Trecce with Sicilian Caponata & Basil



Serves: 6
Prep Time: 20 mins
Cook Time: 40 mins (plus cooling)

Ingredients

- 300-350 g Montefiore Trecce, well drained
- 600 g eggplant
- 1 celery stalk, finely sliced
- 1 medium brown onion, diced
- 150 g crushed tomatoes or passata
- 80 g pitted green olives, halved
- 25 g capers, rinsed and drained
- 30 g raisins
- 25 g pine nuts
- 30 ml red wine vinegar
- 2 tsp caster sugar
- 60 ml extra virgin olive oil, approximately
- 15 g fresh basil leaves
- Sea salt
- Freshly cracked black pepper

Method

STEP 1

Cut eggplant into 2.5-3 cm cubes. Heat 30 ml olive oil in a wide frying pan over medium-high heat. Cook eggplant in batches for 8-10 minutes, adding a little more oil only as needed, until deeply golden and tender but still intact. Transfer to a plate.

STEP 2

Reduce heat to medium. Add onion and celery with a pinch of salt and cook for 7-8 minutes until soft and translucent, not browned.

STEP 3

Add the crushed tomato/passata and cook for 4-5 minutes until reduced and no longer watery.

STEP 4

Add olives, capers, raisins and pine nuts. Stir the vinegar and sugar together, add to the pan, then return the eggplant.

STEP 5

Fold gently and simmer for about 5 minutes until glossy and cohesive. The eggplant should remain as pieces rather than collapsing into sauce. Taste: it should be distinctly sweet-sour, with enough acidity to cut through the fresh cheese.

STEP 6

Cool completely to room temperature. Ideally refrigerate overnight, then bring back to room temperature before the shoot.

STEP 7

Arrange the Trecce as the main hero of the platter. Spoon the caponata generously to one side and slightly around the base rather than underneath the cheese.

STEP 8

Spoon a small amount of the glossy caponata juices and just a few pieces of caponata over one section of the Trecce to show how it is served, while leaving most of the braid clean and white.

STEP 9

Finish with fresh basil, black pepper and a very light drizzle of olive oil.