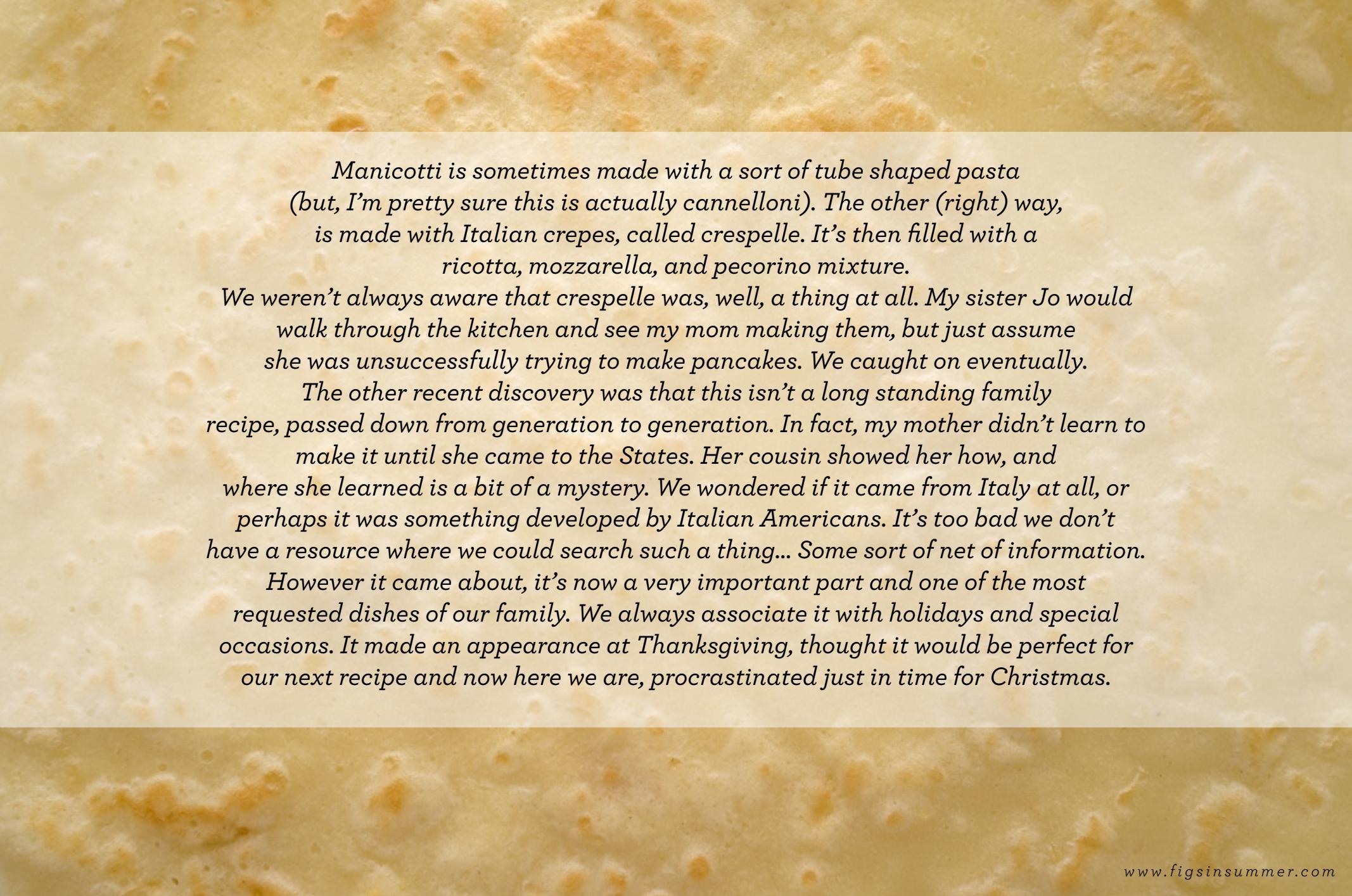




Manicotti

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Manicotti is sometimes made with a sort of tube shaped pasta (but, I'm pretty sure this is actually cannelloni). The other (right) way, is made with Italian crepes, called crespelle. It's then filled with a ricotta, mozzarella, and pecorino mixture.

We weren't always aware that crespelle was, well, a thing at all. My sister Jo would walk through the kitchen and see my mom making them, but just assume she was unsuccessfully trying to make pancakes. We caught on eventually.

The other recent discovery was that this isn't a long standing family recipe, passed down from generation to generation. In fact, my mother didn't learn to make it until she came to the States. Her cousin showed her how, and where she learned is a bit of a mystery. We wondered if it came from Italy at all, or perhaps it was something developed by Italian Americans. It's too bad we don't have a resource where we could search such a thing... Some sort of net of information.

However it came about, it's now a very important part and one of the most requested dishes of our family. We always associate it with holidays and special occasions. It made an appearance at Thanksgiving, thought it would be perfect for our next recipe and now here we are, procrastinated just in time for Christmas.

Ingredients

Serves 9 (2 crepes per person)

Crespelle

2 cups whole milk
2 cups all purpose flour
2 eggs
1 tsp olive oil
1 tsp salt

Filling

32oz ricotta cheese
8oz shredded mozzarella
3/4 cup pecorino romano
(have extra on hand to
sprinkle on at the end)
2 eggs
1 tbsp chopped parsley
pinch of nutmeg
pinch of black pepper

Sauce

28 oz can crushed tomatoes
1 finely chopped onion
1 clove garlic, minced
1 1/2 tbsp olive oil
1/2 tsp dried oregano
3 fresh basil leaves,
chopped
1/4 tsp black pepper
1 1/2 tsp salt





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Sauce

Saute onions in oil. Add tomatoes, oregano, salt and pepper. Simmer low heat, cover partially with lid for 30 minutes, stirring occasionally. Remove from heat and add fresh chopped basil.

Crespelle (*Italian crepes*)

Add all ingredients into a bowl and mix with an immersion blender, until batter is smooth and silky. My mom likes to use a whisk. I like to think it's because she's old fashioned. In reality, she's afraid she'll get batter all over herself. Whatever you decide, just make sure it's smooooth.

Heat an 8" crepe pan on low heat, coat with a bit of olive oil or butter (your choice). Ladle $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of batter to skillet swirl slowly to coat pan. When top is set, flip crepe and cook the other side. Should take about a minute. Set aside and repeat until you've made the entire batch. Should be about 18 crepes (unless you mess up a few like me, maybe making a little extra batter is the way to go).

Assembly

Preheat oven 375 F. Grease 11x17 baking pan (mine is about half that size, but how cute is that pan, am I right?) with olive oil, then coat lightly with sauce. Now we assemble. Take one crepe and apply 2-3 tablespoons of ricotta filling in a line down the center of the crepe. Fold both sides over center. Place in pan in a single layer. Once all crepes are filled and placed in tray, top lightly with sauce, sprinkle grated pecorino romano cheese on top. Bake covered with aluminum foil (vented with holes) for 25 - 30 mins. Uncover and continue to bake for 10 -15 min until top a lightly browned. Let it sit for 10 min before serving.





*Ingredients from this dish:
Ricotta from Alleva Dairy
Milk from Ronnybrook
Eggs from Garden of Eve*