

## PATELLA (PAY-tuh-luh) or ITALIAN HAM PIE

This is an old Italian family recipe handed down by my grandma, Lena Lapetina. Her parents came over from Italy and she was born and raised in Kansas City, Missouri, and yes, she is from Kansas City's Lapetina Funeral Home family. For many years, she was a cook at the famous Italian Gardens restaurant at 1110 Baltimore Ave. Sadly, as the downtown area struggled, the DiCapo family was forced to close the restaurant in December 2003 after 78 years in business. Unfortunately, this historic landmark no longer exists and a parking garage took its place.

Besides some distant cousins and with my mom's recent passing, only I am left and, to my knowledge, I'm the only one who has this recipe and keeps the tradition going. I have held on to it for many years, but now feel the need to pass it on to those whom I hope will enjoy it. I would greatly appreciate it if you would keep it exactly as it is, including these first two paragraphs, to honor and in remembrance of my grandma and the Lapetina family name. Thank you. If you would like to see pictures my grandma and read about the Italian Gardens, Carl DiCapo wrote a book about the restaurant entitled: *Italian Gardens: A History of Kansas City Through Its Favorite Restaurant* - [available on Amazon.com here](#)<sup>1</sup>.

You will probably find many different variations of this recipe on this web, but this one makes a very thick, firm, heavy and dense pie, which is preferred, at least buy me. 😊

This is traditional fare for Italians on Easter morning along with Miscoopies or traditional Biscotti cookies - not like the ones you see in the jars at chain coffee shops. The raisins give it a unique taste that everyone likes. Even though it is mainly served around Easter, I like it all the time. It freezes well and keeps in fridge for a couple of weeks. Eat hot or cold - I prefer cold, which is the traditional way to eat it. Note: The biscotti recipe is also on this website.

### YOU WILL NEED:

- pastry blender
- one or two 13" x 9" x 2" or 14.75" x 10.5" x 2.25" pans - Pyrex/glass works best.

Note: **tsp** = teaspoon, **Tbsp** = Tablespoon

### FILLING INGREDIENTS: (Yes, the amounts are correct.)

- 1 lb thinly sliced (not shaved) deli ham, **baked** variety (**not** smoked, honey, etc.)
- 1/2 lb sliced hard (not Genoa) salami\*
- 2 slices uncooked bacon

(Above meats should be chopped up into pieces approximately the size of a pencil eraser head, maybe a little larger.)

---

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.amazon.com/ITALIAN-GARDENS-History-Favorite-Restaurant/dp/0692010092>

- 5 large, hard-boiled eggs, chopped up medium
- 1 1/2 cup regular (not golden) raisins, dredged in flour, shake out excess
- 1 cup finely chopped curly parsley (not flat/Italian parsley)
- 3 Tbsp grated Italian cheese\*\*
- 8 eggs, scrambled (reserve 2 yolks for crust top)
- 1/2 Tbsp salt
- 1/2 Tbsp pepper

\*I get the pre-sliced hard salami at Sam's - usually comes in a 2 lb. package which is a little more than you need, so you will have some left over for sandwiches.

\*\*Also look for parmesan Reggiano cheese (wedge) at Sam's or just use plain grated parmesan or Romano.

### **DOUGH:**

- 3 cups all-purpose white flour, bleached or unbleached
- 1/2 cup regular Crisco (**NOT** butter-flavored or butter or margarine)
- 1 tsp baking powder (Yes, Rumford aluminum-free works fine)
- 1 1/4 cup whole milk
- 1 tsp salt

### **DIRECTIONS:**

Preheat oven to 375 degrees.

#### **For dough:**

1. Combine dry ingredients.
2. Cut in shortening with a pastry blender, mix well.
3. Add milk.
4. Knead well, place in large bowl, press plastic wrap over dough ball and set aside.

#### **For filling:**

5. Combine meat, raw eggs, hard-boiled eggs, raisins, parsley, cheese, and seasonings in a large bowl and mix well by hand (large spoon) - no electric mixers.
6. On a floured surface, roll out for bottom and top crusts - use about 60% dough for bottom and 40% for the top.
7. Line bottom and sides of a 13"x9"x2" greased baking pan with dough as for pie. The filling will only come up a little more than half the depth of the pan, so there is no need to have dough hanging over the edges. Pinch off any excess and press into thinner areas in pan.

8. Spread filling evenly on bottom crust dough and seal with top crust dough – fold bottom crust dough over top crust dough. Pierce top crust dough a few times with a fork or knife for venting purposes.
9. Bake for 40 - 45 minutes or until golden brown.
10. Remove from oven and brush top crust with beaten egg yolks and return to oven for a few minutes (about 5) until set - top should turn a rich, deep yellow color.
11. Remove from oven and allow to cool until you can touch the pan.
12. I usually place the pan, **UNCOVERED**, in the refrigerator overnight so it will set up properly.
13. After it has cooled, you can cut it in the pan, or, remove the whole patella to a cutting board for cutting into smaller sections to wrap like this:

Place a cookie sheet over top and hold with one hand, while picking up the bottom of the pan with your other hand and invert the pan and allow the patella to fall out. Carefully, with fingers spread out to distribute the weight, place a hand on the top and one on the bottom and turn the patella back over and cut as desired.

Serves 8-10

### **MARK'S TIPS:**

Because it is so much work and goes so quickly, I usually make 2 pans of it at a time.

For storing, I cut (sideways, not lengthwise – see pictures below) the pie into 4 or 5 equally-sized pieces. If freezing, wrap well in plastic wrap, then aluminum foil and then place in a ZipLock-style freezer plastic bag. Don't forget to write the date on the bag.

Chopping up the salami, bacon and prosciutto or ham can sometimes be difficult when it comes to separating the little pieces, which tend to stick together. I suggest that before chopping up the meat, you put on surgical-type latex rubber (no talcum powder) or nitrile (preferred) gloves - once you have the meat cut up, you can put your hands in the bowl and mix up and break up the layers of meat by picking up handfuls and rubbing your fingers together. Also, wearing the gloves prevents the salami smell from getting all over you. ;-)) You can get the gloves at most drugstores, Walmart, Sam's, etc., but be careful - most latex gloves have talcum powder on the outside, but some brands don't. If you get the wrong ones, just put them on and rinse your hands very well under running water. Why is this a concern? Some people are allergic to talcum powder.

On the Crisco - I keep mine in the refrigerator because I had a can go rancid on me even though the expiration date wasn't for another year. No telling what could've caused it, but the stuff has just gotten too expensive lately to risk another can going bad. If you open a can and there is any kind of "strange" odor to it, it is probably bad - Crisco shouldn't have much of any kind of scent at all.

This recipe is rather labor intensive, so I suggest you do all the prep work for the filling (chopping, dicing, hard-boiling, etc.) the night before (placing all ingredients in a large, covered bowl), then make the dough, assemble and bake the patella the next day. If you do it this way, you can combine and mix well all of the filling ingredients the night before **except** the raw eggs - don't add them until the day of baking and be sure to mix everything well again before spooning the filling into the crust.

Mark McGinness  
Rev. 20180603





