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FESTIVE AND FRUITY  
as sangria, a Burgundy  
granita with berries  
wakes up tongues—  
and loosens them.



# Ice Capades

Artist Nadia Roden's version of the classic Italian ice known as granita is anything but classic. Flavored with essence of melon or chocolate or orange or...horseradish?!...these glittering, fun-to-make ices are gorgeous served anytime—as a starter, between-course refresher, or dessert. Pull up a chair, grab a spoon, and *buon appetito!*

Photographs by Gentl & Hyers



ORANGE ZEST, orange-blossom water, and orange juice lift this granita to the highest reaches of orangeness. Roden pairs it with a rich, dense chocolate torte, adapted from a recipe in Claudia Roden's *The Food of Italy*, the latest cookbook by Nadia's mother.

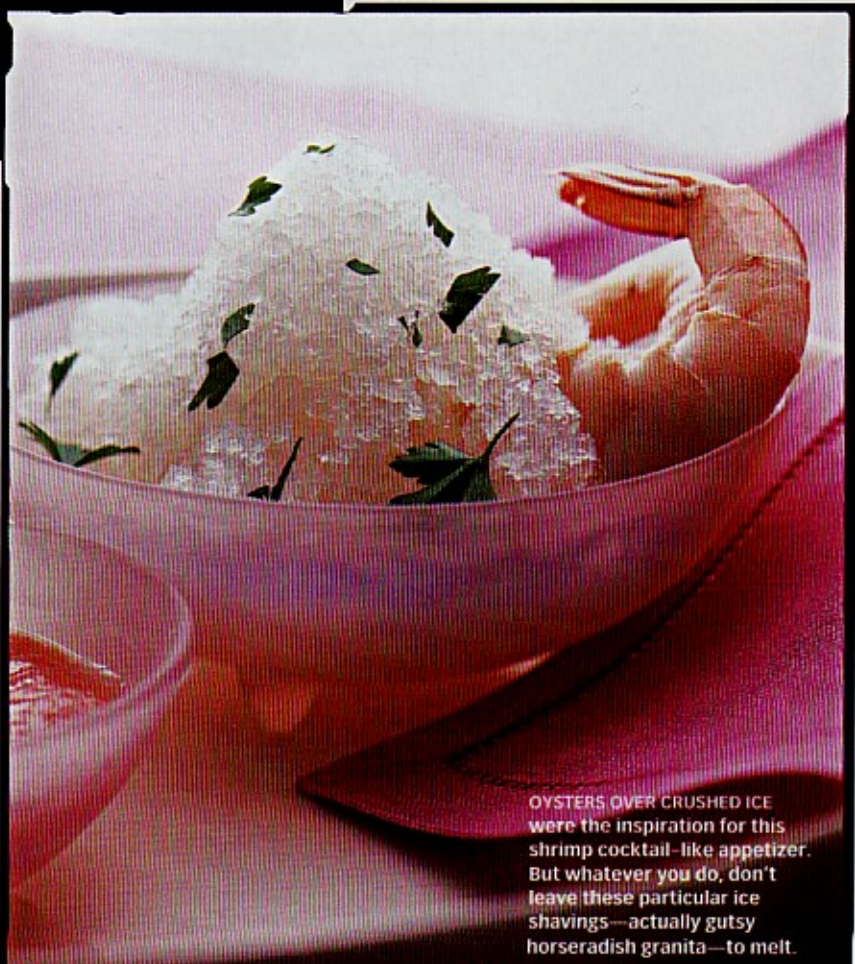
cookbook author Claudia Roden and as an artist, she's had her share of brushes with greatness) but in the sense that everything in her life seems integrated, related—especially food and art.

Roden pretty much grew up in her mother's London kitchen. While Claudia cooked (she almost single-handedly brought Middle Eastern food to Western homes), Nadia painted—though mother and daughter constantly exchanged ladle for paintbrush and back again. (Today a large, exuberant painting of peppers by Claudia hangs in Nadia's kitchen.) Once Nadia graduated from art school with a

degree in painting and began to create restaurant murals, it was clear that the apple didn't fall far from the table. Many of her subsequent commissions for textile designs, like silks that she created for the International Olive Oil Council, had an edible component. Next came an animation phase, and it was only a matter of time before the drawings she brought to life

ONE CONSTANT IN NADIA RODEN'S adult life has been curlicues. The spirally shapes turn up on murals that she's painted for restaurants, on scarves that she designed for the Metropolitan Opera, and all over one of her current projects, an animated film that features singing-and-dancing fruit. They also snake their way through Roden's first cookbook, *Granita Magic* (Artisan), which combines bracingly inventive recipes for shaved ice with illustrations so inspired that you want to turn them into bedspreads and curtains and surround yourself with them.

