

# Italian Cooking

## Regional Dishes Start With Great Ingredients

(NAPSA)—When Biba Caggiano moved to the U.S. from Italy, she felt homesick for the wonderful foods she'd left behind in Emilia-Romagna.

“What a difference 45 years make!” she observes in her new cookbook, “Biba’s Italy” (Artisan, 2006). Not only are Americans more appreciative of regional Italian dishes such as Caggiano’s luscious ragus and pasta dishes, but authentic ingredients are far more available now than in the past.



Caggiano recommends using all-natural Prosciutto di Parma® for several recipes, including an “appetizing, hassle-free dish” typical of Bologna, her home town. Three slices of what Caggiano calls “the world’s finest ham” are arranged on each appetizer plate. Several small chunks of Parmigiano-Reggiano® (“the king of cheeses”), drizzled with an artisan-made balsamic vinegar, are mounded in the center. The final touch: quartered fresh figs, fanned around the cheese.

If figs are out of season, it’s fine to substitute melon, grapes, mangoes or pears. Even simpler, just serve Prosciutto di Parma with seasonal fruit and a few walnuts.

The ham and cheese—produced only in Biba’s native Emilia-Romagna—are widely available in U.S. markets. Prosciutto di Parma



**Regional dishes are easy when you choose authentic ingredients.**

(Parma Ham®), for example, can be purchased by the ounce at a deli counter or in presliced packaged form at many supermarkets and specialty stores.

These long-cured hams contain no ingredients other than sea salt and each one is marked with the official ducal crown logo only after passing strict quality tests. In addition, Prosciutto di Parma has been singled out for Protected Designation of Origin designation by the European Union, a mark of quality similar to the DOC designation reserved for fine wines.

This prized Italian ham is not only one of the very best ingredients, but one of the easiest to use. No need to wait for a special occasion—make a wonderful regional dish, such as the ones in Biba’s Italy, or add Prosciutto di Parma to a pizza, salad, sandwich or main dish.