

“SIMPLY REAL ITALIAN”

I was inspired this week. I got out an old Italian cookbook of mine and put together week of meals that are all inspired by real Italian family food. Italian and French dishes are the real comfort foods in our home, so I can't help but boast that these recipes are soooooo good! The extra recipes are amazing. The “Marinated Eggs” are super- nutritious and the perfect healthy snack, and the “Chocolate Polenta Pudding Cake” is luscious...a perfect treat. (Just a reminder, I like to avoid all sugar during the week then reward myself with a little weekend treat. I definitely don't recommend eating a dessert every day.) Buon Appetito!



ITALIAN SAUSAGE STUFFED CANNELLONI



SICILIAN MINT SAUCE OVER WHITE FISH



FLORENTINE STEAK



ROASTED PEPPERS



TUSCAN BEANS WITH CHICKEN



ROMAN SALAD



ITALIAN MARINATED EGGS

WHAT'S FOR DINNER

- Bistecco di Firenze con Puntarelle e Peperoni (Florentine Steak with Roman Salad and Roasted Peppers)
- Fagioli Toscani con Pollo (Tuscan Beans with Chicken)
- Italian Sausage Stuffed Cannelloni
- Sicilian Mint Sauce over White Fish

EXTRAS

- Budino di Polenta e Cioccolata (Chocolate Polenta Pudding Cake)

NOURISHING ADDITIONS

- Italian Marinated Eggs

PLANNING NOTES

- White cannellini beans are used this week and must be dry beans that have been soaked for 2-12 hours before continuing with recipe



CHOCOLATE POLENTA PUDDING CAKE

BISTECCO DI FIRENZE CON PUNTARELLE E PEPERONI ***(Florentine Steak with Roman Salad and Roasted Peppers)***

Total Time: 45-60 minutes

**Steak may be seared under an oven broiler as a substitute to an outdoor grill.*

Ingredients:

16-20 ounces steak, such as New York, Ribeye or Sirloin

Juice of 1 lemon

Salt and pepper

2-3 large bell peppers

extra virgin olive oil

2 cloves of garlic, minced and separated

4-6 anchovy filets

¼ cup Parmesan cheese, finely grated

1 head of Romaine lettuce leaves, cleaned and dried

2 tablespoons butter

¼ cup dry breadcrumbs

¼ cup flat-leaf (*Italian*) parsley, finely chopped

½ cup kalamata olives, pitted and finely chopped

Marinate steak in lemon juice and a liberal amount of salt and pepper while preparing other ingredients. Preheat outdoor grill (*or broiler*) after preparing salad ingredients, then grill right after finishing roasted peppers dish.

For peppers, coat peppers in oil and place under a broiler until skin begins to blacken. Rotate once or twice until all skin has begun to blacken. Place peppers in a paper lunch bag or plastic ziplock bag (*plastic will work better, but may also be a chemical concern.*) Let sit for at least 30 minutes while preparing other ingredients.

For salad, place 1 garlic clove and anchovies in a small food processor and puree into a paste. Transfer to a bowl and stir in ¼ cup olive oil and Parmesan cheese. Place lettuce leaves on a serving platter, sprinkle with salt and pepper, and pour dressing over leaves just before serving.

Melt butter in a small skillet or saucepan and sauté remaining minced garlic clove and breadcrumbs for 2-3 minutes, stirring often until toasted. Place breadcrumbs in a mixing bowl with the parsley, olives, and a liberal amount of salt and pepper. Remove peppers from bag and carefully remove stalks, seeds, and peel away skin. Slice into 1-2 inch strips and gently toss with breadcrumb and olive mixture.

Grill steak for 3-5 minutes per side, depending on thickness, for medium-rare. Serve steak with dressed salad and roasted peppers.

FAGIOLI TOSCANI CON POLLO *(Tuscan Beans with Chicken)*

Total Time: 2-6 hours

**This recipe was created using slow-cooker. If time allows, beans and chicken can be simmered over higher heat for less time, but must be supervised.*

**Dry beans that have been soaked for 2-12 hours is required for this recipe.*

Ingredients:

6-10 pieces of boneless chicken
1 pound white cannellini beans or white kidney beans that have been soaked for 2-12 hours
1 onion, sliced
½ cup sage leaves
salt and pepper
1 bunch of spinach leaves (*about 2 cups*)
¼ onion, finely sliced
2 tomatoes, seeded and sliced
1 tablespoon white balsamic vinegar

Place chicken, beans and onions in a large stockpot or slow cooker. Fill with enough water to cover contents by 1-2 inches. Add sage leaves and a liberal amount of salt and pepper. Simmer in a slow cooker for up to 6 hours, until beans are soft. If you are able to supervise dish, bring to a boil and keep on a light simmer for 2 hours, until beans are soft. Stir spinach into beans and chicken just until wilted. Season as needed.

In a small bowl, gently mix onions, tomatoes, vinegar and salt and pepper to taste. Serve bean dish with a small serving of onion and tomato mixture.

ITALIAN SAUSAGE STUFFED CANNELLONI

Total Time: 45 minutes

**I don't usually recommend eating pasta, but this is an Italian week of recipes. You can find alternative grain pasta options or just serve the filling with melted cheese and skip the pasta altogether.*

Ingredients:

Extra virgin olive oil
½ onion, chopped
2 garlic cloves, minced
1 pound loose Italian sausage (*or squeezed out of links*)
¼ cup tomato paste
salt and pepper
¼ cup basil, finely chopped
1 ½ cups ricotta cheese
cannelloni pasta
2 cups mozzarella cheese, cut into large slices

Preheat oven to 400°F. Bring a large stockpot of water to a rolling boil.

