

Italian Cuisine – October 6, 2008

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Spinach Artichoke Dip

Ingredients:

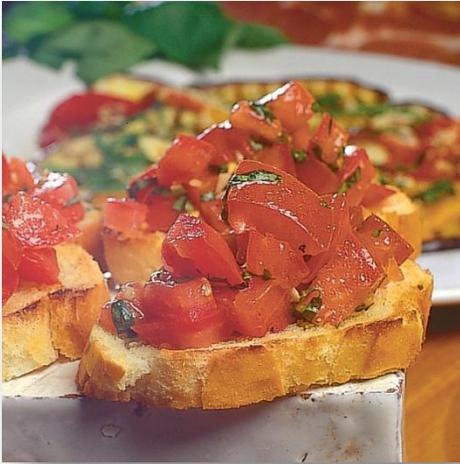
- 1 (14 ounce) can artichoke hearts, drained
- 1/3 cup grated Romano cheese
- 1/4 cup grated Parmesan cheese
- 1/2 teaspoon minced garlic
- 1 (10 ounce) package frozen chopped spinach, thawed and drained
- 1/3 cup heavy cream
- 1/2 cup sour cream
- 1 cup shredded mozzarella cheese



Method:

1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees F (175 degrees C). Grease a 9x13 inch baking dish.
2. In a blender or food processor, place artichoke hearts, Romano cheese, Parmesan cheese and garlic . Pulse until chopped, but not ground. Set aside. Alternatively, chop by hand to a brunoise or small dice.
3. In a medium bowl, mix together spinach, heavy cream, sour cream and mozzarella cheese. Stir in artichoke mixture. Spoon into prepared baking dish. (Alternatively, use an Alfredos sauce in place of the heavy cream and sour cream mixture.)
4. Bake in the preheated oven for 20 to 25 minutes, or until cheese is melted and bubbly

Bruschetta with Tomato and Basil - (Bruschetta con pomodoro e basilica)



Ingredients:

- Italian (Ciabatta) or French bread cut in 1/2 inch slices
- fresh, ripe, firm tomato, washed and coarsely chopped
- fresh basil leaves, whole or shredded
- baby mozzarella, cut into small cubes
- olive oil, extra virgin, the best
- garlic, peeled, whole (optional)
- salt to taste

History:

When you take your olives to the local mill for pressing, make sure to take some country bread. There will be a small fire burning (it is November or December) in the fireplace in the corner of the pressing room, and when your oil emerges from the press, you will want to toast a bit of the bread on the fire to taste your oil on it. This is Bruschetta in its simplest, and to her or she who tended the olives, tastiest form.

Method:

1. Place sliced bread under the broiler, in the toaster or best yet over a charcoal grill and toast.
2. Rub toast with a clove of garlic or not, depending on taste.
3. Drizzle with olive oil.
4. Spoon chopped tomato and cubed baby mozzarella onto bread.
5. Scatter some basil.

Alternatively:

1. Place the tomatoes, basil, garlic (chopped fine), olive oil, diced mozzarella and salt in a bowl and mix.
2. Set bowl at table alongside the toasted bread and simply spoon on mixture.
3. Some prefer to use sliced rather than chopped tomato. Whatever way you serve it, it is delicious.

Tortellini

Tortellini is a derivative of torta or tart (tortellini and tortelloni are from the same root), meaning a very large tortelloni - in this case a large sheet of pasta wrapped around the stuffing.



Noodle Dough:

- 1 egg
- 2 T. Water
- Dash of salt
- 1+ cup flour (amount varies all purpose is a blend of cake flour and bread flour)

Filling Ingredients:

- 1Egg
- 1 # Ground Beef, Chicken, and/or pork
- 1/2 sleeve soda Crackers (10-15) or bread crumbs
- 1 tsp. Italian Seasoning
- 1/2 cup Parmesan Cheese



Try serving tortellini in a rich chicken broth with hard crusted bread for a great winter meal.

Method:

1. Mix all the **filling ingredients** listed and let stand off to the side.
2. Gently beat eggs in a bowl. Add water and salt and beat until mixed.
3. Add flour and stir until all flour is absorbed.
4. Turn dough out onto floured surface and knead the dough until it does not pick up any more flour from the floured surface.
5. Run small strips of dough thru a manual dough machine 2-3 times per setting starting at a large setting (thickest setting) and then move to smaller settings. You may also roll out the noodles by hand with a rolling pin if no machine is available.
6. Cut the strips into 2 inch squares. Place a 1/2 teaspoon of filling in the center of each square. Fold over matching the corners using a square orientation (as opposed to a diamond). Bring both corners around to the front and press firmly to seal. Your index fingers will aid in folding over the top of the tortellini.
7. Allow the tortellini to dry to the touch. Then cook or freeze for later use.
8. For cooked tortellini, top with your favorite sauce. Try a nice basil tomato sauce or an asiago cheese sauce

