

Menu

APERITIVI | ሞርሚሪ

k'olo and popcorn clusters | የቆሎ እና ፈንድሻ ካራሚል | grappoli di k'olo e popcorn caramellati

dabo k'olo | ዳቦ ቆሎ | dabo k'olo

PRIMO | የመጀመሪያ ኮርስ

Abyssinian-spiced arrabbiata with teff bread | የኢትዮጵያዊ አራቢያታ ፍርፍር | pane di teff con sugo all'arrabbiata abissino

DOLCE | ማጣጣሚያ

rue-infused espresso granita | ቡና ግራኒታ ከ ጤናዳም | granita all'espresso con infuso di ruta



Foreword

For my final project, I will present a marriage of Abyssinian and Italian cuisines, showcasing some of the culinary techniques and dishes I have learned throughout my internship. This fusion will consider the available materials, the shared ingredients, and the similar gastronomic practices between the two nations. I will also draw from previous culinary fusions, paying particular attention to the post-war dynamic between the two countries. My aim is to respectfully highlight and honor the rich culinary heritages that have shaped the regional ingredients, techniques, and dishes that define each nation's cuisine.

Abyssinia vs. Ethiopia

The use of the name "Ethiopia" can be traced back as far as the 4th century. Though Ethiopia now refers to the modern state with clear political borders, the name has historically been used to refer to a vast region across and below the Sahara. Additionally, while the modern state of Ethiopia geographically encloses land that belonged to several historical dynasties, including Axum, Zagwe, and the Abyssinian Empire, it no longer encompasses regions that share cultural and culinary aspects with several regions in modern Ethiopia.

The name Abyssinia derives from the Arabic word "Abesha," which was used by outsiders to refer to people originating from both Ethiopia and Eritrea. To avoid limiting the cuisine I am presenting to the modern-day borders of Ethiopia, I will instead use Abyssinia.

Relationship between Italy and Abyssinia

Contacts between Italy and Abyssinia began far before Italy's first invasion into Abyssinia in 1895. However, Italy's invasion marked a direct introduction of Italian cuisine that remained after its departure. In Eritrea, a former colony of Italy, and Ethiopia, albeit to a lesser extent, one can find true Italian staples such as pasta, gelato, espresso, and pizza.

Interestingly, there is little hybridization of the two cuisines, perhaps owing to the starkly different staple ingredients, but surely also to the quasi-colonial dynamic between the two countries. Colonialism is foremost an extractive practice that creates a dynamic in which the colonizer casts aside the interests and livelihoods of the colonized in pursuit of the colony's resources. Italy attempted to establish East Africa as the breadbasket of Italy, clearing away indigenous staple crops to make way for its own staple varieties. This attempt was largely unsuccessful, as it failed to account for the different climate, soil conditions, and agricultural practices.

Analogous to this unsuccessful agricultural imposition was a culinary imposition. Italians living in East Africa did not adopt much local fare—instead, they clung to their staples, relegating any venture into indigenous cuisine to the dessert course. Italian cuisine places a large emphasis on the regionality, or *terroir*, of the ingredients that compose each dish. Distilling Abyssinian cuisine to a "national cuisine" poses a challenge for exactly this reason. Where Italian menus did incorporate local ingredients, like chicken, they often neglected to provide the origin (in contrast to, for example, *Parmigiano-Reggiano* from Emilia-Romagna), or simply stated "*di colonie*." When they did provide the origin ("*pollo di colonie*"), they used the ingredient as a simple 1:1 substitute, rather than taking example from the local preparation.

This approach is problematic because it disregards the significance of technique and form in cooking, reducing cuisine to mere ingredients rather than a complex interplay of ingredients, methods, and cultural context. In Italian cuisine, the preparation and technique are just as crucial as the ingredients themselves. For instance, risotto from the north of Italy is defined not just by the type of rice used, but by the specific method of cooking that rice to achieve the desired texture. Similarly, Abyssinian cuisine is characterized by its own unique techniques, such as the long fermentation process of teff to make injera. Simply substituting Italian ingredients with local ones without respecting these methods strips the food of its cultural and culinary integrity.

Below, I present a menu blending the culinary traditions of both Abyssinia and Italy through the combination of staple dishes and ingredients. I highlight similarities between the two cuisines, each of independent origin in the two nations, and attempt to strike a balance between borrowing technique and ingredients with the resources available.

On Courses

Italian cuisine is structured around a multi-course meal, which typically includes antipasto (starter), primo (first course, usually pasta or risotto), secondo (main course, usually meat or fish), contorno (side dish), and dolce (dessert). This structured progression of courses is designed to provide a balanced and varied dining experience, showcasing a wide range of flavors and textures.

In contrast, Abyssinian cuisine does not follow this multi-course structure. Meals are often served family-style, with various dishes presented together on a large communal platter. This approach emphasizes sharing and communal dining. There is also no dessert course.

Today, I present the menu in a multi-course format, but serve from a single platter.



Abyssinia and Italia, a Culinary Marriage

Join us for an evening
reception celebrating the rich and
diverse flavors of Abyssinian
and Italian cuisines, featuring
a specially curated menu that
blends the traditions of these
two vibrant culinary worlds.

I Tatti
Granaio

4pm
25/7

presented by Yabby Abejie



ABYSSINIE





I TATTI



