

ALKALINE ITALIAN DELIGHTS

50 Delicious & Authentic Italian Cuisines
For Your Whole Family!



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Introduction

There is no doubt that Italian cuisines is one of the most popular cuisines across the world, famous for its simplicity and healthy dishes. Italian food prides itself on fresh herbs and spices to infuse natural flavors, and being balanced in nutrients. Several key ingredients: pasta, pureed sun-dried tomatoes, olive oil, oregano, rosemary and basil form the base of rich and savory Italian cuisines.

In this Alkaline Italian Delights, you will discover 50 amazing recipes on how to cook authentic Italian cuisines inside the comforts of your own kitchen. Learn to master appetizers, entrees, salads, desserts and side dishes - the Italian way!


You'll also learn how to make vegan substitutes for ricotta cheese, as well as popular Italian sauces like Italian red sauce, Garlic butter sauce and sage butter sauce.

Vegetarians will also be delighted in the fact that there are meatless options for each recipe!

Now it's time for you to get in touch with your inner Italian chef and surrender yourself to these delicious Italian food!

The Perfect Panini



 What's better to tickle your taste buds than a deliciously warm Panini? There are many variations, but this one is a crowd favorite. This recipe is not only easy, but also fast to make. Keep the ingredients on hand often so you can slap it together for a toasty treat!



The Perfect Panini

Here's what you need:

Ciabatta or sourdough bread cut in slices (need 4-6 slices for 2-3 panini sandwiches)

4 of olive oil

1 teaspoon of dried oregano

1 teaspoon of garlic salt

6 sliced baby portabella mushrooms

1 cup of baby spinach

½ of a zucchini squash - sliced in 1/8 inch thicknesses

1 sliced tomato

½ cup of non-fat skim Mozzarella or Provolone cheese

Here's what you do:

1. Heat an indoor grill brushed with olive oil.
2. While grill is heating, mix 4 tablespoons of olive oil with oregano and garlic salt with a pastry brush. Put slices of zucchini, mushrooms, and spinach on the grill and sprinkle with a little garlic salt.
3. Brush outside of bread with oil and herb mixture. Remove veggies from grill.
4. Lay one slice of Ciabatta (oil side down) on the grill. Place veggie mixture on top of slice of bread. Place slices of cheese on top of veggies. Put other slice of bread on top of veggies.
5. Brush top of bread with oil and herb mixture. Close lid on grill to press Panini together.
6. Cook until browned on both sides.



Minestrone Primavera



☕ Everyone knows that the best things in life are taken slow and easy right? Well, this slow-cooked minestrone soup is guaranteed to make your knees weak! So sit down to a bowl of this little piece of Heaven and enjoy!

Don't tell the guys, but it is very healthy when made with fresh veggies and served with toasted garlic bread and a smile.

Get everything together first.



Minestrone Primavera

Here's what you need:


2 – 15 oz. cans of cannellini beans or 16 oz dried cannellini beans soaked overnight (use canned if you don't have much time)
 2 cloves garlic crushed
 2-3 sprigs of thyme
 3 small tomatoes, chopped
 3 tablespoons of extra virgin olive oil
 2 carrots (sliced)
 1 stick of celery (chopped)
 1 onion (slivered)
 1 leek (sliced)
 ½ cabbage (cut up in bite sized pieces)
 1 or 2 potatoes (cubed)
 1 can of peeled tomatoes (chopped)
 Other vegetables that are good in it are black leaf kale, chard, spinach etc.
 2 pints vegetable stock
 1 teaspoon of Italian seasoning
 ½ teaspoon of oregano
 Sea salt and pepper to taste

Here's what you do:

1. If you plan to use dried beans, soak them overnight in room temp water. Rinse soaked beans then add back about 8 cups of water and bring it to a boil.
2. If you are using canned beans, mix them into about 6 cups of water and bring to a boil.
3. Add in the garlic, thyme, and small tomatoes and cover. Reduce heat and simmer for about 2 hours, until the beans are tender. (Only about 30 minutes if using canned beans)
4. While the beans are cooking, clean vegetables and cut them into cubes and slices.
5. In a large pot or skillet, add olive oil, sea salt, pepper, Italian seasoning and oregano and sauté all veggies for about 5 minutes.
6. While veggies are sautéing and using a strainer, remove the thyme from the beans and discard.
7. Using the same strainer, remove about half the beans from the water and puree or smash them with a fork in a bowl.
8. Add the smashed/puréed beans, chopped veggies, and vegetable stock to the left over beans in the water. You should end up with a thick soup. If it looks like it is going to be too thin, just don't put in as much vegetable stock, or you can thicken with cornstarch later.
9. Simmer with the lid on for about an hour and a half. Taste to see if you need to add any salt, pepper, or other seasonings.

Italian Green Beans Bucatini



 My nieces and nephews have never been much for green beans, but this version is a favorite of theirs. They have a sweet tenderness that will make them roll their eyes and say, “Mmmmm, mom, this is the best!” while they reach across the table to refill their plates. You don’t have to tell them that this dish is full of anti-aging nutrients and fiber. They’ll thank you later for that. Oh my goodness, this dish is good! You will start craving it again as soon as you clean up your kitchen.



Italian Green Beans Bucatini

Here's what you need:

1 lb fresh green beans, cleaned with the ends cut off
1 large can of peeled whole tomatoes – or chopped if you like smaller pieces
2 cloves garlic (minced)
2 carrots (finely chopped)
1 onion (finely chopped)
2 tablespoons Extra Virgin Olive Oil
Vegetable stock
8 leaves fresh basil (or 1 teaspoon of dried)
Bucatini pasta (or ziti if you can't find Bucatini)
Salt & pepper to taste


Here's what you do:

1. Sauté carrots, onion, and garlic in the olive oil for about 3 minutes. Add the tomatoes. Simmer for about 5 minutes and add the green beans. Season veggies with salt and cover.
2. Simmer for about 30-40 minutes, stirring occasionally. As mixture begins to dry, add some vegetable stock a little at a time.
3. After about 20 minutes, add chopped basil leaves. (If using dried, add them after 10 minutes)
4. After about 40 minutes, check to see if caramelizing is taking place. You want the veggies to start forming a bit of a sauce with the stock.
5. While the veggies are cooking, boil your pasta in water and sea salt.
6. Drain pasta and toss with the green bean mixture.

**For an alternative boost to this recipe, you can add in a ½ cup of crumbled bacon bits

Potato and Spinach Gnocchi



 These little pillow dumplings are named after the Italian composer Pietro Gnocchi, and they will definitely make you want to sing. They are very versatile and easy to make. You can also make them ahead of time and freeze them. I have included three different sauces you can put on them, but the possibilities are endless. I like to add a little spinach to mine to give them some color and boost of nutrients. Kids love them because they are just plain fun to eat and super good!

