



talking point.

To get tiramisu right, you have to get it wrong



Food writer Dianne Bortoletto has family history in Treviso, where the world's favourite Italian dessert originated, and where she once spent a weekend sampling every version in town. But what's her definitive recipe?

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

Should the original recipe be respected or is adding your spin what cooking's all about? Let us know on our social channels or at info@deliciousmagazine.co.uk

First of all, let's establish my tiramisu creds. My father, my grandfather and generations of previous Bortolettos were born in Treviso, the birthplace of the world-famous layered dessert. I've been making and perfecting tiramisu for decades. On my most recent visit to the Venetian town, my niece and I tasted 14 different examples over two days, including at Le Beccherie, the restaurant that claims to be the first to have put it on a menu, back in 1972.

Armed with those credentials, it was my intention in this article to smugly explain to you why you're doing tiramisu wrong. To inform you that 'traditional' tiramisu is made with only six specific ingredients: bitter cocoa, coffee, mascarpone, savoiardi (aka ladyfinger) biscuits, egg yolks (no whites) and granulated sugar.

I planned to quote no less an authority than Aristotle, explaining that with tiramisu, 'the sum of the whole is greater than its parts'. And that those parts all need to be high quality, which means never, ever, ever using instant coffee. It's disrespectful, I had planned to say. It's un-Italian and, quite frankly, it's disgusting.

I was going to reprimand you for using cream. Tiramisu has never contained and never should contain cream, I would patronisingly explain. No whipped cream, no thickened cream, no clotted or any other sort of cream. The only thing

allowed to give tiramisu its lusciousness, I was all ready to stipulate, is mascarpone.

It was my intention to make fun of those cooks who have the temerity to add fruit and other weird flavourings. Please go and make trifle instead, I'd advise, and leave tiramisu alone. Then I'd shock those complacently nodding along in agreement by ruling out the addition of alcohol, too. Were they not aware that the dish originated to feed pregnant women, nursing mothers and sick children?

I was going to say all that. But then I got my hands on the original recipe for tiramisu and made it... To sum up the general reaction, I'll choose my husband's succinct "Yuck!" It was dense, rich and a far cry from my own version, regularly hailed as "the best in the world" by the people sitting around my table.

And okay, I'll admit it: in my recipe I add beaten, fluffy egg whites, folding them through the mix of whipped, sweetened egg yolk and mascarpone, which makes it ever so light. And while I enjoyed the versions of tiramisu I tasted in Treviso, mine is better, frankly, because it's pillowy, luscious and (full disclosure) – I add a generous hit of sweet marsala wine.

After all, eating dessert is meant to be about pleasure, not piety. So I urge you: make tiramisu the way you like it, not how someone tells you to do it. Except when it comes to the instant coffee. I really mean it about the instant coffee... ④

