

St. John's Italian Night Cook Book



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Appetizers



Bruschetta

Contributed by Tom Brzeczek

Ingredients:

Approximately 12 plum/roma tomatoes

1 large red onion

20 – 30 basil leaves

7 large cloves of garlic or pre-minced equivalent

Extra virgin olive oil

1 stick of butter

Salt to taste

Pepper to taste

1 lime

1 baguette or crusty bread

Grated parmesan cheese

For the tomato topping

Wash and cut tomatoes in half, removing the center/seeds. Dice by first cutting into strips and then the strips into diced squares.

Peel and dice onion

Combine in a bowl and just “wet” with olive oil, approximately 1/3-1/2 cup. Add salt (approximately 1/2 tsp) and pepper (approximately 1/4 tsp). Stir mixture.

Rinse and dry basil. Stack about 10 leaves at a time, roll

them into a “cigar” and dice finely. Add to mixture and stir.

Peel and mince 4 cloves of garlic (or use pre-minced equivalent). Add to mixture.

Add lime juice. Stir together.

Add more olive oil and salt to taste.

For the bread

Preheat oven to 375 degrees

Cut bread into thin slices

Melt a stick of butter and add 3 peeled and minced cloves of garlic. Stir together.

Wet both sides of the bread slices with the butter/garlic and place on cookie sheet.

Toast bread in oven approximately 5 mins, flip and toast the other side 5 mins.

Remove from the oven and lightly sprinkle grated parmesan on toasted bread.

I like to serve the bowl of bruschetta on a platter with the bread surrounding the bowl letting people scoop their own. This keeps the bread from getting mushy.



Pizza Dip

**Submitted by Teri Tatu,
from the blog [Celebrating Sweets](#)**

Ingredients

Dip:

**8 oz cream cheese, softened
2 teaspoons minced fresh parsley or basil
1 small clove garlic, finely grated
2 1/2 cups shredded mozzarella, divided
3/4 cup pizza sauce, or plain tomato sauce with
1 teaspoon dried Italian seasoning**

Toppings (use your favorites):

**1/3 cup chopped bell pepper
4 sliced mushrooms
8 slices pepperoni, halved or quartered**

Garlic Bread Dippers:

**1 fairly soft baguette, sliced
1/4 cup extra virgin olive oil
1 clove garlic, finely grated
salt, to taste**

Instructions

Preheat oven to 400°F. Grease a 9 1/2-inch deep dish pie

plate (or similar size casserole dish) and set aside. Using a hand mixer, stand mixer with paddle attachment, or by hand with a rubber spatula: beat cream cheese, parsley/ basil, garlic clove and 1 cup shredded mozzarella until combined. Spread into the bottom of the prepared pie dish. Pour the pizza sauce over the cream cheese mixture. Sprinkle half the remaining shredded cheese over the sauce, then top with half the toppings. Add the remaining shredded cheese, then add the remaining toppings. You can either bake it now (then serve immediately), or you can cover it and refrigerate it for up to 4 hours. Bake, uncovered, for 20-25 minutes, until bubbly and warm throughout. While it's cooking, prepare garlic bread.

Garlic Bread:

In a small bowl, combine the olive oil and finely grated garlic clove. Place the baguette slices in a single layer on a rimmed baking sheet. Brush the top side with the garlic olive oil and sprinkle with salt. Bake at 400° for 6-8 minutes, until toasted and golden brown. Do not flip them otherwise the garlic could burn. Serve the dip fresh from the oven with warm garlic bread.



Salads



Peach Caprese Salad

**Submitted by Teri Tatu,
from the blog [Celebrating Sweets](#)**

Ingredients

- 1 large peach, sliced**
- 1 large tomato, sliced**
- 5 slices fresh mozzarella**
- 5 leaves fresh basil**
- salt and pepper, to taste**
- 1 tablespoon balsamic glaze or syrup, see note**

Instructions

**Stack or layer peach, tomato, mozzarella, and basil.
Sprinkle with salt and pepper and drizzle with balsamic
syrup. Serve immediately.**

Notes

You can purchase balsamic glaze or you can make it. To make it, simmer 1/3 cup balsamic vinegar in a small saucepan over medium heat for 10-15 minutes, until thickened, reduced and syrupy. Allow to cool slightly.



Main Courses



Crepesagna

Submitted by Diane Gustafson

(adapted from the Everyday Low Carb Slow Cooker Cookbook)

Ingredients:

**Your favorite spaghetti sauce 24 oz. or more,
with or without added ground beef**

3 crepes

(found in produce section next to the fresh strawberries)

15 oz. ricotta

1 egg

salt and pepper to taste

1/4 cup grated Parmesan

2 cups shredded mozzarella

In a round or oval slow cooker, cover the bottom with about one cup of the sauce. Put a crepe on top, then half of the filling, spreading it to the edges. Then 1/2 cup mozzarella. Next comes half of the sauce that is left, another crepe, the rest of the filling, and another 1/2 cup mozzarella. Lastly, the third crepe, the rest of the sauce, and the rest of the mozzarella. Cook on low for 3 hours, turn it off and let sit for 15 minutes before serving.