Potato and Spinach Gnocchi

Here's what you need:

2 pounds of red or Idaho potatoes
 2/3 lb fresh spinach
 2– 2 ½ cups of all-purpose flour
 ¾ teaspoon of sea salt
 Ingredients for preferred sauce (see below)

Here's what you do:

1. Boil spinach, squeeze the water out well and set it aside to cool. Once it is cool, mince it into fine shreds.
2. Boil the potatoes with the skin on until tender. Once soft, drain and run cool water over them until you can handle them then peel the potatoes.
3. Using a potato ricer, mash the potatoes thoroughly. Add the sea salt and the minced spinach. Mix well.
4. Work in the flour into the potato mixture until you have formed a soft dough.
5. Roll pieces of the dough into cylinders, about 1" in diameter and 6" long.
6. Using a paring knife, cut the cylinders into small sections about 1" long. These are called gnocchi.
7. Make light grooves in each gnocchi with a fork so that the sauce can penetrate the gnocchi. Place the gnocchi on a well-floured dishcloth so that it doesn't stick.
8. In a medium sized pot, bring about 6 cups of salted water to a boil. Once the water is boiling, gently place the gnocchi in the water. As the gnocchi begin to float to the surface, remove them gently and add more until all are cooked.

Sauce choices:


Garlic-Butter sauce: Melt a stick of butter and add 1 teaspoon of garlic and 1 teaspoon of Italian seasoning. Pour over cooked gnocchi and gently toss until well covered.

Sage-Butter sauce: Melt a stick of butter and add 1 teaspoon of sage. Pour over cooked gnocchi and gently toss until well covered.

Italian red sauce: 1 large can of crushed tomatoes or tomato puree. 1 tablespoon of extra virgin olive oil. 1 tablespoon of Italian seasoning. 1 teaspoon of minced garlic with ¼ teaspoon of sea salt. Simmer together for about 20 minutes.

Orzo with Mushrooms in Lemon Pepper Sauce



 Sautéed mushrooms are a favorite, but add this buttery lemon pepper sauce & orzo pasta, and your guests will rave over your culinary expertise!

They don't have to know how easy it is to make! The orzo pasta gives the mushrooms a rich, barley taste that makes your mouth tingle. It makes for a heavenly side dish that will definitely melt in your mouth. If you want to turn it into an amazing entrée, just add shrimp to the mushroom sauté, and you have an entire meal in one dish!

Orzo with Mushrooms in Lemon Pepper Sauce

Here's what you need:

- 1 cup orzo pasta – uncooked
- 2 tablespoons fresh parsley – chopped
- ¼ teaspoon onion powder with a pinch of sea salt
- 1 pound of sliced baby portabella mushrooms
- 4 tablespoons of unsalted butter
- 2 teaspoons garlic – minced
- 1½ tablespoons of lemon pepper

** Optional variation: If you want to add meat, use ½ pound of uncooked and deveined shrimp or 2 boneless, skinless chicken breasts sliced in bite-sized pieces

Here's what you do:

1. In about 2 quarts of salted water, boil orzo for 7-10 minutes. Drain and set aside.
2. Add chopped parsley and ¼ teaspoon of onion powder and sea salt and stir; cover with foil to keep it warm.
3. While you are cooking your pasta, melt 4 tablespoons of unsalted butter in a skillet. Add minced garlic to the pan and sauté for about 1 minute, stirring constantly.
4. Add sliced mushrooms to the melted butter; sauté about 2 minutes or until the mushrooms begin to change colors. (Add shrimp or chicken here if you want to add meat to the recipe)
5. Add lemon pepper to mushrooms and sauté another 30-45 seconds.
6. Pour mushrooms over orzo pasta and toss.



Roasted Tomato Feta Sauce with Whole Wheat Rigatoni



☕ You know, the thing I love about Italian pasta dishes is that they are healthy and energizing, yet they are so easy to make and change up in order give variety to your culinary repertoire!

I like using the San Marzano canned tomatoes for this recipe because they are a little thicker and sweeter than your traditional Roma tomato, but if you can't find Marzano tomatoes, go ahead and use Roma. This pasta recipe is a delightful side dish that adds a warm and inviting heap of happiness to every plate on the table. It's quick and easy, but healthy and delightful.

Roasted Tomato Feta Sauce with Whole Wheat Rigatoni

Here's what you need:

- 1 package of Whole Wheat Rigatoni pasta
- 1 large can of Pomodoro San Marzano Plum Tomatoes (or Roma Tomatoes), alternatively use fresh tomatoes
- 4 tablespoons of Extra Virgin Olive oil
- 1 small yellow onion, sliced in thin slivers
- 1 small green bell pepper or ½ a large one – diced
- 3 cloves of garlic – crushed
- 4-5 sprigs of fresh oregano – chopped
- 1 teaspoon of red pepper flakes
- ¼ teaspoon of sea salt
- ½ teaspoon of Italian seasoning
- 2 cups of water


Cheese – Any kind of crumbly cheese will do. Our favorite for this recipe is goat cheese, but feta is good as well as cotija. We have also stirred in a little large curd cottage cheese when we want it to remind us of lasagna.

Here's what you do:

1. Preheat your oven on bake at 400 degrees. In a 9x13 casserole dish, drizzle 4 tablespoons of olive oil over the bottom of the dish to lightly cover the entire bottom. Pour the can of Marzano tomatoes over the olive oil, and with a sharp knife, slice tomatoes in ½ inch slices.
2. Slice your onion, chop your oregano, dice your bell pepper, and crush your garlic. Don't you love those "recipe verbs"?
3. Okay, so distribute all seasonings, vegetables and herbs into the sliced tomatoes and put the casserole dish in the preheated oven. Bake for 50 minutes until bubbly and caramelization has occurred with the tomatoes and onions. While this bakes, take a saucepan and boil about 6 cups of water with 1 Teaspoon of sea salt and add your pasta.
4. Boil for about 10 minutes according to package instructions. When done, drain the pasta and set aside in a large bowl.
5. After 50 minutes, take your casserole out of the oven and stir the tomato mixture up with a fork a bit and return it to the oven for another 10 minutes to continue to cook out more of the moisture. Next, you remove the tomato mixture from the casserole dish and transfer it to the saucepan you cooked the pasta in and put it on medium heat.
6. Pour in about 2 cups of water and using a ricer, smash up all of the ingredients together and let simmer for about 10 minutes. Pour the tomato mixture over your pasta and toss it up.
7. Stir in about a cup of your choice of cheese and after you serve it onto your plates, sprinkle a little more cheese over the top.

Homemade Ricotta Veggie Bake



 The best thing about oven-baked cheese is the anticipation - peering through the glass window to see the creamy cheese melt on the colorful vegetables. What if you could replace the dairy with tofu, which is equally as nutritious and even healthier? Remember to select organic tofu if possible.

Homemade Ricotta Veggie Bake

Here's what you need:

First prepare your homemade ricotta.....

