

MEDITERRANEAN VIEWS, RECENT UNVEILINGS, RECIPES... AND NEWS!

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CHARLOTTE/LUCCA

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OPEN STUDIO!

***As the last official days of spring
soon turn to the first official day of summer...***

You are cordially invited to stop by our Charlotte studio this weekend. The studio will be open to the public with new artwork hanging and the latest JSW portrait in progress being painted during the ART & SOUL of SOUTHBEND festival!

***Saturday, June 18, 2016
2:00 pm until 6:00 pm***

***John Seibels Walker Studios
The Dilworth Artisan Station
Suite 30 (Third Floor)***

118 East Kingston Avenue

Charlotte NC 28203



"Jewels of the Sea"

Oil on panel

In Florentine frame: 20" x 24"

~ \$3,200. ~

RECENT JSW PORTRAIT UNVEILINGS:



“Boys and their Toys” / “Portrait of Wright”

Oil on Italian linen

36” x 26”



"Portrait of Roy Bell, Troutman Sanders Law Firm"

Oil on Italian linen

56" x 40"

Spring in Italy 2016

There was so much to share from our time in Lucca and Italy this spring that it has taken until now, after our getting settled back into the Charlotte studio, to finally tackle the project of putting this newsletter together!

It was certainly a productive and restorative Italian spring season for us both, artistically and otherwise ~ with some memorable travel and adventures thrown in. We will now be working in the States for the remainder of 2016.

Right:

Out of the car and waiting for the green light at the old seaside tunnel from Sestri Levante to Moneglia along the Italian Riviera. Only one direction allowed through at a time ~ but not a bad place to have to wait!

Below:

Morning view above the coast from our room's private terrace at www.chincamea.it in Sestri Levante.





The link below will take you to a little slide show where you can join us behind the scenes as we climbed the current scaffolding to the top of the Duomo in Pisa!

Our Swiss neighbor in Lucca, Anton, is a conservator heading up many of the restoration projects in the famous Campo dei Miracoli in Pisa (the Tower, the Duomo, the Baptistry, etc...) and he was kind enough to invite us behind the scenes once again for a fascinating opportunity to get up close to all of the magnificent paintings and frescos as we traveled through the centuries.

*Left:
The view half way up, looking back down*

<https://www.icloud.com/sharedalbum/#B02JEsNWnG9f0Si>



BELLA SICILIA!





Above:

The famous salt flats of Trapani on the west coast of Sicily with Erice seen in the distance

<https://www.icloud.com/sharedalbum/#B02Gf693Z0WYsu>

The link above will take you to a slide show of our travels throughout the west coast of Sicily this past spring, with the whole island covered in wildflowers ~ our favorite time of year to visit Sicily and all of the Mediterranean islands!

*This trip we lodged at an intimate little B & B near the salt flats of Trapani (www.vistaegadi.it) while enjoying all of the surrounding area ~ from the medieval beauty of Erice with its magnificent hilltop views, to the ancient Greek temple of Segesta with the hike up to its equally stunning 3rd C B.C. teatro, to the charming old center of Marsala, and finally to the wild northern coastline and shores of San Vito Lo Capo.....all while enjoying plenty of the traditional local pasta (busiate) and handmade fresh cous cous each and every day, accompanied by abundant local fish and wine.
Add in the world famous desserts of Sicily, and what more could one ask for!*

*Casa Nostra ~
Studio dining*



THE FOODIE PAGES:

It was a deliciously beautiful spring season in Lucca also as we entertained “casa nostra” with our windows wide open, dined out and about at the unique homes and beautiful restaurants of neighbors and friends, and discovered some new culinary jewels during our travels ~

*In celebration,
I have attached some of my favorite recipes of the season on the following pages ~
which should prove perfect for spring and summer dining al fresco, no matter where you find yourself!*