Chicken Maria*

Submitted by Maria (or Joe) Love

Ingredients:

Chicken (whatever cut of chicken you like; skinless is okay but skin-on is better)

Italian Salad Dressing

Sliced White Onions

Grated Parmesan Cheese

Instructions:

Place the chicken into a deep pan and pour the Italian dressing over it.

Place the onion slices on top of the chicken and let sit for at least 1 hour

Bake it at 350 for 20 minutes

Sprinkle on a heavy coat of Parmesan cheese; then bake for 20 more minutes

***If you don't like it, it's called Chicken Joe!**



Meat Sauce with Hidden Vegetables

**Submitted by Teri Tatu,
from the blog [Celebrating Sweets](#)**

Ingredients

- 1 pound lean ground beef**
- 1 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil**
- 2 carrots, chopped**
- 1 large stalk celery, chopped**
- 1 small red bell pepper, seeded and chopped**
- 1 small yellow onion, chopped**
- 3 cloves garlic**
- 3 heaping handfuls fresh baby spinach**
- 1 teaspoon salt**
- 1/4 teaspoon ground black pepper**
- 1 teaspoon dried Italian seasoning**
- 2 25 oz jars marinara sauce**
- 1 28 oz can crushed tomatoes**
- 1 bay leaf**
- Pinch of sugar, if desired**

Instructions

In a large saucepan over medium heat, sauté ground beef

in olive oil until brown, periodically breaking it apart with a wooden spoon. While the meat is browning, place all the vegetables and garlic in a food processor and puree until completely smooth. Add the vegetable puree to the meat, and cook, stirring occasionally until most of the liquid has evaporated (the mixture might look unappetizing at this point, but it will look better after adding the tomatoes). Add the salt, pepper, Italian seasoning, marinara, crushed tomatoes, bay leaf, and a pinch of sugar. Stir to combine. Simmer, partially covered for 30 minutes. Taste and add additional seasoning if necessary.



Quick Bolognese Sauce

Submitted by Teri Tatu,
from the blog [Celebrating Sweets](#)

Ingredients

2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
1/2 yellow onion, finely chopped
1 carrot, finely chopped
1 stalk celery, finely chopped
3 cloves garlic, minced
1 pound lean ground beef
1 1/2 teaspoons dried Italian seasoning
1 1/2 teaspoons salt
1/4 teaspoon pepper
2/3 cup Dreaming Tree Crush, red wine blend
28 oz can crushed tomatoes (basil optional)
3 tablespoons tomato paste
1/4 cup heavy cream
parmesan cheese, for serving
cooked pasta, for serving

Instructions

Heat olive oil in a large skillet over medium heat. Add

onion, carrot, celery, and garlic. Cook, stirring occasionally, until the vegetables soften, about 8 minutes. Add the ground beef. Sauté, stirring frequently and breaking up the meat, until it is brown, about 10 minutes. Add the Italian seasoning, salt, and pepper. Add wine and stir to scrape up any browned bits from the bottom of the pan. Add crushed tomatoes and tomato paste, stirring until combined. Bring to a boil, then reduce heat and simmer for 15 minutes. Stir in heavy cream. If desired, you can also add some water to thin out the sauce slightly. Add additional salt and pepper to taste. Serve over pasta with parmesan cheese.



Lasagna Soup

**Submitted by Teri Tatu,
from the blog Celebrating Sweets**

Ingredients

1 pound lean ground beef
1 tablespoon extra virgin olive oil
1 small yellow onion, finely chopped
1 large carrot, finely chopped
3 cloves garlic, minced
2 cups finely chopped fresh spinach
24 oz jar marinara sauce
3 - 4 cups beef broth, preferably low-sodium
1 cup tomato sauce
1 1/2 teaspoons dried Italian seasoning
1 bay leaf
3 - 4 cups campanelle, gigli, radiatore pasta, or broken lasagna noodles
shredded mozzarella, ricotta cheese, parmesan cheese and basil, for garnish

Instructions

In a large saucepan, saute ground beef in olive oil until cooked through. Add onion, carrot, garlic, and spinach and

sauté for 5 minutes. Add another drizzle of olive oil if necessary.

Add marinara sauce, beef broth, tomato sauce, Italian seasoning, and bay leaf. Simmer, partially covered, stirring occasionally for 20 minutes.

Bring mixture to a boil, add pasta, and cook uncovered until pasta is tender, about 10 minutes. Stir frequently so that the pasta doesn't stick to the bottom of the pan. Add water as needed (I added 2 cups), as the pasta will absorb some of the liquid. Discard the bay leaf, add salt to taste (this will depend on how much salt was in your broth and marinara sauce).

Top each bowl of soup with mozzarella, ricotta, and parmesan cheese. Garnish with basil, if desired.