Cheesecloth

2 quarts of 2% milk

1 cup of plain yogurt

1 cup of fat-free half and half*

2 teaspoons of white vinegar

1/2 teaspoon of sea salt

1/2 teaspoon of dried oregano

*half and half is product made of half milk and half cream. Land O Lakes make a fat-free half & half that provides the creamy taste of regular half & half without the fat. The milk and cream in their half & half doesn't contain preservatives or artificial flavors, but the drawback of using it is that it increases the corn syrup to create the same taste and texture as regular half and half. For a healthier alternative, use plain yogurt or soy milk

Here's a Vegan Substitute:

If you don't want to make traditional ricotta...

8 ounces of firm tofu

1/2 teaspoon of garlic – minced

1 shallot – minced

1/2 teaspoon of plum vinegar

1 tablespoon of lemon juice – fresh squeezed

1 teaspoon of extra-virgin olive oil

1 teaspoon of nutritional yeast

1/2 teaspoon of fresh basil – chopped

1/2 teaspoon fresh parsley – chopped

Sea salt and fresh black pepper – coarsely ground

Using a potato masher, press the tofu until completely crumbled. Add the rest of the ingredients and continue mashing and combining. You should have a lumpy, cheesy mixture resembling ricotta cheese.

Homemade Ricotta Veggie Bake (cont.)

Next prepare your vegetables....

- 1 medium sized zucchini – cleaned and sliced in 1" rounds
- 1 yellow squash – cleaned and sliced in 1" rounds
- 1 yellow onion – peeled and sliced in bite sized chunks
- 5 Roma tomatoes – cleaned and cut on 1" slices
- 2 tablespoons of extra virgin olive oil
- 4-5 Sprigs of Fresh Basil – chopped
- 2 cloves of garlic – crushed
- ½ teaspoon of sea salt
- Italian seasoning
- Extra sprigs of fresh Basil and slices of lemon for garnish

Here's what you do:

1. Bring your milk to a boil in a large saucepan. Remove the milk from the heat and add in your yogurt, half and half, vinegar, sea salt, and oregano.
2. Return the mixture to the heat and bring to a gentle boil for one to two minutes, until the milk curdles. While your milk mixture is heating up, put a couple of layers of cheesecloth into a strainer put it on top of a large bowl.
3. Pour the milk mixture over the cheesecloth in the strainer and drain for 10-15 minutes. Lift the cheesecloth with curds out of the bowl and gently squeeze excess liquid out of the cheese. Set your cheese aside while you prepare your veggies.
4. Preheat your oven to 350 degrees on bake. Clean and slice up your veggies. Put them in a large bowl.
5. Drizzle olive oil over the veggies and toss with chopped basil, crushed garlic, and sea salt. I like to grill my veggies on an indoor grill, but you can bake them in a casserole dish or sauté them in olive oil as well. Make sure you do not grill, sauté, or bake them too long though. You want the veggies to maintain their crispness. Just make sure they still have their bright, rich color and are not too flexible.
6. Spread the veggies evenly into a 9x13 casserole dish.
7. Spoon the homemade ricotta cheese in medium sized dollops all around the veggies until all is applied. Sprinkle a little Italian seasoning over the mounds of ricotta.
8. Place casserole in a 350 degree oven and bake until bubbly and ricotta has melted down into the veggies. Spoon helpings onto a plate and garnish with a sprig of fresh basil and slice of lemon.

Creamy Mushroom Fettuccini



☕ Okay, so you just got home from a long day, and you realize you never made a plan for dinner, and very soon you will have a house full of hungry family members looking to be not only fed, but spoiled because they know you live to please right!? Well, maybe it's not quite like that, but you know where I'm going here right?

The point is, you need to come up with a hearty, nutritious meal, and you don't have much time before dinner. Here's the perfect dish to place before your hungry brood for those rushed nights with little time to cook. There are only 4 ingredients, yet the dish is heavenly!



Creamy Mushroom Fettuccini

Here's what you need:

1 package of wheat fettuccini pasta

Sea Salt

Extra Virgin Olive Oil

1 eight ounce package of sliced baby Portobello mushrooms

*Optional meat addition: boneless-skinless chicken breast cut in bite-sized pieces

1 can of fat free cream of chicken soup, or vegetable broth (you can prepare your own vegetable broth)

1 eight ounce block of reduced fat cream cheese – cut in small blocks

Here's what you do:

1. Get your pasta started by boiling about 6-8 cups of water with sea salt. Put your pasta in once the water starts boiling and cook for about 14 minutes.
2. While your pasta is cooking, put olive oil in a sauce pan and add mushroom slices with sea salt to taste. If you are using chicken in this recipe, you will also add in your sliced chicken here and sauté it all together. For an additional boost of nutrition and color, you can add broccoli caps too! Add the broccoli last though because it takes less time to cook than the mushrooms and chicken.
3. Saute the mushrooms (with chicken and/or broccoli for about 4-5 minutes or until you can see that the chicken is completely cooked, then add your soup and cream cheese. Stir this constantly to melt and combine the soup and cream cheese well. It will form a smooth sauce.
4. By now your pasta should be ready. Drain the pasta in a strainer and put it back into the pot.
5. Pour your sauce over the pasta and toss it well to cover all of the pasta with the sauce.

Serve it up on a plate with a side of salad greens, and you're done! And it didn't take but about 20 minutes to prepare!

Spinach Alfredo Farfalle



🍷 This is one of my favorite Italian dishes to cook around Christmas time. The reason is because it is delicious, super easy, and it just reminds me of Christmas! The tiny sweet bites of red bell pepper mixed in with the spinach are like little presents under the tree! And of course the bow ties just wrap it all up to make the perfect delectable gift for your table!

Spinach Alfredo Farfalle

Here's what you need:

- 1 eight ounce package of whole wheat Farfalle pasta – or bow tie pasta
- ½ cup of Extra Virgin Olive Oil
- 2 cloves of garlic – minced
- 1 red bell pepper – washed, seeded, and chopped
- 1 package of frozen chopped spinach (thawed and drained)
- ¼ cup of vegetable stock (can substitute chicken stock)
- ½ cup of fat free half and half*
- 1 cup of grated Parmesan cheese
- 1 tablespoon of fresh parsley – chopped
- ¼ teaspoon sea salt
- ¼ teaspoon of ground pepper

*half and half is product made of half milk and half cream. Land O Lakes make a fat-free half & half that provides the creamy taste of regular half & half without the fat. The milk and cream in their half & half doesn't contain preservatives or artificial flavors, but the drawback of using it is that it increases the corn syrup to create the same taste and texture as regular half and half. For a healthier alternative, use plain yogurt or soy milk


Here's what you do:

1. Get your pasta started by boiling about 6-8 cups of water with sea salt. Put your pasta in once the water starts boiling and cook according to package directions. While this is cooking, work on your sauce.
2. In a medium saucepan, heat your olive oil on low and add sliced bell pepper and minced garlic with ¼ teaspoon of sea salt.
3. After the pepper slices begin to soften, add the spinach (be sure to squeeze the moisture out of it really good before cooking) and sauté for about 2 minutes. Add vegetable stock or chicken stock and stir. Add in your fat free half and half, Parmesan cheese, and chopped parsley and blend by stirring constantly until the sauce begins to thicken. As you stir, season with a little ground black pepper – about ¼ teaspoon will probably get it.
4. By now your pasta should be done, so go ahead and drain it and put it back into the pot you boiled it in then pour your sauce over the pasta. Toss it really good to coat all of the bow ties.

