



14 Must-Have Ingredients for Amazing Italian Food



A Free eBook Provided By:
Rosedale Brick Oven Pizzeria

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14 MUST HAVE Ingredients for Amazing Italian Food

Lotsa' Pasta – Favorite Italian Pastas

What would Italian food be without pasta? Pasta is the most widely used ingredient in Italian cooking. It comes in different shapes and sizes and can be stuffed with tasty ingredients, layered in baked dishes, or served with succulent sauces. It can be served as the main dish or as a side dish. Whatever the occasion, great Italian food calls for the perfect pasta! Here are a few of our favorites at Rosedale Pizzeria:

Rigatoni – Its short tubular shape is perfect for catching delicious ingredients such as our bolognese sauce and amatriciana sauce.

Spaghetti – A classic, and the perfect pasta for twining vegetables in our primavera sauce, as well as delicious clams in our white clam sauce.

Fettuccine – With its flat, thick and lengthy shape, it is perfect for thicker sauces such as alfredo. It's also a great pasta for getting a hearty serving while spinning your fork!

Gnocchi – This is the Italian potato pasta dumpling, perfect for pairing with meats such as our bolognese sauce or side by side with our famous meatballs or sausages.

Lasagna – Who can resist these famous long, wide noodles set between layers of ricotta cheese, a mixture of pork and beef, and topped with mozzarella cheese.

At Rosedale Brick Oven Pizzeria, we let you create your own perfect pasta dish, by choosing from a variety of sauces:

Amatriciana – A flavorful classic. Sautéed pancetta, onions, and garlic with a dash of red pepper flake and fresh basil, simmered with imported Neapolitan Roma tomatoes.

Alla Vodka – A house specialty – crushed imported Neapolitan Roma tomatoes, sautéed garlic, imported prosciutto, cream and a touch of vodka.

Rosedale's Marinara – A light, meatless tomato sauce, using imported Neapolitan Roma tomatoes, red wine, sautéed garlic, onions and fresh basil.

White clam – Whole baby clams, sautéed with EVOO, fresh garlic, white wine, julienne onions and chopped fresh basil.

Primavera – Light flavors of garlic, EVOO and herbs with a medley of fresh garden vegetables.

Bolognese – Meat based sauce consisting of beef, pork and a tomato puree of fine ingredients.

Alfredo – A delicious mixture of Parmesan cheese, butter and cream.



Extra-Virgin Olive Oil (EVOO)

Everything tastes better with a fine coating of extra-virgin olive oil (“EVOO”). Olive oil’s distinctive taste goes perfectly with Italian cuisine. At Rosedale Pizzeria, we use only the finest imported EVOO. All of our wood fired pizzas are finished with a drizzle. We also top off such dishes as our caprese salad, antipasti salad and some of our pasta specialties before they arrive at your table for the final touch.

What exactly is “Extra Virgin Olive Oil”?

Extra virgin is the highest quality olive oil classification. In chemical terms, extra virgin olive oil is described as having a free acidity of not more than 0.8 grams per 100 grams.

It also must be produced entirely by mechanical means without the use of any solvents, and under temperatures that will not degrade the oil (less than 86°F, 30°C).

In order for an oil to qualify as “extra virgin” the oil must also pass both an official chemical test in a laboratory and a sensory evaluation by a trained tasting panel recognized by the International Olive Council. The olive oil must be found to be free from defects, and exhibit some characteristics of “fruitiness”.

Since extra virgin olive oil is simply pressed fruit juice without additives, the factors influencing its quality and taste include:

- The varieties of olives used
- The terroir (special characteristics that the geography, geology, and climate of an area is expressed in agricultural products when interacting with the plant’s genetics)
- The numerous decisions, production practices, and dedication of the producer



Real Balsamic Vinegar

The perfect compliment for EVOO is a quality balsamic vinegar. Italians refer to Real Balsamic Vinegar as “tradizionale”, in contrast to the “industriale” or industrial vinegar on supermarket shelves.

The traditional, real balsamic vinegar is called “Aceto Balsamico Tradizionale”. It has a rich, deep, amber color, and is almost syrupy in texture. Its has a very intense flavor, and is a perfectly calibrated burst of sweet and sour.

