



Not Your Spring Spiral

Every Easter I look forward to a breakfast of homemade Easter Bread — a sweet, buttery bread similar to a brioche or a challah — hard-boiled eggs and prosciutto. Just a few slices of this delicious Italian dry cured ham are the perfect accompaniment to the rich, sweet bread. My ideal ham would be the celebrated Prosciutto di Parma or San Daniele Prosciutto from Friuli.

Prosciutto has a special connection with Easter, as it is a key element of Pizza Rustica (Italian Easter Pie), the savory pie of eggs, cheese and Italian meats including salami, sausage and prosciutto. While I enjoy prosciutto at this time of year in my Easter breakfast and Easter Pie, I have some suggestions for incorporating prosciutto throughout the year.

Typically, I buy my ingredients for Easter at the Italian Market in Philly, and DiBruno Brothers is the place to go for Prosciutto di Parma. As Marlo Batall says of prosciutto in *The Babbo Cookbook*, “Buy it from a busy store, with high turnover; when it sits wrapped in plastic for a while it loses its exceptional color and some of the porky quality that makes it so good.” This is good advice. If you go for the best ham, you want to ensure that it has the color and taste intended by the artisans who painstakingly prepared it.

Most of you have probably enjoyed the well-known duo of prosciutto and melon, but below are some other preparation ideas, featuring truffle butter, ricotta and asparagus.

Prosciutto and Truffle Butter Breadstick

The inspiration for this appetizer came from the “Truffled Grissini” on the menu at Luke Palladino Seasonal Italian Cooking in Linwood, New Jersey. This BYO near the Jersey Shore serves its breadsticks in a special stand that resembles a candelabra. Until I find a similar serving piece, laying these treats on a platter will have to do.



Find thin breadsticks sturdy enough to withstand rubbing them with truffle butter. Breadsticks that are too delicate will crack under the pressure. Either white or black truffle butter will work well, as the butter will be covered by the prosciutto. Leave the butter at room temperature so that is spreadable, and begin by spreading it three quarters of the way down the breadstick. The un-buttered part will serve as the handle. Then wrap thinly sliced prosciutto around the breadstick, stopping where the butter stops.

Prosciutto with Ricotta Cheese and Spring Peas

This dish is perfect for a less rich appetizer and is extremely simple. Place a dollop of ricotta cheese on an appetizer plate and make a small well using the back of a spoon. Drop a spoonful of spring peas on top of the cheese along with a sprinkle of walnuts. Drizzle with extra virgin olive oil and season with pepper to taste. Place thin slices of prosciutto on the side for some color and saltiness.

Pasta with Prosciutto and Asparagus

This could be a pasta course or main course. Thinly slice five asparagus spears on an angle and cut five prosciutto slices into strips. Bring a large pot of water to a boil and add a pinch of salt when the water comes to a rolling boil. I use egg spaghetti that cooks in six minutes, so as soon as I drop the pasta in the water, I melt several tablespoons of butter and extra virgin olive oil in a large non-stick pan. Add the asparagus and prosciutto to the bubbling butter and oil and stir while sautéing. Depending on the pasta you choose, you may want to start sautéing the asparagus and prosciutto later to prevent overcooking it.

When the pasta is ready, transfer it to the pan, adding several tablespoons of the pasta water and more butter if necessary. Stir the asparagus and prosciutto into the spaghetti, and add freshly squeezed Meyer lemon juice. Serve with some fresh cracked pepper and grated Parmesan cheese.

Enjoy your spring ham! 🍷



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