*If you want to add chicken or shrimp to this dish, you will want to add it in when you are sautéing the bell peppers and spinach.

Boca Italian Sausage Rigatoni



 Sausage and pasta just seem to go perfectly together, but who wants all the fat and cholesterol of traditional sausage? Here's a healthy recipe that satisfies your Italian sausage craving.

Bear in mind that all sausage, including Boca sausage, is high in salt content. Because of this, there is no other salt added to this recipe besides the salt in the pasta water, so go lightly on the salt in your pasta this time! You won't miss it a bit.



Boca Italian Sausage Rigatoni

Here's what you need:

- 1 sixteen ounce package of rigatoni pasta
- 1 package of Boca Italian Sausage (sliced in ¼ inch rounds)

*Note: Boca Italian Sausage is a meatless sausage made primarily from soy proteins.

- 3 tablespoons of Extra Virgin Olive Oil
- 2 cloves of garlic – minced
- 1 green bell pepper – washed, seeded, and chopped in large bites
- 1 small yellow onion – chopped
- 4-5 sprigs of fresh oregano – chopped
- 3 tablespoons of fresh parsley – chopped
- ½ teaspoon of Italian seasoning
- 1 large can of crushed tomatoes

Here's what you do:


1. Get your pasta started by boiling about 6-8 cups of water with sea salt. Put your pasta in once the water starts boiling and cook according to package directions. While this is cooking, work on your sauce.
2. In a large saucepan, heat your olive oil on medium heat. Add to the oil your bell pepper, parsley, onions, oregano, and Italian seasoning.

Note: Don't add any salt because your sausage has plenty and it will cook in later)

3. After sautéing the seasonings and vegetables together for about 2 minutes, stir in your sliced sausage and continue sautéing until sausage begins to brown.
4. Add crushed tomatoes to the vegetables and sausage and let it all simmer for about 10 minutes on low heat.
5. By now your pasta should be done. Drain your pasta in a strainer and pour it onto a serving dish. Pour your sauce over the pasta and mix it in slightly.
6. Oh my, you are going to love this!!

Eggplant Italiano



 Next time Daddy wants to crank up the grill, give these tasty little treats a try! The smoky combination of cheeses and spices along with eggplant and tomato are sure to create a party in your mouth that will make you forget everything else on your plate. They make an excellent side dish to go with baked chicken or even Dad's grilled steak!

Eggplant Italiano

Here's what you need:


- 1 large eggplant cut into 1" slices
- 2 large tomatoes sliced into 1/2 " slices (you need the same number of slices as you have of eggplant)
- 1/4 cup of Parmesan cheese – shredded
- 3 cloves of garlic – minced
- 2 tablespoons of basil – finely minced
- 1 teaspoon of oregano – finely minced
- 6 tablespoons of Extra Virgin Olive Oil
- 1-2 lemons – cut in half
- 1 cup of part-skim mozzarella cheese – finely shredded
- Italian seasoning

Here's what you do:

1. Get a medium sized bowl and combine your Parmesan cheese, garlic, basil, and oregano.
2. Pour olive oil over the cheese mixture and squeeze your lemons over it to add about 3 tablespoons of juice. Stir it all up to combine well then set aside to rest.
3. Cook your eggplant slices on the grill because it is a dry heat that keeps them from becoming mushy. It also gives them a smoky flavor. About 2-3 minutes on each side should be good.
4. Remove your eggplant slices from the grill and put a spoonful of cheese mixture on top of each slice.
5. Put a slice of tomato on top of the cheese mixture, and top the tomato with mozzarella cheese.
6. Sprinkle a little Italian seasoning on the mozzarella.
7. Place each slice on a cookie sheet and bake them in a 350 degree oven for about 3 minutes – just long enough to melt the cheese.

Roma-licious Eggplant Pita-Melt



 Pitas have become very popular items on the sandwich menu these days. Why? Well perhaps it's because they are easy to make, healthy to eat, and the varieties are endless! What is a pita, you might ask?

Well, it's a flat bread that is formed in a circle and baked. After it's cooled, it is usually cut into a half moon shape and then split in the middle to create a little bread pocket. You can fill it with your favorite combination of flavors and bake it to make a hearty, healthy meal! Here's one of my favorites...



Roma-licious Eggplant Pita-Melt

Here's what you need:

....use these ingredients to make a spread

- 1/2 cup of sliced ripe olives
- 8 ounces of goat cheese
- 1 package of frozen chopped spinach – thawed and drained
- 1 Roma tomato
- 2 tablespoons of rosemary
- 5 tablespoons of Extra Virgin Olive Oil

....use these ingredients to make a wash

- 2 tablespoons of balsamic vinegar
- 3 cloves of garlic – minced
- 1/4 cup fresh basil leaves - finely chopped
- 1/8 teaspoon of sea salt
- 1 teaspoon of black pepper
- 1/4 cup of Extra Virgin Olive Oil

....use these ingredients to make your pita stuffing

- 1 large eggplant – Washed and cut long-ways into 1/2 - 1/4 " slices
- 2 large sweet red peppers – washed, seeded, and sliced in strips

And then of course you need about 8 whole wheat pita halves.

Here's what you do:

1. Make a spread with the first six ingredients by blending them in a food processor or blender. Set this aside until you are ready to use it.
2. Next, make your wash by combining your vinegar, garlic, basil, sea salt, black pepper, and olive oil in a bowl. Mix it all up really good.
3. Clean and slice up your veggies into strips so they will fit in the pita well. Place veggie slices on an indoor grill or in a skillet and brush the wash over them, cooking them on medium heat until they are tender.
4. Take your pita half and open it up enough to wipe about a tablespoon of spread onto each side. Slip a few veggies down in between the spread. Divide out any remaining spread and spread it over the veggies in the pitas.
5. Put the pita halves on a cookie sheet and bake them in a 350 degree oven for about 10 minutes.

Meatless Spaghetti & Meatballs



 As an Italian food fanatic, I can't resist the temptation to share my favorite Italian dish and that's spaghetti and meatballs. I can remember this dish as being my very first experience with Italian cuisine as a child. My mama would scoop out a pile of steamy pasta and plop it on my plate, then she would top it with two giant, aromatic meatballs, then pour extra sauce over it, and voila! I would stare with utter excitement at the delicious plate of heaven sitting in front of me.

This is when I learned to practice patience while I waited for my mama to serve everyone else's plates too before I dove into my dinner. I would sit there staring at my plate, fork in hand and on ready, quickly glancing around the table to know when the last plate was served, then bam! I was digging into my spaghetti with all the intensity of a ravenous mountain lion.

This new recipe is actually more healthy than my mama's traditional meatball recipe because it uses mushrooms instead of beef, but if you want to use meat for your meatballs instead of mushrooms, you can make them a little more healthy by using ground turkey instead of beef. Either way, this recipe is a family favorite, and is sure to become a favorite of your family as well.