“Balsamic vinegar starts as a tiny tingle at the tip of your tongue, and slowly expands into a mouth-filling, smooth, sensuous sweetness. The sourness is gentle, comforting; supportive yet never intrusive. Hints of plums, black grapes, wild currants, vanilla, a touch of oak.”
~Zingerman’s”



Caprese Salad with real Balsamic Vinegar

Real Balsamic vinegar is made with the “must” (freshly pressed juice of wine grapes – not wine) of the local Trebbiano and Spergola grapes. Because it is made from must, Aceto Balsamico is not strictly a “wine vinegar”. The fresh must is brought to the acetaia, poured into open copper kettles, then cooked down to a thick, almost syrupy consistency. From the kettles, it is then transferred into wooden barrels. Each vinegar maker uses his or her own, unique mix of woods. The barrel aging develops the flavor and characteristics of the vinegar. After twelve years in wooden barrels, a panel of experts taste tests each batch of vinegar. These experts are from the Consorzio Aceto Balsamico, a body which oversees and monitors Aceto Balsamico production and ensures quality standards.

At [Rosedale Pizzeria](#), we not only use a fine imported balsamic, we reduce it to the point where it thickens into a thick, holding glaze. It is used in such salads as our caprese and antipasti. You can also enjoy Real Balsamic vinegar on our bruschetta, chicken milanaise, and pork chop specials.

Fresh Mozzarella Cheese

As they say in Italy...“C’è mozzarella ... e mozzarella!” (“There’s mozzarella ... and then there’s **mozzarella!**”)



Not to be confused with the shredded mozzarella imitation you see on grocery store shelves, imported “fresh mozzarella cheese” is something quite different.

Fresh mozzarella is a semi-soft, white cheese stored fresh in water to give a velvety creamy taste.

Once you’ve tasted an authentic fresh mozzarella, you’ll know what the Italians mean by “...and then there’s *mozzarella!*”

Fresh mozzarella is wonderful served at room temperature (“mozzarella fresca”). At Rosedale, you can experience this when you try it on our delicious Caprese Salad.

Mozzarella is also able to withstand the high 800+ degrees in our wood burning oven for our pizzas, and tastes amazing!


It is also prepared fresh and shredded to be used in our popular lasagna as well as our oven baked sandwiches.

Making sure the right mozzarella cheese is used on the right dish makes the world of difference in taste.

Got a craving for Caprese Salad, lasagna, or our famous brick oven pizza?
Don’t have time to dine with us? No problem! Get your order “[to go!](#)”

More Favorite Italian Cheeses

Sharp provolone



Provolone originally comes from the south of Italy, but is currently produced in several regions of North Italy. No Italian kitchen is complete without it! Provolone is produced in various shapes such as long pear, sausage, or cone shapes. The cheese is made from pasteurized cow's milk that is cooked, shaped, salted in brine, and hung up to dry.

True Provolone continues to be produced in Casilli, Italy (near Vesuvius) and Northern Italy. However, a variant of Provolone is also produced in North America and Japan.

Provolone is a semi-hard cheese with a taste that can vary greatly, depending on the type. For example, Provolone Piccante (piquant) is aged for a minimum of four months, and has a very sharp taste. This distinctive piquant taste is produced with a lipase (enzyme) derived from goat. Provolone Dolce (sweet), on the other hand, has a very mild taste. This version of Provolone uses calf's lipase instead of goat's.

Some cheeses are sold as young as two months, but six months is the typical aging period. The longer the Provolone is aged, the sharper, more distinct its flavor becomes. You can enjoy sharp provolone at Rosedale Pizzeria on our antipasti plate, cut in wedges, and joined by other delicious ingredients.

Fresh Ricotta

Ricotta is an Italian whey cheese made from sheep, cow, goat, or buffalo milk whey left over from the production of cheese. The word ricotta literally means "recooked". When making cheese, the cooled curds are separated by passing through a fine cloth. Ricotta cheese is made by using whey, the liquid that remains after straining curds.

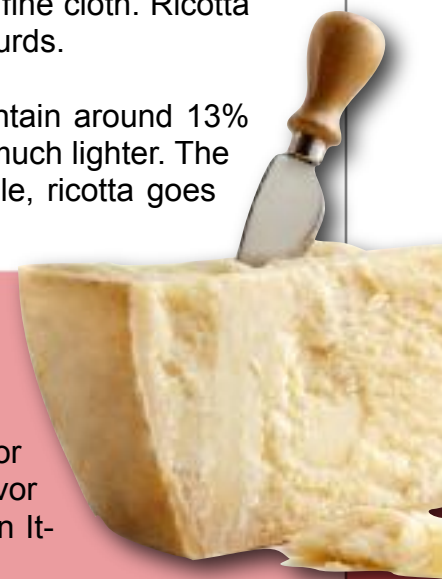
Ricotta curds are creamy white, and slightly sweet in taste. They contain around 13% fat and are a similar texture to some types of cottage cheese, though much lighter. The texture of ricotta cheese is much smoother and creamier. At Rosedale, ricotta goes perfectly with our famous meatballs, white pizza, and thick lasagna.

