

CARNE CRUDA

After a long transcontinental flight with missed connections and a jarring car ride from Nice, we finally arrived in adorable Alba too late for lunch. We found one tiny restaurant about to shut its doors for the afternoon that took pity on us. The kitchen was officially closed, but the staff fixed us a plate of *carne cruda*, a slightly intimidating heap of hand-cut raw beef drizzled with olive oil and accompanied with a lemon wedge. It was a love-at-first-bite moment, and to our surprise, we polished it off with gusto, then proceeded to eat our weight in various incarnations of *carne cruda* throughout Piedmont.

Both well-trimmed sirloin and tenderloin, two cuts that are lean, flavorful, and tender, work well in this recipe. It is crucial to use fresh high-quality beef and to cut the meat by hand. To ensure a small, uniform dice, chill the beef thoroughly beforehand and use a sturdy, sharp chef's knife. Crisp flatbreads, crostini, or halved hard-boiled eggs make excellent accompaniments. **SERVES 6 AS AN HORS D'OEUVRE OR 4 AS A FIRST COURSE**

1 pound (450 g) lean beef sirloin or tenderloin, well chilled
1 teaspoon coarse sea salt (such as Maldon or fleur de sel)
1/4 teaspoon finely ground pepper
1 clove garlic, finely chopped
Juice of 1 lemon
1 tablespoon finely chopped fresh flat-leaf parsley
Generous handful of arugula, cut into narrow ribbons
1/3 cup (75 ml) extra-virgin olive oil, plus more for finishing

Trim any silver skin, gristle, or large pieces of fat from the exterior of the beef, then cut into 1/4-inch (6 mm) cubes. Place the beef in a bowl. Add the salt, pepper, garlic, lemon juice, parsley, and half of the arugula and fold them into the beef to mix evenly. Stir in the olive oil and taste for seasoning.

To serve, mound the beef mixture onto a large plate. Garnish with the remaining arugula and drizzle with olive oil.