



I am head-over-heels in love with anchovies. I love to eat them in front of people who think they hate them. I make obnoxious Mmmmm sounds to let the doubters know what they are missing. Anchovies get a bad rap. Here are 6 ways to celebrate the anchovy.

Embrace the Anchovy

6 Uses for Anchovies

Behold, the anchovy, one of the most maligned – and in my opinion, most delicious – treats from the sea.

Here's where many of you insert a groan and exclaim, "I hate anchovies!" You don't. Chances are, you eat them, you enjoy them, and you just don't know any different.

I love anchovies. No, I LOVE ANCHOVIES! I decided to showcase anchovies in this segment, and perhaps you will be encouraged to give them a try. Here we go.

Olives stuffed with anchovies. This is where it all began for me, at the bar in the Capitol Hotel in London, in 1989. With me was my dear friend, Jim Whalen, and we were having a glass of wine before heading out to dinner. The British, being a very civilized people, serve excellent bar snacks, and before us was a trio of tasty tidbits, including large green olives stuffed with... something. I've enjoyed olives my entire life, so I ate one, and it was a completely unique flavor. I liked it! I had no idea what it was, but I liked it, so I ate another, and another, and finally I asked Jim what it was about the olives that was so darn good! He laughed and revealed the surprise ingredient. I was amazed! I had never eaten an anchovy. I had been taught they were nasty, yet these olives were delicious. My life changed that day.

Hooray for olives stuffed with anchovies! From that moment, I was never afraid to order a dish that included anchovies; in fact, I sought them out.

You can make your own snack: Just mince a few filets, and use a small fork or spoon to stuff the minced anchovies into the olives. No pimentos (remove them if you can't find plain green olives). Only anchovies.

As a side note, I'll mention an acquaintance who is a trauma surgeon in Philadelphia. He loves these treats every bit as much as I do, but he can't eat them when he's on duty because they make his fingers swell. So be advised, if you're a surgeon, or a violinist, or someone who needs to keep your fingers limber, the salt can get to you!

Anchovy butter. Many great steakhouses finish their most exquisite grilled meats with a dollop of

anchovy butter. Let a stick of butter come to room temperature. Mix in several minced anchovy filets. You can add herbs too, if you want (thyme, parsley). Refrigerate so that the butter hardens again, and then drop a chunk on top of your hot grilled steak. If you want to get fancy, you can roll the softened butter into a log inside of plastic wrap, and then cut little medallions when the butter has re-hardened and you are ready to serve. Fancy or not, this small detail packs big flavor with your delicious steak.

Caesar salad dressing. Yep, if you've eaten a tasty Caesar salad, you've probably eaten anchovies in the dressing. Accept it – and move on. (You've also probably eaten raw egg, but that's another story). I always order anchovies on top of my Caesar salad. I imagine it pleases the chefs because I always get a lot.

Marinara sauce. Anchovies are the first, and the secret ingredient in my homemade marinara. After warming some extra virgin olive oil in the pot, I add 3 or 4 anchovy filets and a couple shakes of crushed red pepper, and I wait for the anchovies to literally melt into the oil. Crushing them with a wooden spoon speeds along the process. They make a huge mess – splatter like crazy – but it's worth it. My marinara recipe will be posted on the site soon.

Colatura di Alici. This is a magic liquid. A few drops will change the entire flavor profile of pasta. Basically, Colatura is the juice of salted anchovies that have been pressed for months in wooden barrels. A hole is drilled in the bottom of the barrel, and the magic liquid drips out. Italian fishermen have been making this juice for centuries. Colatura is added to pasta after the cooking process. Toss plain pasta with a little olive oil, crushed red pepper, and Colatura for a simple yet sensational meal. Likewise, you can mix olive oil, crushed red pepper and Colatura for a dipping sauce for bread. Use a light touch with the Colatura di Alici because it is powerful.

Pizza. Many people associate anchovies with pizza. The association, however, is rarely positive. The problem is that the anchovies are being used incorrectly. An anchovy should never be baked on the top of a pizza – that just dries out the filet and makes it taste awful! Anchovies should be incorporated into the marinara sauce, or they should be added to the top of an already-baked pizza. White pizzas, which often showcase Mediterranean flavors, are perfect for bits of anchovy. As with any ingredient, the key is balance. Use only enough anchovy to enhance the other flavors, not overpower them. In this manner, anchovy just might become your favorite new pizza topping. But remember: Don't bake them!

Embrace the anchovy. Let flavor triumph over fear.

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