Romano and Parmesan

If you are enjoying dinner at an Italian restaurant, and they don't offer you fresh-grated Parmesan, then you are in the wrong place!

Both Romano and Parmesan are hard, dry cheeses, typically grated or shaved and served over pasta, salads, and vegetables or used to flavor and thicken sauces. Romano and Parmesan cheeses both originate in Italy, but are also now made in the U.S. and elsewhere.

Fresh Romano and Parmesan cheeses are served table-side at Rosedale and are ingredients in our Alfredo sauce and pizzas.



Vino! – Cooking with Italian Wine

Vino! Don't limit this nectar of the gods by only sipping it from a glass. Fine Italian wine also has many other wonderful uses in the kitchen...such as flavoring your favorite Italian dish!

Cooking with wine has recently become even more popular, as many have discovered its ability to add unique flavor and bring out the best in food.

There are endless recipes which incorporate all different types of wine into your cuisine, and put a unique spin on your favorite, classic dishes.

Not a drinker? Just be extra careful in what you consume because contrary to conventional wisdom, [not all alcohol evaporates](#) from the food.

The key to cooking with wine is to choose good, quality Italian wine. But remember, quality wines are not necessarily the most expensive wines, so don't always associate price with taste.

Your enjoyment of a glass of Italian wine is directly affected by quality, and your particular taste. This also holds true when you are cooking with wine. If you enjoy drinking a particular vineyard's wine, you will likely also enjoy dishes that are prepared with that wine as an ingredient.

If you are not typically a wine drinker, ask [our owner Joe](#) about which wines go best with which dishes. The right wine used with the right dish will surely make a difference. Cook off the alcohol and be left with the fine taste.

At Rosedale Pizzeria, you will experience notes of a Burgundy Red in our Bolognese, and Chablis found in our Piccata or seafood dishes. The wine compliments the main ingredient. And, what is Chicken Marsala without a good Marsala cooking wine? Well...just chicken.

Glorious Tomatoes

"That kitchen illuminated in light for it's its presence on the Italian table – to that wonderful product of nature, made in the form of a bulb." ~Luciano De Crescenzo

Is it the color? The flavor? The versatility? What is it about the tomato that makes it a staple of every Italian kitchen? Let's start with a little history lesson.

According to Wikipedia, the recorded history of tomatoes in Italy dates back to October 31, 1548. It was said, on that date, the grand duke of Tuscany wrote to the Medici private secretary informing him that the basket of tomatoes sent from the duke's Florentine estate at Torre del Gallo "had arrived safely."

Soon after their arrival in Italy, tomatoes were primarily grown as ornamental plants and "were to be sought only for their beauty", according to the Florentine aristocrat Giovanvettorio Soderini. At this time, they were grown only in gardens or flower beds. What a shame! Because tomatoes have an ability to mutate and create new, different varieties, they successfully spread throughout Italy.

So many kinds. So many styles. Which to use or how to use them, that is the question. Here are just a few of our favorite ways to enjoy the almighty tomato at Rosedale Brick Oven Pizzeria:

Fresh, garden tomatoes

Cut thick and layered between fresh basil and fresh mozzarella cheese in a caprese salad...it's heavenly.

Enjoy them diced and put over a fresh salad or mouth-watering pizza.

Bruschetta, with its diced garden tomatoes is an all-time favorite.

San Marzano tomatoes. Need we say anything else? These plum tomatoes are the only tomato accepted by Italian pizza makers in Napoli. We use only the actual tomatoes in our wood fired pizzas for that authentic Napoli taste. These thick, sweet fruits are used in all our pasta dishes as well as our meatballs' sauces.



San Marzano Tomatoes (Courtesy of Flickr User houstonfoodie)

Too tired to whip up a meal tonight? No problem. Rosedale offers carryout!