Benvenuto in Italia

~~~~~  
*k & j ~*



[www.ristoranteilmatto.it](http://www.ristoranteilmatto.it)



[www.labrinca.it](http://www.labrinca.it)



## ~ GNUDI ~



*If you like gnocchi, you will LOVE making fresh gnudi!*

*We love to make these in Lucca when the fresh local spinach is in high season, but you need pounds of it! Frozen spinach also works great, so that is how I am writing this recipe. The quality of each ingredient is essential for perfect gnudi and you absolutely must use a kitchen scale for precise measure of the ricotta and spinach. Having those two ingredients always be of the same exact weight is the key to this recipe.*

### ***Ingredients:***

- \*250 grams of freshest and best quality ricotta ~ after it has been strained a minute or two to remove any excess liquid.*
- \*250 grams (after absolutely all water has been squeezed out) of extremely finely chopped thawed frozen spinach*
- \* About ¼ cup of finely grated aged Parmigiano Reggiano*
- \* About ⅛ tsp of freshly grated nutmeg (or to taste)*
- \* ¾ tsp of sea salt and some fresh cracked pepper, to taste*
- \* 1 large egg, beaten (use only a little more than half of it)*
- \* Some flour on a large plate*

### ***Method:***

*First, strain the ricotta for a minute or two to remove any excess liquid. Be sure that you chop the spinach extremely finely and mix it together with the following ingredients in a large bowl: the strained ricotta, the Parmigiano Reggiano, the nutmeg, the sea salt, and some freshly cracked pepper. Now mix in about ½ to ¾ of the beaten egg ~ just until you have enough of the desired wetness for your mixture. You will need a consistency where the sticky mixture will hold together to form balls.*



*Bring a very large pot of water to boil with about a Tbsp of salt and a tsp of olive oil added to it.*

*When the water has come to a boil, make one gnudo by gently rolling the mixture in your floured hands (thin gloves can be a help, as the mixture can be sticky) to make a firm oval ball about 2 inches long. Very gently roll the ball on a plate coated with flour and then shake off as much excess flour as possible from the gnudo. Place the gnudo in the boiling water and cook for about 3 minutes. If made correctly, it will be floating when done and hold together throughout the boiling process. Remove ball with a large flat slotted spoon and taste. Adjust mixture, if necessary, for seasonings or consistency (can add in just a bit of flour or more cheese to your mixture, if the ball fell apart) and repeat test, if necessary.*

*\* The goal here is to keep the gnudi light, but where they still hold together, and to use as little flour as possible!*

*Roll all remaining gnudi and then lightly coat them all in flour on a plate. Shake off excess flour from each gnudo and place them on a second plate where you can then carefully add them all to the boiling water at once. Gently stir and when they float to the top, in about 3 minutes, remove them to a platter with the large flat slotted spoon and serve with your favorite sauce. A classic pommarola, meat ragu, or sage and butter sauce are all traditional ~ the gnudi can be placed over the sauce on a platter or the sauce can be placed over the gnudi to serve.*

*Top the platter with more freshly grated Parmigiano Reggiano and garnish with fresh Italian parsley sprigs or basil sprigs (or herb of your choice) as the finishing touch!*

*This recipe makes about 20 gnudi, which is perfect for a first course for 4 people.*

#### **Notes:**

*If you wish to make more gnudi, use 350 grams of spinach and 350 grams of ricotta and one whole large egg ~ increasing the quantity of the other ingredients also, to taste.*

*Uncooked gnudi also freeze beautifully. Before adding them to the boiling water, freeze the gnudi on a tray where they are not touching (once frozen, they can all be poured into a container in the freezer and touch each other). When ready to enjoy, place the frozen gnudi directly into the salted boiling water and boil until they all float (about 8 minutes or so). Serve as described above.*

*Buon appetito!*

*Kiki Walker*

*[www.johnseibelswalker.com](http://www.johnseibelswalker.com)*



# GRILLED OCTOPUS (POLPO ALLA GRIGLIA)



## *Pre-Cooking the Octopus Ingredients:*

*A 2 to 2 1/4 pound octopus (thawed, if previously frozen)*

*1 lemon, cut into 6 wedges*

*Several sprigs of fresh Italian parsley*

*3 cloves of garlic, peeled*

*Sea salt and freshly cracked black pepper, to taste*

## *Marinade Ingredients:*

*The juice from 3 lemons*

*3 Tbs olive oil*

*1/2 tsp dried oregano*

*Sea salt and freshly cracked black pepper, to taste*

*Dried peperoncini (red hot pepper flakes), to taste*

## *Plating/Garnishing:*

*1 lemon, cut into 6 wedges*

*Garnish: fresh herbs and/or flowers, fresh Genovese pesto or a salsa verde*

*I usually plate the octopus with a potato cake and a piece of frittata or some grilled asparagus*



*Fresh octopus is cooked and served many ways in the Mediterranean countries, but this recipe must be one of the simplest ways to prepare it ~ and it is a true favorite.*

*In Liguria especially, octopus is frequently combined with potatoes. Both the octopus and potatoes pair beautifully with fresh Genovese pesto served along side.*

*This recipe serves 4 as a main course.*

### ***Method:***

*Begin with a cleaned and skinned fresh (or thawed, if previously frozen) octopus. Separate each large tentacle by cutting up to the center beak/mouth of the octopus (discard the center beak/mouth). Cut the head in half to be grilled as two flat pieces.*

