



GATHER

Starter

SPAGHETTI WITH SHREDDED RADICCHIO AND BLACK OLIVES

In Bret Easton Ellis's *American Psycho*, Patrick Bateman ponders his dining companions' gruesome demises over free-range squid and radicchio. Could his affinity for the Italian chicory have been a sign of his sinister side? A study by *Appetite* found that people who preferred bitter foods had more aggressive and antisocial tendencies than others. But if loving our spaghetti laced with threads of bitter radicchio is wrong, we don't want to be right.

Serves: 4

6 Tbsp extra virgin olive oil, divided

2 cups large crumbs torn from day-old crustless bread

¼ cup coarsely chopped flat-leaf parsley

¾ lb whole wheat spaghetti

1 large shallot, finely chopped

1 large head radicchio (about ¾ lb), shredded

½ cup pitted black, oil-cured Moroccan olives, coarsely chopped

1 Tbsp finely grated lemon zest, plus wedges from 1 lemon
grated Parmesan for serving

Heat 3 Tbsp oil in a large skillet over medium heat until shimmering. Add crumbs and a pinch of salt and sauté, stirring frequently, until golden brown, 10-12 minutes. Stir in parsley and transfer crumbs to a plate. Wipe out skillet and reserve.

Bring a large pot of salted water to a boil and cook pasta until barely al dente, about 2 minutes less than package instructions. Reserve a cup of pasta water, then drain.

While pasta cooks, heat 2 Tbsp oil in skillet over medium-high heat and sauté shallot until soft, 2-3 minutes. Add radicchio and cook, stirring, until wilted and darkened, 3-4 minutes. Toss in olives. Add pasta to skillet and season with pepper. Add ¾ cup of pasta water, stirring together over medium heat until water has been mostly absorbed, about 1 minute. Stir in lemon zest and remaining Tbsp oil.

Serve pasta with a squeeze of lemon, parsley crumbs, and Parmesan.

BITTER TRUTH I remember my mother adoring pasta with *i mazzareddi amari*, a kind of wild brassica that grows all over our fields in the Sicilian countryside as soon as the first rains of spring come in. In my mind, that was food for adults. Because it was bitter, it was not something I would want to eat, but since my mother and my grandparents would, I gave it some sort of status: It *must* be good and real. This is to say that we are exposed to bitterness from the time we are children, and that means many things, since bitter is a shade of flavor which completes and highlights the other shades such as sweet or sour. Having a life without bitter flavors is like seeing a landscape without any blue. Bitterness in Sicilian cuisine plays an important role. Think of the value bitter almonds have in Sicilian pastry. No decent pastry maker will ever prepare an almond pastry without adding a small percentage of bitter almond. It takes only one bite to understand why. The reaction on your taste buds is at first, well, almost disgusting, but after a few seconds there's an incredible opening of sweet almond flavor that you would never perceive otherwise. Eating a bitter almond is to experience the almond's true flavor. And this is what bitter is all about. FABRIZIA LANZA