The Freshest Fruits and Vegetables

Fruit such as tomatoes, eggplant, string beans and squash are often mistaken for vegetables because they are used in savory cooking. Grocery stores and cookbooks only add to the confusion by labeling and organizing produce according to culinary usage, rather than botanical classification. A basic rule of thumb: if the edible plant in question has seeds in it, it's probably a fruit.

Fresh, fresh, fresh is the only way to go. Italians use many fruits and vegetables in their cooking, making Italian food not only flavorful, but one of the healthiest types of cuisines. The types of fruits and veggies used are what characterizes the regional differences in Italian food.

Southern Italian – Because the South is much warmer, with a much longer growing season, southern Italians use fruits that thrive under warmer conditions (like tomatoes!) For this reason, many dishes with red sauces are more popular in Southern Italian cuisine than Northern. Some other popular Southern fruits and vegetables include eggplant and broccoli rabe.

Northern Italian – In the Northern regions of Italy, vegetables that thrive in cooler temperatures and less sunlight are more popular. Some of these include head cabbages, black leaf kale, cardoons and radicchio.

In both Italy and America, there are many fruits and vegetables that are used in fine Italian cooking. For example:

Eggplant – This is a versatile fruit, used in a variety of Italian dishes, and is one of the most prominent staples of Southern Italian cooking. It can have a slightly bitter taste when raw, but when it is cooked, it becomes very tender with a rich, complex flavor.

Greens (spinach, kale, chard, endive, escarole, chicory, etc) – Italian cooking uses greens that are flavorful and loaded with nutrients. The many greens that are a part of the Italian diet are also a great way to incorporate flavor and nutrition into the American diet. Radicchio or endive are popular in Italian cooking, but are also served raw in salads for tasty side dish.

Sweet bell peppers – These delicious peppers are used throughout Italy and are popular in the United States as well. Sweet bell peppers are wonderful for adding color, flavor, and nutrition to any fine Italian dish.

Pasta primavera without fresh veggies? Unheard of. And what's an Insalata pizza without fresh veggies...well, not Insalata for one thing. Broccoli rabe, spinach, portobello mushrooms, zucchini, arugula, squash, escarole, cucumbers, tomatoes...the list goes on and on. Rest assured that you're eating healthy when enjoying our fruit and veggie dishes.



Getting to the Meat of it – Favorite Italian Meats

As you've probably figured out...when it comes to Italians, food is a way of life. Special attention is given to each and every ingredient that used in Italian cooking. The meat is no exception! Italian meats are made with select ingredients and an array of savory spices. Although Italian cooking can incorporate many different types of meats, the most prevalent in Southern Italian cuisine are pork products. Nobody gets more out of pork than Italians! Here are just a few of our favorite ways to use pork in Italian cooking:

Soppresata – This is a dry, Italian salami, and is a specialty of southern Italy. It often includes hot pepper (though, as with all salami, seasonings vary), and is usually served sliced, alongside other meats and cheese or served with crackers. (You can enjoy soppresata in our delicious antipasti salad!)

Prosciutto – This is a dry-cured, Italian ham that is usually thinly sliced and served uncooked. This style is called “prosciutto crudo” in Italian. It is distinguished from cooked ham, which is called “prosciutto cotto”.

Wikipedia quotes a writer on Italian food, Bill Buford, describing talking to an old Italian butcher, who says:

“When I was young, there was one kind of prosciutto. It was made in the winter, by hand, and aged for two years. It was sweet when you smelled it. A profound perfume. Unmistakable. To age a prosciutto is a subtle business. If it's too warm, the aging process never begins. The meat spoils. If it's too dry, the meat is ruined. It needs to be damp but cool. The summer is too hot. In the winter—that's when you make salumi. Your prosciutto. Your soppresata. Your sausages.”

At Rosedale, you can enjoy some of the best Prosciutto in our Toscano pizza, Pasta Faggioli soup, and alla vodka sauce!

Pancetta – This is the Italian version of bacon. It is used in such dishes as our Amatriciana sauce or Italian bacon pizza.

Ground pork – Sometimes pork and ground beef are combined to create an unbelievable flavor. We use these two ingredients used in our bolognese as well as our famous meatballs.

Braciola – Nothing flavors up a meat sauce better than “braciola” – a pork fillet wrapped around a tasty mix of cheese and Italian herbs.