Meatless Spaghetti & Meatballs (cont.)

Here's what you need:

About a pound of fresh mushrooms rinsed, and finely chopped. (I like to use baby portobellos, but you can use any kind of mushroom that is available in your market)

**If you are using meat, use either a pound of ground turkey, or a ½ pound of ground turkey and a ½ pound of ground mutton.

½ cup of water

1 egg – beaten with a fork until evenly yellow

3 cloves of minced garlic

¼ cup of fresh parsley – finely chopped

¼ cup of grated Pecorino cheese (do not add any salt to this recipe because the cheese has enough to flavor adequately)

½ teaspoon of ground black pepper

2/3 cup of bread crumbs

½ cup of Extra Virgin Olive Oil

Here's what you do:

1. Rinse and chop your mushrooms into fine pieces to resemble ground beef.
2. Bring ½ cup of water to a boil and add your mushrooms, simmer the mushrooms for about 1-2 minutes. Drain your mushrooms, and set them aside to cool.
3. While the mushrooms are cooling, mince your egg, garlic, pepper and parsley and mix these together. When the mushrooms are room temp, add them to the egg mixture and stir well.
4. Add the cheese and bread crumbs to the mushroom and egg mixture and knead all ingredients together like a dough.
5. Take a pinch of this mixture that is large enough to roll it into about a 1 ½ inch to 2 inch ball.
6. While you are rolling your meatballs (or mushroom balls rather), let your olive oil begin to heat in a frying pan.
7. Drop each meatball into the pan and roll them around until they are browned all around.
8. As they brown, take them out one at a time and place them on a paper towel to drain.

You can serve these meatless meatballs as appetizers, or you can serve them with a tomatoey sauce over traditional whole wheat spaghetti noodles.

If you want a sauce, I like to make the Roasted Tomato Feta Sauce (minus the Feta) from an earlier recipe.



Meatless Spaghetti & Meatballs (cont.)

Here's what you need:


- 1 large can of Pomodoro San Marzano Plum Tomatoes (or Roma Tomatoes) - crushed
- **These are just my favorites, but any CRUSHED tomatoes will do
- 4 tablespoons of Extra Virgin Olive oil
- 1 small yellow onion, sliced in thin slivers
- 1 small green bell pepper or ½ a large one – diced
- 3 cloves of garlic – crushed
- 4-5 Sprigs of fresh Oregano – chopped
- 1 teaspoon of red pepper flakes
- ¼ teaspoon of sea salt
- ½ teaspoon of Italian seasoning
- 2 cups of water

Here's what you do:

1. This time, rather than doing the whole casserole dish thing, you can cook up your sauce in a large pot on the stove.
2. First get your water boiling for your pasta. Add in about a tablespoon of sea salt to season the pasta and cook according to package instructions. While that is cooking, work on your sauce:
3. Start with 4 Tablespoons of olive oil poured over the bottom of the pot to lightly cover the entire bottom.
4. Add in your sliced onion, chopped your oregano, diced bell pepper, crushed garlic, red pepper, sea salt, and Italian seasoning and sauté for about 2 minutes.
5. Next, add in your crushed tomatoes and let it all simmer for about 20 minutes.
6. When the pasta is done, drain it and set it aside in a large bowl.
7. Once the sauce has simmered about 20 minutes, add in the meatballs and gently spoon sauce over them to coat them well. Let them simmer in the sauce another 10 minutes.
8. To serve, place a pile of spaghetti in the middle of the plate then scoop out some meatballs and sauce and pour it over the middle of your mound of pasta. It's not just delicious, it's rather pretty as well!!

Italian Tomato Bean and Basil Soup



 Have you ever awakened on a cold winter morning and wanted to skip right over breakfast to lunch because you are craving a hot, tomatoey soup? Of course, this soup is best in the summer when the Romas are ripe, but in the winter, it just warms you from your tongue to your toes! It's creamy, healthy, and oh so comfy. Try it! You will think about it for days!

Italian Tomato Bean and Basil Soup

Here's what you need:

- 1 cup of dried kidney beans - rinsed & soaked in water overnight (or 2 cans if you don't get to soak the dried ones)
- 15 Fresh Roma tomatoes - chopped (or 2 large cans of Glen Muir canned crushed tomatoes if it's winter where you are)
- 2 tablespoons of Extra Virgin olive oil
- 2 red onions – chopped
- 4 cloves of garlic – chopped
- 2 cups of vegetable stock
- 3 cups of spinach
- 2 apples – peeled, cored, and chopped
- 5 carrots – washed and sliced
- 1 large avocado – chopped
- 5 sprigs of fresh basil – chopped
- 2 tablespoons of pure honey
- 1 bay leaf
- 1 teaspoon of dried oregano
- 1 teaspoon of sea salt
- 1 tablespoon of crushed red pepper
- 4-6 ounces of your favorite spiral pasta – I like Fusilli Spiral, but it's up to you

Here's what you do:

1. Take a soup pot and add about 2 Tablespoons of olive oil to the bottom and heat.
2. Add your onion and garlic and sauté until tender.
3. Add chopped Roma tomatoes (or the can of crushed if you don't have fresh Romas or are short on time), 2 cups of vegetable stock, and kidney beans and simmer while you blend the other veggies.
4. Place avocado, carrots, spinach, and apples in a blender or juicer and blend on low for about 1 minute then hit it with a burst of high speed for another 2 minutes until creamy.
5. Pour your creamed veggies into the soup pot with the tomatoes, onion, and garlic. Add in your honey, bay leaf, oregano, salt, and crushed red pepper.
6. Pour in your dried pasta and cook.
7. Simmer for about 30 minutes or cook it on a crock pot on low for about 2 hours.

🌿 Marinated Portobello Steak & Gorgonzola Spinach & Potato Mash



☕ Okay, guys, this is how you impress your wife with a good steak that is healthy too! The next time you decide to cook on the grill, go get these ingredients and cook up this dish that is absolutely heavenly.

Of course, you can garnish it with whatever you like, but I like the creaminess of the Gorgonzola creamed spinach. And what would a steak be without potatoes? This dish looks inviting on the plate and it's invigorating on the taste buds.

Marinated Portobello Steak & Gorgonzola Spinach & Potato Mash

Here's what you need:

....for the steaks

8 large portabella mushrooms with large, flat caps (trim the stem flat with the mushroom and flush out gills with clean water)
 ½ cup of lemon juice – freshly squeezed is best
 2 tablespoons pure honey
 2 tablespoons of balsamic vinegar
 2 teaspoons of freshly grated ginger
 ½ cup roasted tomatoes (in a jar)
 4 cloves of garlic – crushed
 1 green onion
 ½ cup olive oil

..... for the Gorgonzola Spinach & Potato Mash

3 tablespoons of extra virgin olive oil
 2-3 finely chopped shallots
 1 clove of garlic – minced
 4 tablespoons of whole wheat flour
 2 cups of skim milk
 4 ounces of gorgonzola cheese
 Ground black pepper to taste
 2 pounds of fresh spinach leaves – washed and chopped well
 6-8 medium sized new potatoes

Here's what you do:


1. Wash your mushrooms and set them aside. Combine lemon juice, honey, vinegar, ginger, tomatoes, garlic, and onion in a blender or food processor and blend on low for about 1 minute. It should become thicker as it blends and turn a little lighter in color.
2. While you are blending the above ingredients, drizzle the oil in and continue to process until it is creamy. (This is your marinade)
3. Put the mushrooms in a large gallon zip lock bag or sealable container and pour the above mixture over the mushrooms and marinate for a couple of hours. While your mushrooms are marinating, prepare your creamed spinach & potatoes.

