Main dishes / Italy

Vitello Tonnato

Cold, paper-thin slices of poached veal draped in a silky cream of tuna, capers, and mayonnaise — a collision of land and sea that sounds absurd until the first bite makes it make complete, inevitable sense. A Piedmontese summer classic, best served cold enough that the sauce barely trembles.

Time 180 min **Servings** 4

What you'll need.

- ☐ 800 g Veal eye of round or topside
- ☐ 250 ml Dry white wine
- ☐ 2 leaves Bay leaves
- ☐ 8 whole Whole peppercorns
- ☐ 160 g Tuna in olive oil, drained
- ☐ 40 g Capers in brine, drained
- ☐ 2 whole Egg yolks
- ☐ 120 ml Extra-virgin olive oil
- ☐ 30 ml Fresh lemon juice
- ☐ 15 g Capers and lemon slices for garnish

Let's make it.

01 Tie the veal with kitchen twine into a compact cylinder if needed. Place in a pot just large enough to hold it. Add white wine, bay leaves, peppercorns, and cold water to cover by 3 cm. Bring very slowly to a bare simmer — 80–85 C, when tiny bubbles rise lazily and the surface barely shivers. Poach for 45–60 minutes, maintaining this temperature throughout. Do not let it boil; boiling will tighten and toughen the veal. Probe with an instant-read thermometer: pull at 62–63 C internal. Let cool completely in the poaching liquid.

02 Combine the drained tuna, capers, and egg yolks in a blender or food processor. Blend until smooth. With the motor running, add the olive oil in a thin, steady stream — exactly as you would build a mayonnaise — until the sauce is thick, creamy, and pale. Add lemon juice and blend again. Taste: it should be powerfully savory, bright with lemon, and rich enough to coat a spoon thickly. Thin with a tablespoon of poaching liquid if needed for a more draping consistency.

03 Remove the completely cold veal from the poaching liquid. Using the sharpest knife available, slice the veal as thinly as possible — ideally 2–3 mm, almost translucent. A meat slicer is ideal but a long, thin-bladed knife works if the veal is cold enough (refrigerate for 1 hour before slicing). Each slice should be near-transparent at the edges and nearly white throughout.

04 Spoon a pool of tonnato sauce onto a large, flat platter. Layer the veal slices overlapping over the sauce. Drizzle more tonnato generously over the top, making sure every slice is covered. Scatter capers and lemon slices decoratively. Refrigerate for at least 1 hour before serving — the sauce must be very cold and the veal must absorb its flavor.

Recipe & provenance ForkRecipe Kitchen / ForkRecipe / FoodML and contributors / CC BY-SA 4.0.
Original recipe and attribution CC BY-SA 4.0
Servings are an estimate; check quantities in the source recipe.
recipes.dvs-services.be / vitello-tonnato