

Panelle di ceci

Sicilian chickpea fritters

Panelle is the quintessential street food. In Palermo you see vendors frying the thin fritters of chickpea flour in oil on street corners, or in the Vucciria market, and in the smaller towns and villages you see guys driving around in their little three-wheeled Ape Piaggios, with a gas burner on the back. They stop where they feel like it, fire up the burner underneath a big wok-like pot of olive oil, and start frying.

Serves 4

250g chickpea flour

a pinch of salt

a handful of flat-leaf parsley leaves,

finely chopped

a little olive oil

vegetable oil for deep-frying

sea salt

Pour 500ml of cold water into a heavy pan, then add the chickpea flour in a steady stream, whisking constantly to avoid lumps.

Add the salt and cook over a medium heat, stirring constantly with a wooden spoon, until the mixture thickens and pulls away from the sides of the pan. Add the parsley.

Rub a cold surface (marble if possible) with olive oil, spoon out the mixture, and spread it out thinly (about 3mm) with a rolling pin or spatula. When it cools down, cut it into squares or triangles.

Heat the vegetable oil in a deep pan, making sure it comes no higher than a third of the way up the pan. It should be 180°C. If you don't have a thermometer, put in a few breadcrumbs, and if they sizzle straight away the oil is ready. Deep-fry the fritters until golden, about 1–2 minutes. Drain on kitchen paper, sprinkle with sea salt and serve warm.