

BROCCOLI RABE SOFFRITI

Braised Broccoli

This dish is to Christmas Eve dinner in Amalfi what apple pie is to July Fourth in middle America: an absolute necessity. The Amalfitani choose a leafy, lighter colored broccoli from Campania for this dish; the closest substitute in this country is broccoli rabe; choose a bunch with as many leaves as possible.

— ingredients —

3 pounds fresh broccoli rabe, with leaves, if possible, or 3 pounds broccoli
1/4 cup extra-virgin olive oil
8 garlic cloves, halved
10 [marinated anchovy fillets](#), roughly chopped or 5 salted-packed anchovies, soaked, rinsed, and filleted (see note)
Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper
1/4 cup toasted bread crumbs

— preparation —

Trim the broccoli rabe into long stalks, removing the bottom 2 inches and leaving the leaves attached. Bring 6 quarts of water to a boil. Meanwhile, place a 12- to 14-inch sauté pan over medium-low heat and add the olive oil. Add the garlic and anchovies and cook 5 minutes, stirring often, until just golden brown and very fragrant. While the garlic and anchovies cook, plunge the broccoli rabe into the boiling water and cook for 1 minute. Drain the broccoli rabe well and add it to the pan with the garlic and anchovies. Cook over low heat for 10 to 12 minutes, until tender but still holding its shape. Remove from heat and season aggressively with pepper and timidly with salt. Serve hot or at room temperature sprinkled with the bread crumbs.

Anchovies

Whenever anchovies are called for in my recipes, the quantity is given as a number of fillets — preferably taken from fresh anchovies you have marinated yourself (see [Alici Marinati](#)), which yield two fillets each. If prepackaged anchovies must be used, however, be aware that they come in one acceptable — and one despicable — form. Salt-packed anchovies that come in a 1- or 2-kilo can are available in Italian delis and are sold whole. Order them by the quarter-pound, take them home, soak them in either water or milk, then remove the fillets. Least desirable are the tiny cans of salty prefilleted anchovies packed in oil. This is not to say all brands of canned fillets are not very good, but most aren't, so use one of the other types if you can.

Makes 8 servings.