Pasta with Mushrooms and Spinach in Tomato Cream Sauce

**Submitted by Teri Tatu,
from the blog [Celebrating Sweets](#)**

Ingredients

- 1 box Barilla pasta,**
- 2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil**
- 1/2 small yellow onion, finely chopped**
- 8 oz container mushrooms, sliced**
- 3 cloves garlic, minced**
- 5 oz fresh baby spinach, chopped**
- 28 oz can crushed tomatoes with basil**
- 1/3 to 1/2 cup heavy cream**
- salt, crushed red pepper, parmesan cheese, to taste**
- Sliced cooked chicken, optional**

Instructions

In a large saucepan, heat olive oil over medium heat. Add onions and mushrooms and cook until the onions have softened and the mushrooms are brown, about 10 minutes.

Add garlic and chopped spinach and stir for a couple minutes, until the spinach wilts.

Add crushed tomatoes and 1/2 cup water. Simmer, stirring occasionally, while you cook the pasta.

Prepare pasta according to package instructions. Right before pasta is done, finish the sauce.

Remove the sauce from the heat and stir in cream. Add salt and crushed red pepper to taste. Toss the drained pasta with the sauce and serve with parmesan cheese. If desired, you can top the pasta with sliced cooked chicken breasts.



Baked Ravioli with Asparagus and Peas

**Submitted by Teri Tatu,
from the blog [Celebrating Sweets](#)**

Ingredients

16 ounces ravioli, I used two 8-oz packages of frozen spinach and cheese ravioli
1/2 pound asparagus, cut into bite-sized pieces
1 cup frozen peas
3 tablespoons olive oil or butter
3 tablespoons all purpose flour
1 clove large garlic, minced or finely grated
3 cups milk, I used skim
1/2 cup grated parmesan cheese, divided
salt and pepper
Chopped parsley and thyme, for garnish (if desired)

Instructions

Preheat oven to 375°F. Butter a 10-inch pie plate or 2-quart casserole dish.

Cook ravioli in boiling water according to package directions. During the final 2 minutes, add the asparagus

and peas to the boiling water and boil for 2 minutes. Drain. While the pasta is cooking, place the olive oil or butter in a medium saucepan over medium heat. Add the garlic and cook for 1 minute. Whisk in flour, cook for 1 more minute. Slowly add the milk, whisking as you pour. Simmer until slightly thickened and bubbly, whisking occasionally. Remove from the heat and stir in 1/4 cup parmesan cheese, and salt and pepper to taste. Spread 1/4 cup sauce in the bottom of prepared pan. Top with half the drained ravioli, asparagus, and peas. Spoon half the remaining sauce over, then sprinkle with 2 tablespoons grated parmesan. Add the remaining ravioli and vegetables, top with the remaining sauce, then finish with 2 more tablespoons parmesan cheese. Bake uncovered for approximately 20 minutes, or until bubbly. Sprinkle with chopped herbs, if desired. Serve immediately.



Side Dishes



Italian Spinach

Contributed by Diane Gustafson

Spinach really wilts when sautéed. A 5 oz. bag or plastic box will serve only two. Use 1 lb. for four people.

Saute a couple of cloves of garlic, minced, in 1 or 2 Tablespoons olive oil. Add the spinach and cook until it has all wilted. Squirt lemon juice on top. Serve at once.



Drinks & Desserts



Chai

Submitted by Lynn and Jim McDevitt

Heat water to a boil.

Add: A big chunk freshly grated ginger

1 nutmeg ball

1/2 lg. cinnamon stick

5 - 7 cardamom pods

5 - 7 cloves

1 - 2 Star Anise

Simmer 30 minutes

Roast 3 pinches of black tea (assaya or ceylon)

Oven heat in a dry pan until hot and delicious flavor.

Add Black tea to water. Steep 5 mins. More strain.

Add honey, mild 1/2 & 1/2 to taste.

Vanilla is also good.....mmmmmmmm



Fresh Fruit and Nutella Bruschetta

**Submitted by Teri Tatu,
from the blog [Celebrating Sweets](#)**

Ingredients

Good quality sliced bread

Nutella, or other chocolate spread

Fresh fruit (raspberries, sliced strawberries, sliced bananas, pears, peaches or blackberries)

Chopped, toasted hazelnuts

Instructions

Toast the bread. Spread the toasted bread generously with Nutella, then top with fruit and a sprinkling of hazelnuts. Serve immediately.



Fruit Pizza

Submitted by Maria Love

Ingredients

Sugar Cookie Dough (ready-to-bake, or your favorite from-scratch recipe)

1/2 cup cream cheese

2 tablespoons sugar (more or less to taste)

1/4 teaspoon vanilla extract

1 tablespoon milk

Selection of fruits: berries, kiwi fruit, bananas, pineapple, mandarin orange sections, halved grapes

Instructions

Spread the sugar cookie dough onto a pizza pan and bake until done (because the dough might be thicker than a normal cookie, a little extra baking might be needed.)

Mix the cream cheese, sugar, vanilla extract and milk until smooth and spreadable. Spread it onto the cooled cookie “pizza” and then decorate with your favorite fruits. (This is a perfect job for children/grandchildren!)