*Now simmer the cut up octopus in the above pre-cooking ingredients with just enough water to cover everything. Trick: throw in a wine cork or two, which somehow helps tenderize the octopus while cooking!*

*Simmer for 30 minutes and then let cool just a bit in the simmering liquid before draining. Gently rub off any of the remaining dark skin.*

*Mix the marinade ingredients together in a large glass bowl and let the octopus pieces marinate for at least an hour (they can marinate for up to 4 hours).*

*Use a very hot outdoor grill (or very hot indoor grill/panini press) to cook the octopus. Sear the octopus pieces for about 4 minutes, if using a panini press at the hottest setting. Sear for about 4 minutes per side, if using a very hot outdoor grill. (If using an outdoor grill, baste in the marinade and turn the octopus pieces once while cooking.)*

*Once cooked, place the octopus back in any reserved marinade and then immediately plate and garnish it as described above.*

### ***Note:***

*In America I use PanaPesca brand smaller frozen octopi (around 3 per pound) from the Harris Teeter grocer for this recipe, so I cut the 6 heads from the 6 bodies and then the bodies in half (making 3 big pieces from each octopus) and I pre-cook/simmer everything only for about 15 minutes (or until tender), let cool, and then marinate and grill as usual.*

***Come sempre, buon appetito!***

***kiki walker***

***[www.johnseibelswalker.com](http://www.johnseibelswalker.com)***



## ***KIKI'S POTATO CAKE RECIPE:***

*Use a mandoline to thinly slice several pounds of potatoes. Tightly layer (fan out) 1/2 of the sliced potatoes in a 24cm round nonstick baking dish coated with olive oil. Pour just a touch of white wine over everything. Sprinkle with minced fresh rosemary or oregano, some Parmigiano Reggiano (optional), finely diced shallots (optional) and plenty of salt and pepper. Now drizzle lightly with EVOO (extra virgin olive oil) infused with peperoncini/rosemary/ garlic.*

*Tightly layer the rest of the thinly sliced potatoes on top. Coat the flat top layer generously with EVOO spray or rub in a good drizzle of EVOO across the top to coat. Sprinkle with more salt and pepper*

*Bake uncovered at 400\* F for about 1 hour to 1 hour and 15 minutes (depending on how high you have made your potato cake), or until it is nicely browned on top. When you remove it from the oven, have a large round platter ready to invert the potato cake onto for slicing and serving. (I often use a round cutter to cut small round individual servings from the larger whole potato cake for plating and then all the rest is delicious as leftovers in the morning for breakfast!)*

*\* Note: It can work well to make this ahead before baking. Just be sure to coat the top well in olive oil to prevent too much discoloration occurring in the potatoes. Place some plastic wrap over the top before putting in the frig for several hours and take it out of the frig about 20 minutes before baking it. Letting it sit for several hours in the frig before baking it sweats out some of the liquid from the potatoes, so just pour a bit of that extra liquid off before putting the whole potato cake in the oven to bake it and the result will be an extra crispy potato cake when finished.*





## ***Spring Salad with Pansies and Pistachios:***

### ***Salad Ingredients:***

*Assorted baby spring lettuce*

*Assorted small edible pansies and flowers*

*A few sliced strawberries*

*A few orange slices (cut in half)*

*A few slices of ripe avocado*

*A sprinkling of shelled pistachio nuts*

*Optional: A 1" slice from a log of very fresh goat cheese that has been rolled in crushed pistachios.*

### ***Dressing Ingredients:***

*Shake the following together in a small jar: 1 cup of toasted pistachio or walnut oil, 1/3 cup of Trader Joe's Orange Muscat Champagne vinegar, some very finely minced shallot, salt and pepper.*

*Drizzle dressing on the salad right before serving and enjoy!*



## *Sicilian Blood Orange and Marsala Gelatina*



*This refreshing Sicilian dessert is perfect for spring or summer, but I especially like to make it in the spring when the blood oranges, strawberries, and pansies are all in season together!*

### *Ingredients:*

*3 envelopes of Knox unflavored gelatin (24 grams)  
1 ½ cups of water  
¾ cup sugar  
2 cups of freshly squeezed blood orange juice  
¼ cup of sweet Marsala wine  
Plenty of sliced strawberries, fresh mint leaves, and pansies for garnish*

### *Method:*

*Soften the gelatin in ½ cup of water in a small saucepan. Heat over low heat and stir until the gelatin is completely dissolved. Set aside. In another small saucepan, combine the remaining 1 cup of water and all of the sugar and bring it to a boil, stirring constantly until it is completely dissolved (making a simple syrup). Remove from the heat and stir in the gelatin with a wooden spoon. Now stir in the orange juice and the wine. Pour the mixture into a non-stick ring mould and chill for at least 6 hours, or until the gelatin is fully set.*

*To serve, remove the gelatin from the mould onto a large round platter (I typically place a doily on the platter first). Fill the center of the mould with fresh edible spring flowers (I like pansies) and surround the mould with fresh strawberry slices and fresh mint sprigs.*