

## Grandma Jo's "Sauce"

### *My mother and grandmother's perfect recipe for homemade Italian Meat Sauce*

*From Josephine's Petite Cucina*

I wrote the story about the homemade meatballs back in 2016.

Three years later, I finally got back to the computer to write this chapter on Grandma Jo's "Sauce".

It is September 8, 2019 - "Grandparents' Day" - a most appropriate day, don't you think?



### The "Sauce" Story

It was sometime during the 1960's when I learned the greatest gift for any Italian cook: How to make the "sauce".

A traditional Italian "meat sauce" is not the same as a traditional Bolognese.

The meat sauce is particular to each region in Italy and varies based on how your Grandmother learned to make it, with recipes passed down through generations of daughters and sons.

One day, I was sitting in my Grandma Cifonelli's kitchen drawing pictures, as a normal child under 10 would do. Grandma C. was preparing her meat sauce. Though she was born in America, her family was from Campobasso. She learned the art of the sauce from her mom, Rose Piedigrossi.

Grandma C. used a lot of olive oil to start, adding in a 6-7 oz. piece of London Broil, which was placed in the pot for the flavor it offers. The olive oil came in giant "Gemma Oil" cans, available at a little neighborhood market, right on the same street my grandparents lived on. Grandma would add the tomato sauce once the London Broil had been lightly seared on both sides. Sometimes it came from a can, but often, it was from tomatoes fresh from their garden, which backed up to the old train tracks in Cortland, New York. I still remember them grinding the tomatoes to separate them from the skins.

My mother's recipe started much the same way, with a little less olive oil. She would brown a mix of hot and Italian sausage separately and drain the oil prior to adding the sausage to the sauce. The meatballs were, of course, made prior to all of this so they could be placed in the sauce as well - adding that perfect meat flavor.

One time, Mom asked me if I liked her sauce better than Grandma's.

This, of course, was a loyalty test.

I knew if I gave the wrong answer, I would be in trouble. So, I answered her question with a question:

"Mom, what do you call your sauce? Is it the same name Grandma calls hers?"

"Sauce", she answered. "And if you use Hunts from the can, don't add any salt."

What I learned from there was how to perfect the sauce. Adding your own perfect, hand-made meatballs coupled with just the right type of Italian sausage makes the perfect combination. Salt isn't necessary as the flavor comes from the meat itself.

Since that day, the only changes I've made to Mom's recipe was adding the Italian trio of spices – parsley, oregano and basil -- with one or two extra cloves of fresh garlic at the end. I also add about a quarter to a half coup of yellow onion when searing the London Broil. But any way you do it, it's going to come out well (especially if you don't add any salt).

## The Ingredients

Homemade Meatballs – use the recipe offered earlier in this book.

6-7 oz. London Broil (or a piece of beef with flavor)

3 or 4 boxes of POMI Sauce (my favorite) or substitute your favorite sauce. If you do your own tomato canning, that's even better!

2 cloves of garlic, chopped

4-8 Italian sausage (hot & mild, or to your liking)

One-quarter yellow onion, chopped

Basil (fresh if you have it), Oregano, Parsley

Start by sautéing the piece of beef in a bit of olive oil – I like to use London Broil – just about 6-7 ounces for flavor. Cut off all the exterior 'fat' off it before putting in the pan. Brown it on both sides – don't over-cook!

Add tomatoes – crushed Pomi (if you can find it) or Hunt's tomato sauce. Use a couple of large cans of Hunts or a three to four cartons of the crushed Pomi.

Add in cooked Italian sausage. Let that simmer for a little while. Mom always used Gianelli's Sausage – the mild and the hot – but choose your favorite and it will be good.

As that's simmering, add in the outstanding homemade meatballs. Trust me, if you do this correctly, they are the best meatballs you've ever tasted!

Cook on low or simmer all three meats in the sauce together for about three-quarters to 1 hour until done. About 30 minutes before serving, add fresh green pepper (sliced or diced, to your preference).

You can also add a couple of leaves of fresh basil at this time as well. If you use dried basil, that's OK too. Don't overdue the spices – the flavor is the meat.



*Buon Appetito!*