Pork chops – For those “pork purists” out there, you may prefer to enjoy a juicy, delicious pork chop on its own. This popular meat is used in some of our daily specials, cooked many different ways, but always delicious.



Prosciutto

Somewhere, Beyond the Sea – Italian Seafood

Italians love their seafood! And why wouldn't they? Their country is a peninsula, completely surrounded by water. In fact, one of Italians' favorite ways to celebrate the holidays is through a Southern Italian tradition called "Feast of the 7 Fishes", celebrated on Christmas Eve. Today, this Italian tradition (also known as "La Vigilia", is shared by families across the globe.



The Feast of the 7 Fishes includes a variety of fish and seafood, which is also popular in other Italian cuisine. Dishes such as calamari, baccala (codfish), oysters, scallops, whiting, clams, shrimp, and even eel are traditional favorites.

When it comes to the seafood you'll find at Rosedale, there are so many different types, cooked in so many ways, it is hard to choose! We are pleased to have received so many [rave reviews](#) on our seafood dishes. Seafood is a nice way to enjoy a lighter meal, and can be so delicious when prepared with perfection.

One of our favorites is Seafood Pescatore, a mouth watering mixture of clams, mussels, calamari and shrimp, served over perfectly cooked pasta. Some other great dishes for shellfish lovers are Shrimp scampi or the delicious Mussels marinara.

As we leave the shellfish and go a little deeper to sea, we can't leave out our much acclaimed calamari! This is a succulent, deep sea calamari, seasoned, lightly breaded, quick-fried and served with our signature marinara sauce.

We serve many other seafood dishes as daily specials at Rosedale's. They can be combined with either a pasta or medley of fresh vegetables and many different tantalizing sauces. We receive seafood daily to assure you get the freshest possible meal. Filets of choice are often bass, grouper, salmon, barramundi, lemon sole, and swordfish...just to name a few!

Did you know that we cater, too? If you're planning a party and you'd like to serve your guests succulent seafood, we'd love the opportunity to cater your event. [Check out our catering menu.](#)

The Power of Onions

So good, they'll make you cry! When it comes to an Italian kitchen, onions are used in so many dishes, we don't know where to start. Whether they are standing out on a salad, adding flavor and texture to a pizza, or combined with other ingredients, many of our dishes would lose their touch without the presence of onions.

Onions are combined with pancetta in our Amatriciana sauce, which earns its place as one of our favorite dishes. Our famous marinara sauce also gets a nice assist from the onion. Joined by garlic and other herbs, and cooked with our marinated chicken wings in our wood fired oven, onions help to give our "Wings Italiano" their name.

Flavorful onions are also used in some of our delicious seafood dishes, such as mussels marinara in white wine sauce.

Since the beginning of civilization, onions have been an important part of our diet. However, it was once believed to be a lowly vegetable because of its pungent taste. But, as we all know, over the centuries the onion has prevailed!

It is now one of the most commonly consumed vegetables, and has emerged as a favorite ingredient in many recipes. Onions have the amazing ability to add flavor to an otherwise bland dish, can turn an average meal into an elegant dinner, and fill the kitchen with delicious aromas.

Practically everyone is familiar with onions, but there are probably a number of things you don't know about this amazing vegetable.

Onions actually belong to the lily plant family. They are grown for the edible bulb, which is what you find in the produce section. Onions are typically put into two categories, "green" or "dry".

Green onions are smaller onions, harvested before the bulb has matured. Because of early harvesting, the tops are still green. Dry onions are also known as "mature onions". These are harvested when the shoot has died and layers of papery thin skin cover a firm juicy flesh.

There are two types of dry onions: Fresh (Spring/Summer), also called "sweet onions", and Storage (Fall/Winter) onions. Sweet onions have higher water content and may be served either raw or cooked. Storage onions contain less moisture and have a higher sulfur content, so they can be kept in storage for longer periods of time. The storage onion is used in cooking, providing a sharper and more flavorful taste than sweet onions.

A traditional Italian onion is the Cipolline onion. It has a flat oval shape, a brown papery skin, and ranges from 1-3 inches in size. Cipolline onions are a dry onion, with a delicately sweet flavor. They're wonderful for roasting whole – caramelized and delicious.