Marinated Portobello Steak & Gorgonzola Spinach & Potato Mash

4. Wash your potatoes and place them in about 8 cups of water and bring to a boil. Boil until they test tender with a fork (do not peel your potatoes).
5. Heat your olive oil and add your shallots and garlic. Sauté until tender and add flour and whisk until smooth
6. Pour in milk and continue to whisk to keep it creamy while it thickens. It should thicken to a gravy consistency. Pepper to taste (no salt because you get that from the cheese). Add in your gorgonzola cheese and continue to blend with the whisk until the cheese melts.
7. Once the cheese is melted, add in your chopped spinach leaves. Continue stirring and blending until spinach is soft.
8. Check your potatoes, and if they are tender, drain them and set them aside to cool some while you grill your steaks.
9. You can grill the steaks inside or out, but grill them until cooked through and edges curl in, basting them with the marinade on each side as they cook.
10. To plate this, first place about 2 potatoes on your dish and press down on them with a fork to smash. Spoon a little of the spinach mixture over the potatoes.
11. Place a mushroom steak over the potatoes and spoon another small portion of creamed spinach over the steak – Heavenly!

Italian Black Beans & Rice with Tomato Salsa



 This is an Italian version of one of a favorite Mexican recipe; it just has an Italian twist! It is festive and hearty but very healthy as well. You get your protein, fiber, and vegetable needs all in one! It is sure to be a family favorite.

For an added punch, if your family likes chicken, you can add a little chili powder and garlic to the bean mixture.

Italian Black Beans & Rice with Tomato Salsa

Here's what you need:

....For the Black Beans

- 1 pound of dried black beans – rinsed and soaked over night
- 1 thirty-two ounce box or vegetable broth
- Chili powder
- Chipotle powder
- 2 cloves of garlic – minced
- 4 cups of brown rice

....for the Salsa


- 6 medium sized Roma Tomatoes – chopped
- 2 green bell peppers - chopped
- 1 purple onion – chopped
- 2 tablespoons of olive oil
- 2 tablespoons of Balsamic vinegar
- The juice of one Lime
- 2 teaspoons of Italian seasoning
- 1 small bunch of cilantro – chopped (remove stems)
- 1 bunch of green onions – chopped
- 1 tablespoon of chili powder
- 1 teaspoon of ground cumin
- 2 cloves of garlic - minced

Here's what you do:

1. Prepare the beans ahead of time by rinsing them and soaking them overnight in just enough water to cover with to 2 inches above beans.
2. Drain the beans and place them in a pan and with the vegetable broth. If the liquid does not reach above the beans, add a little water to where they are just covered.
3. Add your chili & chipotle powders and garlic and bring to a boil. Let this cook for about an hour and then let it continue to simmer until the beans are very tender.
4. Prepare your four cups of brown rice according to the directions on the package.
5. While your beans are cooking, prepare your salsa. Chop your tomatoes, bell peppers, and onions and put them in a medium sized sauce pan with your oil and vinegar.
6. Squeeze the juice of one lime into the salsa, add Italian seasoning, and turn on the heat to begin a simmer
7. Add cilantro, onions, chili powder, cumin, and garlic and let it continue to simmer for about 20 minutes. On your plate, place a scoop of rice, a scoop of beans on top of the rice and the salsa on top of the beans.

Italian Brown Rice Casserole



 I love this recipe because it can be made in several different variations to please every taste. I usually make it with chicken, but I have made it with tofu as well for a vegetarian variation and then I have made it with ground Italian sausage for guests who wanted a bit more kick to their plate. So actually, it's three recipes in one!

Each variation turns out to be a completely different dish that your guests will rave over! To me, however, the topping just makes the dish pop! Once you try this topping, you will crave it on every other dish you make! Feel free to do so too!

Italian Brown Rice Casserole

Here's what you need:

1-2 Pounds of skinless, boneless chicken breasts – sliced into strips

** For a meatless version, substitute chicken with tofu or fresh sliced mushrooms

1 tablespoon of canola oil

½ teaspoon of fresh oregano – minced

½ teaspoon of thyme – chopped

1 medium yellow onion – chopped

1 sweet red pepper – sliced in thin strips

1 zucchini – cleaned and sliced then cut slices in half

1 cup of uncooked brown rice

2 medium carrots – chopped

3 vegetable bouillon cubes

3 cups of boiling water

1 eight ounce package of fresh sliced mushrooms – chopped

3 Roma tomatoes - peeled, seeded, and chopped

½ cup of sliced black olives

Topping

½ cup of nutritional yeast

¼ cup of raw almonds

¼ cup of raw cashews

¼ teaspoon of garlic powder

½ teaspoon of sea salt

Put all of the above ingredients in a blender or food processor and hit the chopper a few times until finely chopped and crumbly. It should resemble the look of grated parmesan cheese.

Here's what you do:

1. Heat oil in a sauce pan or skillet and brown chicken (or sliced tofu or mushrooms) adding sea salt and pepper to taste.
2. Remove from heat and drain on a paper towel to remove the majority of the remaining oil. Leave left over oil in the pan.




Italian Brown Rice Casserole

3. Add your chopped oregano, thyme, onion, sliced sweet red pepper, and zucchini and sauté until onions begin to turn clear and peppers and zucchini are beginning to wilt. If it is too dry to sauté, you can add about a teaspoon more of canola oil.
4. Add in uncooked rice and stir-fry slightly until it starts to lightly brown.
5. Stir in the carrots, water, and vegetable bouillon and bring this mixture to a boil.
6. Cover the mixture and let it simmer for about 20-30 minutes until the rice has absorbed most of the liquid. You will want to stir it occasionally to check to see if it is sticking on the bottom of the skillet.
7. When rice is cooked, add your chicken (or tofu or mushrooms) black olives, mushrooms and tomatoes.
8. Put entire mixture into a casserole dish and top with parmesan cheese or the provided topping recipe. Bake in a 350 degree oven for about 10 minutes until all flavors have been able to mingle.
9. Top the mixture with either parmesan cheese or the provided topping recipe

Velvety Vegan Manicotti



 Manicotti is an Italian favorite, but everyone knows that when you eat manicotti, you are pretty much eating a tube of pasta filled with cheese. It's very tasty, but not very healthy at all. This is a recipe that doesn't have a bit of cheese and is actually quite good for you! You get the manicotti without the guilt! Now that's Italian!