As I notice still more curlicues, on the back of a sinuous chair in her New York loft, I can't help thinking that Roden is the most well-connected person I've ever met. Not in the it's-*who*-you-know sense (although, as the daughter of the renowned



OYSTERS OVER CRUSHED ICE were the inspiration for this shrimp cocktail-like appetizer. But whatever you do, don't leave these particular ice shavings—actually gutsy horseradish granita—to melt.

“I started  
seeing everything as  
a potential granita,” Roden says.  
She’d poach, steep, grind, or  
boil until, say, her orange granita tasted  
more orange than an orange.



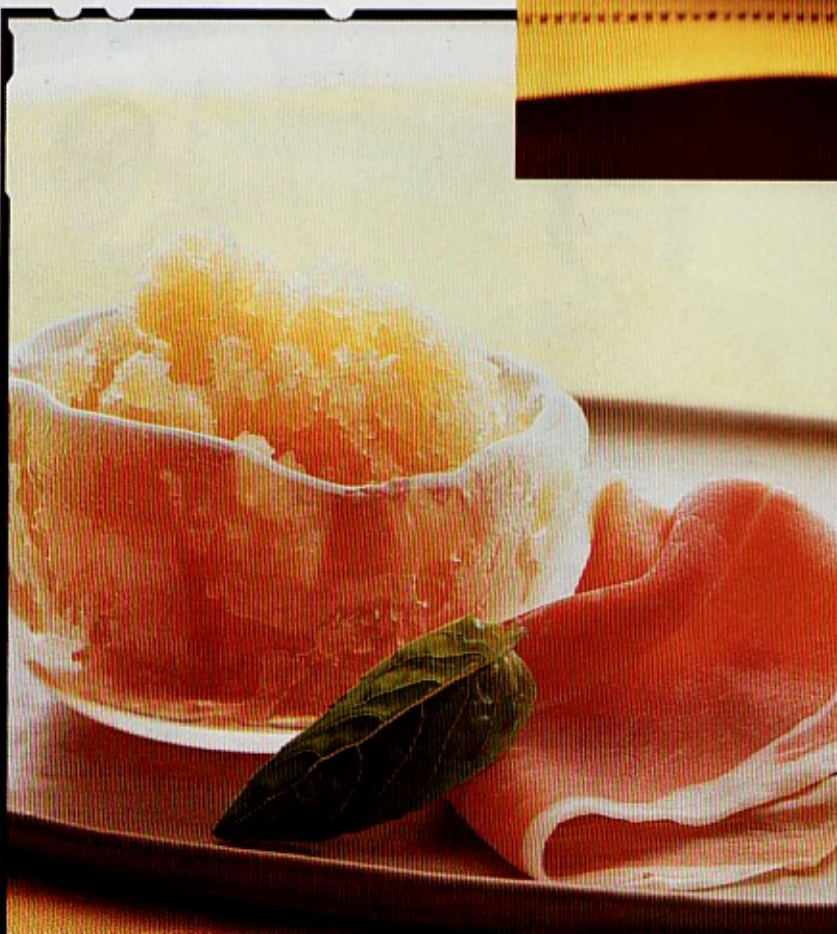
RODEN CALLS HER HERB GRANITAS  
“a real discovery”—for herself  
and for anyone she’s fed them to.  
Great as palate cleansers and  
appetizers, several spoonfuls of  
icy sage deliver the purest hit  
of herb imaginable.

were of pineapples and figs. From fruit cartoons, she moved on to fruit books, experimenting with ideas like a children's adventure story about the history of peaches. "My career has progressed a lot," Roden says, "but I've never let go of anything that I started earlier on."

While her fruit passion reached its height, another obsession began to overtake her: July and August of 2002 became the summer of granitas. She couldn't stop making them—tiny grains of ice with a pure, bold burst of peach, melon, pistachio, and soon enough rose petal, horseradish, tomato, sangria—and her friends couldn't stop eating them. "I started seeing everything as a potential granita," Roden says. For each recipe, she'd poach, steep, grind, or boil until, say, her orange granita tasted more orange than an orange.

As her mania gelled into a cookbook, her eyes were as busy as her tongue. "I'd cut open a melon and think, *That's beautiful—the seeds,*

**CHOCOLATE** granita is almost creamy—less flaky, more sorbetlike than the others. Roden serves it with butter cookies, a childhood favorite baked by virtually every one of her female Middle Eastern relatives. *Below: Melon granita with prosciutto varies a classic combination of tastes with a surprising texture. For recipes see Love That! on page 280.*



*the shape, the color.* So when I was creating the illustrations, I'd ask, *How can I turn this melon into a design, maybe a repeating pattern that can make a house beautiful?* The fruit inspired the patterns." Roden is hoping that a home-furnishings company will license these patterns, making them jump off the pages and become fabrics.

