

**Joyce Goldstein, Cookbook Author and guest chef for Passover seder at Perbacco Restaurant
San Francisco, CA**

Passover Thoughts

It is easy to do a great Italian Passover dinner here in California because we get all of the traditional Mediterranean spring vegetables right on time.

We are at the peak of season for asparagus, artichokes, favas, peas, new carrots, fennel and tiny new potatoes. So I like to feature many vegetables at the Seder and Passover table. I hate to leave the table feeling too full so featuring lots of vegetables is the perfect solution for a beautiful and delicious meal. It is the start of strawberry season, too. My grandchildren like them sprinkled with a little blood orange juice and a hint of sugar.

Passover Menu (Italian)

Asparagus Soup with Saffron
Roast Chicken with Orange Lemon and Ginger
Spinach with Pine nuts and Raisins
Roasted Fennel
Roasted New Potatoes
Almond Cake served with strawberries macerated in blood orange juice

Recipe

Spinaci con Pinoli e Passerine (Spinach with Pine Nuts and Raisins), adapted from *Cucina Ebraica* (Chronicle Books)

Spinach with pine nuts and raisins is a classic Sephardic dish that appears on tables in Greece, Spain, Turkey and Italy, where it is a staple on Venetian and Genoese menus. It is a perfect accompaniment to delicate fish or poultry dishes and is often served at room temperature.

2 ½ pounds spinach
2 to 3 tablespoons olive oil
6 to 8 scallions, (white part and a little green), minced
4 tablespoons raisins, plumped in hot water and drained for a few minutes
4 tablespoons pine nuts, toasted
Salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste

1. Rinse the spinach well and remove the stems. Put in a large sauté pan with only the water clinging to the leaves, and cook over medium heat, turning as needed, until wilted, just a few minutes. (You'll have to do this in batches.) Drain well by pressing down on the spinach to release as much liquid as possible, and set aside.
2. Warm the olive oil in the same sauté pan over medium heat. Add the onions and sauté until tender, about 8 minutes. Add the spinach, raisins, and pine nuts and sauté briefly to warm through. Season with salt and pepper and serve warm or at room temperature.

Yield: 6 to 8 servings