Velvety Vegan Manicotti

Here's what you need:

- 1 package of manicotti pasta – cooked according to package directions
- ½ pound of silken tofu
- ½ pound of non-silken, firm tofu
- 2 cloves of garlic – minced
- 1 teaspoon of dried oregano
- ½ cup of soy milk
- 2 tablespoons of Extra Virgin Olive Oil
- 2 lemons juiced to get about 2 tablespoons
- 1 tablespoon of agave syrup
- ½ teaspoon of sea salt
- ½ teaspoon of ground black pepper
- 2 tablespoons of fresh cilantro – finely chopped
- 1 box of frozen chopped spinach – thawed, drained, and patted dry

Italian red sauce:

- 1 large can of crushed tomatoes or tomato puree
 - 1 tablespoon of extra virgin olive oil
 - 1 tablespoon of Italian seasoning
 - 1 teaspoon of minced garlic with ¼ teaspoon of sea salt
- Simmer together for about 20 minutes

Here's what you do:

1. Cook your manicotti noodles according to the package directions. Be extra careful not to overcook them or they will tear easily when working with them. When they are done, drain and rinse them.
2. Get a medium sized bowl and first smash the soft tofu then add cubes of the firm tofu and smash it into the soft tofu. You should end up with a creamy mixture with a few smaller chunks resembling ricotta cheese.
3. Add in your minced garlic, oregano, soy milk, olive oil, lemon juice, agave, sea salt, ground black pepper, chopped cilantro, and drained, chopped spinach.
4. Stir it all up very well.




Velvety Vegan Manicotti

5. Mix your Italian red sauce in a sauce pan (see instructions above)
6. Take a casserole dish and spoon about 1 cup of your spaghetti sauce over the bottom of the dish.
7. Gently fill each manicotti shell with your tofu mixture using a teaspoon or a pastry filler. Make sure you fill each shell until you can see the tofu mixture on each end.
8. Place each filled shell on top of the spaghetti sauce in the casserole dish.
9. Spoon about a tablespoon of sauce over each shell and continue filling, placing, and covering the manicotti until the dish is full or the tofu mixture runs out, whichever comes first.
10. Any leftover sauce needs to be distributed evenly over all of the manicotti shells.
11. Cover the casserole with foil and bake in a 350 degree oven for about 30-40 minutes. The sauce will begin to bubble on the sides when it is ready.
12. Remove the manicotti and top with shredded fat-free skim mozzarella cheese.
13. Put casserole back into the oven uncovered until cheese melts.

Eggplant Lasagna



 No Italian recipe repertoire is complete without a lasagna recipe. This one is easy to make and absolutely delicious.

After your family tastes this dish, they will forget you ever made traditional lasagna. The eggplant adds a meaty texture that is not only good for you, but elegant as well!

Eggplant Lasagna

Here's what you need:


- 1 package of whole wheat lasagna noodles – cooked according to directions
- 1 tablespoon of Extra Virgin Olive Oil
- 1 clove of garlic – minced
- ½ medium sized yellow onion – finely chopped
- 1 medium, firm eggplant – washed and diced
- 2 boxes of frozen chopped spinach – thawed, drained, and squeezed dry
- 1 large can of crushed Roma Tomatoes
- 4 tablespoons of Extra Virgin Olive oil
- 1 small green bell pepper or ½ a large one – diced
- 2 cloves of garlic – minced
- 4-5 sprigs of fresh oregano – chopped
- ¼ teaspoon of sea salt
- ½ teaspoon of Italian seasoning
- 2 cups of water

Here's what you do:

1. Boil your lasagna noodles according to package directions. Preheat your oven to 350 degrees.
2. Wash and chop your eggplant into about 1-2 inch cubes. Chop your onion.
3. In a medium saucepan, drizzle about 1 Tablespoon of olive oil on the bottom and heat it on medium heat. Add in your minced garlic and yellow onion and sauté for about 2 minutes until the onions begin to become transparent.
4. Add in your chopped eggplant and chopped spinach and continue sautéing until the eggplant begins to become tender. This will take about 5 minutes. Set eggplant aside to make your sauce.
5. In a medium saucepan, combine tomatoes, olive oil, bell pepper, garlic, oregano, sea salt, Italian seasoning, and water.
6. On medium heat, simmer sauce for about 20 minutes, until bell pepper is tender.
7. In a casserole dish, scoop out about 2 cups of sauce and spread it on the bottom of the dish. Place strips of pasta over the sauce until it is predominately covered. Spread another scoop of sauce over the noodles, then spoon about a cup of the eggplant mixture over the sauce.
8. Add another layer of sauce over the eggplant mixture and top with strips of pasta.
9. Keep repeating the layers until all is used up. You need to save some sauce to end up on top.
10. Sprinkle some shredded non-fat skim mozzarella cheese over the top and bake in the oven for about 20 minutes or until cheese is melted and sauce is bubbly.

Italian Sweet Nutty Quesadillas



 Quesadillas have become a favorite appetizer on menus all over the world. Every nationality seems to have it's own version, but I love the sweet and nutty flavor of this Italian recipe. It's colorful and easy to serve. They are easy to make, easy to eat, and very tasty!

Italian Sweet Nutty Quesadillas

Here's what you need:

5 tablespoons of Extra Virgin Olive Oil (or coconut oil)
 2 large Vidalia onions (sweet onions) – chopped
 1 teaspoon of Swerve natural granular sugar substitute
 ½ teaspoon of sea salt
 ½ teaspoon of ground black pepper
 1 teaspoon of Angelica spice
 ½ yellow bell pepper
 ½ orange bell pepper
 ½ sweet red bell pepper
 10 large whole wheat tortillas
 3 cups of Daiya Shredded Vegan Italian Cheese
 ½ cup of fresh parsley chopped

Prepare the following nutty topping to sprinkle over your veggies:

½ cup of nutritional yeast
 ¼ cup of raw almonds
 ¼ cup of raw cashews
 ½ teaspoon of sea salt

****Put all of the above ingredients in a blender or food processor and hit the chopper a few times until finely chopped and crumbly.**

Here's what you do:

1. Preheat your oven to 300 degrees. In a large skillet, heat your olive oil on medium heat.
2. Add your onions and sugar and sauté until onions begin to caramelize. Add salt, pepper, and Angelica spice to the onion and stir well. Add in your diced bell peppers (all three colors) and sauté for about 2 minutes until they are just barely starting to wilt. Save drippings for later.
3. While your peppers are cooking, process your nutty topping. Place a whole wheat flour tortilla on a flat cooking surface. Sprinkle about a handful of Daiya Shredded Vegan Italian Cheese over half of your tortilla, leaving the other half clean to fold over later.
4. Place a small mound of peppers and onions over the cheese and spread it out over the cheese, leaving about 1 inch free from the edge. Top the veggies with your nutty topping. Fold the other half of the tortilla over the veggies.