Sauté onions in olive oil for 5-7 minutes, until translucent. Add garlic and sausage and sauté until sausage begins to brown. Add tomato paste and a liberal amount of salt and pepper. Continue to sauté until sausage is completely cooked. Remove from heat and stir in basil and ricotta and until smooth.

Meanwhile, season boiling water with a small handful of salt and cook pasta until very al dente (*not quite fully cooked*). Stuff pasta with sausage filling and place in a baking dish. Pour remaining filling (*if any*) over pasta, then top with mozzarella cheese. Bake for 8-10 minutes, until cheese is bubbling and beginning to brown. Let cool for 5 minutes, then serve.

SICILIAN MINT SAUCE OVER WHITE FISH

Total Time: 20 minutes

**This recipe may be served with a simple side salad or lightly steamed vegetables.*

Ingredients:

1-2 pounds firm white fish, such as halibut, seabass
or cod
salt and pepper
¼ cup arrowroot powder and/or all-purpose flour
2 tablespoons butter
extra virgin olive oil
¼ of a medium onion, finely sliced
1 garlic clove, finely minced
2 teaspoons honey
1/3 cup fresh mint and oregano, finely chopped
2-3 tablespoons white balsamic vinegar or lemon juice

Season fish with salt and pepper, then dredge in arrowroot powder and/or flour, shaking to remove excess. Bring butter and ¼ cup olive oil to medium-high heat and sear fish for 3-5 minutes per side, depending on thickness, until fully cooked (*just beginning to flake*). Place remaining ingredients in a bowl and mix until well blended. Pour ½ cup olive oil in bowl, stirring to incorporate. Spoon sauce evenly over fish to serve.

ITALIAN MARINATED EGGS

Ingredients:

Hard-boiled eggs, peeled (*see cooking note below*)
Large handful of fresh oregano, mint, and/or basil
1 garlic clove, roughly chopped
5-6 anchovy filets
dash of freshly ground pepper
2 tablespoons tomato paste
1 cup extra virgin olive oil

To hard-boil eggs, place eggs in a medium saucepan and cover with water. Bring to a boil then remove from heat and cover for 9 minutes. Remove from hot water, then let cool. Gently roll egg around to crack entire shell, then peel, using water if needed.

Place herbs in a small food processor and pulse until finely chopped. Add garlic, anchovies and pepper, then pulse until pureed with herbs. Transfer to a bowl and stir in tomato paste and olive oil until smooth and blended. Place peeled eggs in a fully-enclosable jar or container and pour marinade over eggs. Cover and let marinate for at least 1 hour before serving. Marinated eggs may be stored and enjoyed for up to 1 week. Preserve marinade for more batches of eggs, or use for other recipes.

BUDINO DI POLENTA E CIOCCOLATA *(Chocolate Polenta Pudding Cake)*

Total Time: 60+ minutes

Ingredients:

2 cups milk

$\frac{3}{4}$ cups coarsely ground cornmeal (*polenta*)

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup, plus 3 tablespoons sugar, plus 1 tablespoon for optional whipped cream topping

$\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon salt

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup orange juice and zest of $\frac{1}{2}$ large orange (*separated- zest orange first*)

8 ounces bittersweet chocolate, plus 1 tablespoon shaved chocolate for garnish

1 teaspoon cinnamon

$\frac{1}{8}$ teaspoon cayenne pepper

4 large eggs, separated

1 tablespoon vanilla extract

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup heavy whipping cream, plus 1 cup for optional whipped cream topping

Bring milk to a simmer. Meanwhile whisk cornmeal, $\frac{1}{2}$ cup sugar and salt in a metal bowl. Whisk hot milk and orange juice into cornmeal mixture. Clean out pan used to heat milk and half-fill with water and place over low heat. Place bowl with cornmeal mixture over the pan with water. Cover and cook for 40 minutes, stirring often, until polenta is thick and stiff.

Preheat oven to 350°F. Butter an 8-inch springform pan.

Use a knife or food processor to finely chop $\frac{2}{3}$ of chocolate and extra tablespoon. Roughly chop remaining chocolate into chunks. Remove polenta from heat and whisk in finely chopped chocolate, orange zest, cinnamon, pepper, egg yolks and vanilla. Place 1 cup of this mixture in a small bowl and whisk in $\frac{1}{2}$ cup cream.

Whip egg whites until frothy. Add 3 tablespoons sugar and whip until soft peaks form. Gently fold egg whites into chocolate mixture without cream, just until small ribbons of egg whites can be seen. Fold chocolate chunks into this mixture.

Pour half the egg white batter into the pan, then use a spoon to hollow out the center of the batter. Pour the chocolate mixture with cream into this center hole, then pour remaining egg white batter over everything. Bake for 1 hour until a knife comes out clean on sides of cake, and with streaks from center of cake. Let cool for 15 minutes.

Whip remaining $\frac{1}{2}$ cup cream with 1 tablespoons of sugar and a dash of vanilla until soft peaks form (*optional*). Top cake with shavings of chocolate and serve with fresh whipped cream.