Variation: Three Cheese Tortellini (fill with Scmorza, Gorgonzola, Parmesan)

Tortellacci

Ingredients:

Noodle Dough, prepared

Filling Ingredients:

- 14 oz. Fresh Spinach, Stemmed
- 3/4 cup Ricotta Cheese
- 1/2 cup Parmesan, Fresh
- 1 egg
- Pinch of nutmeg
- Salt and Freshly ground Black Pepper

Marinara Sauce

Terry's Secret

(you have to come to class for this one)

Tortellacci Asiago (Variation):

Fresh pasta stuffed with spinach and cheeses, and then shaped into a belly button. Served a sauce of garlic, butter, and asiago cheese.

Method:

Tortellacci is typically stuffed with spinach, ricotta, Parmesan, butter and just a hint of nutmeg. The flavor of nutmeg can easily overpower everything around it. Hence, use just enough to accent the tried and true combined flavors of the spinach, ricotta and Parmesan.



1. Clean in several changes of water then stem the fresh spinach (note: packaged spinach will be pre-washed so you will only need to wash it once). Place in a saucepan with only the water that is clinging to the leaves. Cover and cook until tender, about 5 minutes. Drain and squeeze out as much water as possible. Chop finely.
2. Stir in ricotta cheese, parmesan, egg and a pinch of nutmeg. Add bread crumbs to tighten slightly if necessary.
3. Prepare squares of dough as noted above. Substitute this filling for the tortellini meat filling. Continue as above. Note: Any kitchen supply store will have a ravioli tool for cutting pillows.
4. Cook the noodles for 5-6 minutes. Serve with your favorite sauce.

Chicken Parmesan - (Parmigiana)

Ingredients:

- Chicken breasts, pounded even
- flour, egg wash, and bread crumbs
- Italian tomato sauce
- Mozzarella cheese



Method:

1. Pass the pounded chicken breasts thru a standard breading procedure- lightly season and then dredge the seasoned breasts in flour, dip in the egg mixture (beaten egg and milk), then roll in bread crumbs.
2. Sauté the breasts in olive oil or mixture of clarified butter and olive oil until golden brown on each side.
3. Remove the breasts to a platter and place atop fresh, hot pasta. Top with warm tomato sauce and top with mozzarella cheese.
4. Place under broiler just long enough to melt the cheese and serve.

Chicken Alfredos



Ingredients:

- 2 skinless chicken breasts, cut in slices about 1/4 " thick then in bite-size morsels
- 1-2 cloves of garlic, finely diced.
- 1 cup broccoli florets, steamed (optional)
- 8 oz pasta (fettuccine, penne, etc.)
- 4 tablespoons unsalted butter, at room temperature (or olive oil for sautéing the chicken and for the sauce)
- 1 cup freshly grated Parmigiano Reggiano (Parmesan), at room temperature, plus extra cheese to pass at the table.
- 1 1/4 cups heavy cream
- salt and freshly ground pepper

Method:

1. Cook the pasta in boiling salted water until al dente (to the bite), rinse with hot water, drain and hold for later.
2. In the large sauté pan large enough to hold all the ingredients, sauté the chicken in 2 tablespoons of butter or good olive oil until lightly browned. Add garlic and sauté until the aroma of the garlic is evident (without burning the garlic).
3. In the sauté pan: ADD the heavy cream. Keep cooking on low-medium heat, stirring occasionally until the mixture reduces slightly and thickens.
4. Add 1/2 cup Parmesan cheese to the same pan along with the cooked and well-drained pasta to the sauce. If including broccoli to this dish, add the steamed al dente florets. Mix well with a wooden spoon and simmer to the right consistency. Add salt and pepper to taste.
5. Add more heavy cream (or milk) if dish becomes too dry.

Steak Gorgonzola-Alfredo

Grilled beef medallions drizzled with balsamic glaze, served over fettuccine tossed with spinach and gorgonzola-alfredos sauce.



Tiramisu

Ingredients: Hot Milk Sponge

- Milk, 1/4 cup
- Butter, 2 tsp butter
- Flour, 1-1/4 cups
- Baking Powder, 1 tsp
- Eggs, 3
- Sugar, 1-1/4 cups
- Egg Yolks, 3

Ingredients: Mascarpone Cream

- Espresso Coffee, 1/2 cup + 2 T.
- Hot Water, 1/2 cup + 2 T.
- Grand Marnier, 3 T.
- Mascarpone, 1 cup
- Rum or Marsala wine
- Eggs, 3 separated
- Sugar, 6 tablespoons
- Heavy Cream, 1 cup
- Vanilla 1/4 teaspoon
- SALT, a pinch
- Cocoa Powder, to sprinkle
- Powdered Sugar, to garnish

Directions: Assembly

1. Cut the sponge cake in half crosswise.
2. Place in a pan large enough to fit the halved sponge cake snugly. Moisten the cake with half of the espresso mixture.
3. Top with half of the mascarpone mixture, spreading it out evenly. Sprinkle generously with cocoa powder, and powdered sugar.
4. Top with the other half of the sponge cake layer. Moisten with the remaining espresso mixture.
5. Top with the remaining mascarpone mixture, spreading evenly. Sprinkle generously with the cocoa powder and powdered sugar. Refrigerate, uncovered, for 2 hours.

