolve brown particles. Pour over the chicken and serve.