On the day I visited, the seamlessness of Roden's varied imaginings extended to me. I'd shown up wearing brown and pink, which prompted her to create a tiny work of culinary art. She filled a martini glass with chocolate granita and dropped in a pink butter cookie that she just happened to have baked the night before. Kind of like having a sandwich named after you at the Carnegie Deli but prettier, and with much less cholesterol. —Susan Chumsky

Roden  
couldn't stop  
making granitas, and  
her friends couldn't stop  
eating them.



WHEN RODEN WAS A CHILD, her mother would add ice cubes to Andalusian gazpacho. Refreshing enough. But Roden goes even further with her gazpacho granita: tiny crystals of potent tomato ice with a crisp chopped salad.

4 six-inch sprigs mint, 20 large basil leaves, 20 large sage leaves  
3 cups water  
 $\frac{1}{2}$  to  $\frac{3}{4}$  cup sugar, to taste  
1 cup dry white wine  
3 to 4 Tbsp. fresh lemon juice  
Fresh herb leaves, for garnish

1. Rinse herbs and bruise slightly with back of a spoon. In a medium saucepan, bring herbs, water, and sugar almost to a boil. Reduce flame and simmer until sugar dissolves. Remove from heat; add wine and cool. Cover and refrigerate overnight to infuse flavors.
2. Add lemon juice and strain. Discard herbs. Freeze granita as directed above.
3. Spoon granita into serving dishes. Garnish with fresh herb leaves and serve immediately. Makes 4 to 6 servings.

### Chocolate Granita with Butter Cookies

*Cookies adapted from The New Book of Middle Eastern Food, by Claudia Roden.*

#### Granita:

4 cups water  
 $\frac{3}{4}$  cup sugar  
1 cup unsweetened cocoa

6 dozen (3 ounces) whole blanched almonds

1. To make granita: In a medium saucepan, combine first 3 ingredients. Cook over medium-low heat just until mixture starts to bubble at edges. Cook, whisking, until slightly thickened, 1 minute. Cool.
2. Freeze granita as directed above.
3. To make cookies: Preheat oven to 325°. Line 2 large cookie sheets with parchment paper.
4. In a large mixer bowl, beat butter at medium-high speed until creamy. Slowly add sugar, 1 Tbsp. at a time, until mixture is light and fluffy. With mixer on low speed, gradually add flour just until blended.
5. Roll dough into 1-inch balls; arrange 2 inches apart on prepared cookie sheets. With the palm of your hand, gently flatten each ball; press an almond in the center of each cookie.
6. Bake cookies 20 to 25 minutes just until pale golden around edges only (do not brown). Cool on cookie sheets 5 minutes. Makes 6 dozen cookies.
7. Spoon granita into serving dishes, garnish with mint and whipped cream, if desired. Makes 4 to 6 servings.



### Burgundy Granita with Berries

$\frac{3}{4}$  cup water  
 $\frac{1}{2}$  cup sugar  
Zest of 1 orange  
2 cups Burgundy wine  
Juice of 1 large orange  
Assorted fresh berries (raspberries, blueberries, and strawberries)

1. In a small saucepan, bring water, sugar, and orange zest to a boil over medium-high heat. Reduce flame and simmer until sugar dissolves. Cool; stir in wine and orange juice.
2. Freeze granita as directed above, but for 6 hours or overnight (takes longer to freeze due to alcohol content). Spoon into serving dishes; garnish with berries. Serve immediately. Makes 4 to 6 servings. •

*All granita recipes adapted from Granita Magic (Artisan), by Nadia Roden, to be published in June.*

Nadia Roden,  
culinary  
artist.



## The Ice Princess

As the author of eight cookbooks, Claudia Roden may have cornered the market on Mediterranean and Middle Eastern food, but when it comes to shaved ice, she defers to her daughter. *Granita Magic*, by New York artist Nadia Roden, is the first cookbook solely devoted to these simple, frosty creations—light ice, rough and granular in texture, that latches onto flavors with a delicate intensity. Equipped with little more than a fork, a saucepan, and a freezer, Nadia began experimenting,

applying to her cooking the same energy she dedicates to her artwork. "I tried classics from around the world—lemon, coffee—and also created new combinations ranging from vegetables to flowers to wines," she says. Many of the recipes, like saffron and honey granita, are an homage to her mother's cooking, while others arose from a trip to the market or a dinner with friends. Once inspired, Nadia tested and perfected each recipe till she got it down cold.

—Victoria Stein