Fresh Garlic

Heaven forbid we ever experienced the loss of garlic. This treasure is found in every Italian kitchen, sometimes next to their vitamins...and rightfully so. Not only is garlic delicious, but it's also good for you. Garlic has been proven to be good for your heart, and has other medicinal qualities which have been used for centuries to cure ailments. Recent studies have shown that garlic can boost your immune system and lower cholesterol. Isn't it wonderful when great tasting food turns out to be good for you? Don't be afraid to consume as much as you like of this delicious herb!



Contrary to some beliefs, when used properly garlic does not have to overpower your dish. For amazing Italian food, fresh garlic cloves are the only way to go. There are many ways to prepare fresh garlic.

Dry roasting – This is a quick, easy way to mellow garlic. Place the whole, unpeeled cloves into a dry skillet or frying pan over medium-high heat, stirring occasionally. Toast until the skins are golden brown. The skins will now come off easily, and the garlic is soft and ready to be chopped or minced.

Blanching – To prepare raw garlic this way, put the whole, peeled cloves in a pot of cold water and bring to a boil, then immediately take them off. Pour off the water and add fresh, cold water, bring to a boil again and remove. You can continue to repeat the process until the cloves are as soft and mellow as you would like them.

Roasting – Roasting garlic gives it sweet, wonderful flavor (and fills the kitchen with delicious aromas.) You get a wonderful golden, creamy garlic paste, which can be used for so many things!

Mincing – You typically want to leave this to someone with excellent knife skills. (Such as our proficient chefs at Rosedale!) Most chefs can cut, mince and make garlic paste all with a chef's knife, but for those who are not trained, you may want to use a garlic press for raw cloves.

Garlic is a delicious addition to any Italian meal, and surpasses even the onion as the most used ingredient in our dishes. What would else could you expect at Rosedale...we're cucina Italiano! It would be easier to have you [look at our menu](#) than list all our dishes where garlic is present. Let's just say it would be high on our list of things we'd thank at an awards ceremony....(behind Momma and Nonna, of course!)

Spice it Up! – Crushed Red Pepper Flakes

Found table-side, crushed red pepper flakes give every guest at Rosedale the chance to “spice it up”. Although crushed cherry peppers are also available with our dishes, red pepper flakes are always a most popular.

A dash of red pepper flakes in our Amatriciana sauce gives it the kick that makes it stand out. It can also add a delicious spice to the marinara served with your calamari or a fra diavolo sauce for your seafood pescatore dish.

Many a pizza has been dashed with red pepper flakes to add a little extra spice. However, if you really want to tingle the lips and look for your beverage, try adding a little red pepper while sauteing. The heat and oil will release all the punch these little flakes have to offer.

This is another classic Italian ingredient that’s both good and good for you! There are many health benefits you can gain from crushed red pepper. It’s been proven that these little flakes of spicy goodness have:

- Antioxidant effects
- Anti-inflammation properties
- Metabolism boosters
- Ability to reduce the risk of stroke
- Immunity boosters

Eating something spicy is also a great way to relieve congestion. So, the next time you’re enjoying your favorite Italian dish, turn up the heat!



By the way, have you signed up to be notified of [our specials](#) yet?



Italian Herbs

Italy is known for its abundance of herbs, from basil and rosemary to oregano and thyme. Italian herbs are perfect in a wide range of both traditional and modern dishes including pasta, pizza, bruschetta, salad, soups, veal and chicken.

Basil – What would a Margherita pizza or caprese salad be without it? Flagrant and aromatic, basil (or as Italians would say “Basilico”) is often left on tables for its scent. The type used in Italian food is typically called “sweet basil”. When basil is used in cooked recipes, it is usually added at the last moment to preserve the most of its flavor. Basil is also one of the main ingredients in pesto — a green Italian oil-and-herb sauce made with basil, olive oil, garlic, and pine nuts.

Parsley – It’s not just a garnish! Parsley is also used for its light, distinctive flavor in many dishes. At Rosedale, you’ll find it in our delicious meatballs and many sauces.

Fresh rosemary and Thyme – These two ingredients assist in the marination of our famous, and much sought-after, Wings Italiano!

Combined with extra virgin olive oil, Italian herbs make the perfect dipping mix. At Rosedale, we offer this table-side, where it pairs perfectly with our crusty, homemade, Italian bread.



Wings Italiano

Now that you’ve learned about these 14 MUST HAVE ingredients, we hope that you’re able to enjoy them in your own Italian dishes. If not, we’re more than happy to cook for you. Come visit us at [1427 Pine Ridge Rd](https://www.RosedalePizza.com) in Naples.