Method:

Directions: Sponge Cake

1. Preheat the oven to 350 degrees.
2. Grease and lightly flour a 9 by 13 pan
3. Heat milk and butter until the butter melts.
4. Stir the flour and baking powder together.
5. Put the eggs, sugar, and yolks in a bowl and set over a hot water bath, whisking until the egg mixture triples in size.
6. Fold in the flour mixture and the milk.
7. Pour into the prepared pan.
8. Bake for 10 - 15 minutes or until done.



Directions: Mascarpone Cream

1. Combine the espresso, water and the Grand Marnier, set aside. Combine the mascarpone and the rum in a large bowl, beat until smooth.
2. In a medium bowl, beat the eggs yolks and 3 tablespoons of the sugar together until smooth.
3. Set over a hot water bath and beat for 3 minutes until light and foamy.
4. Remove from the heat, and without waiting beat this mixture into the mascarpone mixture. Set aside.
5. Whip the cream until the cream holds a firm shape. Fold in vanilla.
6. In two small additions, fold about 1/3 of the mascarpone mixture into the whipped cream.
7. Then fold the whipped cream into the remaining mascarpone mixture. Set aside.
8. Beat the egg whites and salt on medium until foamy. Increase the speed and add the remaining 3 tablespoons sugar, beat until glossy, not dry.
9. Fold the egg whites, all at once into the mascarpone.

Zepolles

Ingredients

- 2 quarts vegetable oil for frying
- 1 cup all-purpose flour
- 2 teaspoons baking powder
- 1 pinch salt
- 1 1/2 teaspoons white sugar
- 2 eggs, beaten
- 1 cup ricotta cheese
- 1/4 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 1/2 cup confectioners' sugar for dusting



Directions

1. Heat oil in a deep-fryer to 375 degrees F (190 degrees C).
2. In a medium heatproof bowl (metal), combine the flour, baking powder, salt and sugar. Stir in the eggs, ricotta cheese and vanilla. Mix gently over low heat until combined. Batter will be sticky.
3. Drop by tablespoons into the hot oil a few at a time. Zepole will turn over by themselves. Fry until golden brown, about 3 or 4 minutes. Drain in a paper sack and dust with confectioners' sugar. Serve warm.

Fruit Sorbet

Ingredients

- 2/3 cup boiling water
- 2/3 cup sugar
- 2 cups fruit puree (4 cups fresh peaches, apricots, berries, etc.)



Directions

1. Pour boiling water over sugar in a small bowl. Stir till sugar is dissolved.
2. Cover and chill.
3. Sieve fruit puree, if necessary.
4. Combine with sugar syrup.
5. Freeze in ice cream maker according to manufacturer's directions.

Focaccia Bread

Ingredients:

- 3 1/2 cups all-purpose flour
- 1 tsp. white sugar
- 1 tsp. salt
- 1 tbl. active dry yeast
- 1 cup water
- 2 tbl. vegetable oil
- 1 egg
- 3 tbl. olive oil
- 1 tsp. dried rosemary, crushed



Variation:

Potato Focaccia Bread

Try this bread made with potatoes. Potatoes help to hold in the moisture so the bread stays fresher longer. Just add in those leftover mashed potatoes with the rest of the ingredients.

Method:

1. Combine 1 cup flour, sugar, salt, and yeast. Mix well. Heat water and vegetable oil until warm, and add to yeast mixture along with the egg. Blend with an electric mixer at low speed until moistened. Beat for 2 additional minutes. Stir in 1 3/4 cup flour while beating, until dough pulls away from side of bowl.
2. Knead in 3/4 cup flour on floured surface. Cover dough with a bowl, and let sit for 5 minutes. Place dough on a greased baking sheet. Roll out to 12 inch circle. Cover with greased plastic wrap and a cloth towel. Alternatively, place inside a large plastic bag with enough air to keep the bag from settling on the dough. Place in a warm place for 30 minutes.
3. Uncover dough, and poke holes in it with a spoon handle at 1 inch intervals. Drizzle olive oil on dough, and sprinkle with crushed rosemary.
4. Bake at 400 degrees F (205 degrees C) for 17 to 27 minutes, until just golden. Remove from baking sheet, and cool on rack.