

Easy-to-prepare meals and accompanying drinks

# Caponata And Sea Bass

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☛ **CAPONATA IS A SICILIAN STEW**, which makes a delicious alternative to standard vegetable sides. It's often made a day in advance so the flavours have time to develop, and it's served at room temperature. So all you have to do on the day is pan-fry some fillets of fish to place artfully on top of the caponata.

This recipe can easily be doubled up (though the aubergine may need cooking in batches)—heap the leftovers on crusty bread and crumble some feta on top for a delicious lunch the following day.

## Serves 4

- 40ml red-wine vinegar
- 40g caster sugar
- 1tbsps sultanas
- 4tbsps olive oil
- 2 aubergines, cut into chunks
- 1 onion, thinly sliced
- 2 sticks of celery, sliced
- 2 cloves garlic, crushed
- 4 plum tomatoes, roughly chopped
- 2tbsps green pitted olives
- 1tbsp capers
- 1tsp dried oregano

- 50ml water
- Salt
- Pepper
- Olive oil
- Baking parchment
- 4 boneless sea-bass fillets

1. Mix the red-wine vinegar and sugar in a small saucepan and heat until the sugar has dissolved. Add the sultanas.
2. Heat the olive oil in a pan and fry the aubergine for 6–8 minutes, until golden. Remove the chunks from



the pan and leave them to soak on kitchen paper.

3. Cook the celery and onion in the pan on a gentle heat for 6–8 minutes until they've softened, but not coloured. Add the garlic and cook for a minute.
4. Return the aubergine to the pan. Add the vinegar mix, tomatoes, olives, capers, oregano and water.
5. Bring to the boil. Cover and simmer for 12–15 minutes. Remove from the heat and allow to cool.
6. Drizzle a little olive oil over the sea-bass fillets, and season with salt and pepper.
7. Put a splash of olive oil in a frying pan and place a sheet of parchment on it. Put a dash more oil on the paper and lay the fillets on skin-side down. Fry for 5 minutes, or until the side of the fillets have turned opaque white. Flip and cook for another 2 minutes.
8. Divide the caponata between four plates and lay a sea-bass fillet on top.

## TRY THIS...

A good alternative to the sea bass is sea bream. You could even try grilled lamb chops too—meat goes well with caponata and is perfect as a delicious side dish for a BBQ.

# Wine From Ancient Vines

**WINE EXPERT BRUNO PASTENA SAID**, “Sicilian wines encompass the essence and spirit of 20 civilisations.” It’s not only the mixture of Baroque churches and Greek temples that indicate a varied history on the island, but the ever-changing scenery too. The southern tip is closer to the equator than Tunis, and is particularly susceptible to hot, dry Sirocco winds from Africa. Mount Etna, located on the east of the island, is surrounded by mineral-rich soil, which is different again to the 1,000 miles of salty-aired coastline.

It’s hard to generalise what makes a “typical Sicilian wine”, but the best form of education is experimentation, so I’ve picked out three bottles of Sicilian wine that would pair well



with the Sicilian caponata. Firstly, the easy-drinking Castellore and the crisp Fiano, which both drink well with fish too. But it’s a common misconception that fish should only be eaten with white wine (The Guild of Fishmongers always serve red wine with fish), so give the Nero d’Avola a go, which has sweet spice notes with a Med herb and tapenade finish.

■ **Castellore Pinot Grigio**, Aldi, £3.99/bottle

■ **Extra Special Fiano 2012**,

Asda, £7.50/bottle

■ **Valdibella Jaki Nero d’Avola 2013**, Berry Bros & Rudd, £9.95/bottle

■ **Lorina Sicilian Lemonade (dry option)**, 750ml, Ocado, £2.89/bottle



## TOP 3 ONLINE COFFEE COMPANIES

- **Kopi:** discover new coffees from round the world with their monthly subscriptions packs, starting from £7.95/month ([kopi.co.uk](http://kopi.co.uk)).
- **Has Bean:** wide range of brewing equipment and monthly subscriptions available ([hasbean.co.uk](http://hasbean.co.uk)).
- **Pact Coffee:** wholebean or ground coffee delivered to your door, guaranteed to be roasted in the last seven days ([pactcoffee.com](http://pactcoffee.com)).

**Pudding  
of the  
Month**



## Sicilian Affogato

This *affogato*—Italian for “drowned”—invites diners to drench scoops of traditional Sicilian gelato known as *crema rinforzata* in hot espresso.

- 4tbsps corn flour
- 750ml full-fat milk (fridge cold)
- 250ml cream
- 180g sugar
- 1 vanilla pod
- 4 shots of hot espresso
- Optional: biscotti, amaretti biscuit

1. Mix the flour into 250ml of milk and whisk until smooth. Heat the remaining milk with the cream. Stir in sugar until dissolved and add the vanilla pod.
2. Combine the two mixtures, remove the pod and freeze, stirring from time to time.
3. “Drown” two scoops with one espresso shot per person. Serve with a biscotti or amaretti biscuit. ■

### BOOK



***Honey & Co: The Baking Book*** by Itamar Srulovich & Sarit Packer, Amazon, £17. Delicious recipes.

### BARGAIN



**Le Xpress six-cup espresso maker**, *House of Fraser*, £10. Italian-style stove-top espresso maker for great coffee.

### BLOW-OUT



**Red lotus tablecloth**, *Rani Organic Cotton*, £42/150x270cm. Other sizes available from [raniorganiccotton.co.uk](http://raniorganiccotton.co.uk)