Italian Sweet Nutty Quesadillas

5. In a large skillet, heat about a Tablespoon of olive oil.
6. Place the folded tortilla into the skillet and lightly brush the side of the quesadilla that is on top with drippings from the onion and pepper sauté.
7. Cook the quesadilla until the cheese begins to melt and the tortilla is beginning to brown. As it cooks, press it down with a spatula to flatten it out.
8. As each quesadilla gets done, place it on a sheet of foil and set it in a warm oven to keep it warm while you make the rest of the quesadillas.
9. When all quesadillas are done, slice them into thirds and garnish. Garnish with any left over nutty topping as well as a little chopped parsley. Serve with a tomatoey sauce for dipping

Veggi Cannelloni



 Cannelloni is an Italian favorite and this recipe not only looks beautiful on your plate, but it is also very healthy! It's colorful and symmetrical yet lively and very tasty! The vegetable-filled tubes of pasta are like little gifts resting pleasantly on a bed of greens. This recipe is perfect for a formal luncheon or romantic dinner. It's the perfect dish for your special occasion.

Veggi Cannelloni

Here's what you need:

- 2 heads of fresh broccoli washed and stalks removed, or 1 one pound bag of frozen broccoli florets
- 1 large cauliflower – washed and cut into florets with stalks removed
- 4 large carrots – cleaned and diced
- 3 zucchinis – washed and cut into bite sized pieces
- 2 tablespoons of sea salt
- ½ cup of vegetable stock
- 3 tablespoons of Extra Virgin Olive Oil
- 6 cloves of garlic – chopped
- 3 tablespoons of fresh thyme – finely chopped
- 2 dried chili peppers – crushed
- ½ teaspoon of ground black pepper
- 1 sixteen ounce can of tomato puree
- ½ cup of red wine vinegar
- 2 cups of soy milk
- ¼ cup of lemon juice
- ½ cup of Parmesan cheese – grated
- 16 whole wheat cannelloni pasta tubes
- ½ cup of fresh basil – chopped
- 1 cup of non-fat, skim mozzarella cheese – shredded
- 4 tablespoons of Extra Virgin Olive Oil
- 2 tablespoons of red wine vinegar
- 3 bunches of arugula salad greens – rinsed and patted dry

Here's what you do:

1. Preheat your oven to 400 degrees. In a large pot with about 8 cups of salted water, boil your broccoli, carrots, zucchini, and cauliflower for about 6 minutes.
2. When the veggies are tender, remove them from the heat and drain.
3. In the pot you used to boil your veggies, pour your olive oil and sauté your garlic, thyme, and chili flakes. Sauté for about 30 seconds, then add in about ¼ cup of vegetable stock. You should have ¼ cup left to add in if the veggies get too dry when they are simmering.
4. Add your broccoli, cauliflower, zucchini, and carrots to the oil and herb mixture, and let it




Veggi Cannelloni

simmer for about 15 minutes, stirring from time to time to make sure it isn't sticking. If it does get dry, add in the other ¼ cup of vegetable stock.

5. After the veggies have become pretty soft, take a potato smasher and mash the vegetables to create a colorful mash.
6. Set the mixture aside to cool. Take a 9x13 glass casserole dish, and spread your tomato puree evenly along the bottom of the pan. Pour in your red wine vinegar and stir it into the tomato puree.
7. In a medium sized saucepan, combine your soy milk, lemon juice, and Parmesan cheese. Heat on medium heat, stirring constantly. Add a bit of sea salt and ground black pepper to taste. Keep stirring until it begins to thicken.
8. Once your veggie mash has cooled, spoon it into a large zip lock bag. Cut about ½ inch off of one corner and squeeze the bag down until the veggie mash starts to come out of the hole. Take one of your cannelloni tubes and squeeze the veggie mash into it until it is full. Place the filled tube into the casserole on top of the puree and red wine vinegar mixture. Repeat filling the tubes and placing them snugly in the dish until the casserole is full of tubes.
9. Spoon your white sauce over the filled cannelloni tubes and top with shredded mozzarella and chopped basil leaves.
10. Place the casserole into the 400 degree oven and bake for about 30 minutes. To serve it, first toss your arugula leaves with 4 Tablespoons of olive oil and 2 Tablespoons of red wine vinegar. Place a mound of arugula on the center of a plate and place two tubes of cannelloni on top of the greens.

Eggplant Spaghetti



 Traditional spaghetti is a family favorite, but sometimes we all get in the mood for a change. How about a healthy change? Here's a great recipe for traditional spaghetti using eggplant and mushrooms instead of the traditional beef?

Where's the beef? Not here! It's a delicious alternative to a favorite dish that will please even your pickiest eaters.

Eggplant Spaghetti

Here's what you need:


- 3 tablespoons of Extra Virgin Olive Oil
- 1 large eggplant – washed and diced
- 1 pint of sliced baby portobello mushrooms
- 1 large green bell pepper – washed and diced
- 1 yellow onion – peeled and diced
- 2 cloves of garlic – minced
- 1/3 cup of fresh parsley – finely chopped (can substitute 2 tablespoons of dried)
- 1/3 cup of fresh oregano – finely chopped (can substitute 2 tablespoons of dried)
- 1 large can of peeled whole Roma tomatoes
- 1 fourteen ounce can of no-sodium tomato paste
- 1/2 teaspoon of sea salt
- 1/2 teaspoon of ground pepper
- 1 fourteen ounce package of Extra Thin whole wheat spaghetti pasta

Here's what you do:

1. Take a large pot and put about 8 cups of water in it. Add about 1 Tablespoon of sea salt to the water..
2. When the water boils, add your pasta. Continue boiling for about 10 minutes. While your pasta cooks, wash and dice your eggplant, bell pepper, and onion. Mince your garlic.
3. Finely chop your mushrooms, parsley, and oregano. Heat your oil in a large cooking pot on medium heat. Add to your oil the eggplant, bell pepper, onion, mushroom, parsley, and oregano.
4. Sauté until the onion begins to become translucent – about 5-7 minutes Drain the juice from your peeled tomatoes into the sauted veggies and let simmer while you dice your tomatoes.
5. While the sauce continues to simmer, add your tomato paste.
6. After you empty the can of tomato paste into the sauce, fill the can with water and add to the sauce. Add your salt and pepper. Simmer on low to medium heat for about 45 minutes
7. After your pasta is cooked, drain it in a colander.
8. Rinse the cooked pasta with luke warm water. Drain.
9. Serve by putting a mound of sauce on your plate first, then scooping out about 2 cups of sauce and pour over the pasta.

Parmesan Crusted Tofu Marinara



 Looking for a romantic dish to serve on that special occasion? This recipe is luxuriously scrumptious and looks as if a professional chef prepared it. Set it on the center of your plate with a little salad on the side, and you have the perfect romantic dinner.

All you need now is a little jazz and merlot, and you have a complete recipe for the perfect evening.

Parmesan Crusted Tofu Marinara

Here's what you need:


- 1/4 cup of seasoned breadcrumbs (I used seasoned dressing mix – crushed)
- 1 fourteen ounce package of firm tofu
- 1/4 teaspoon of sea salt
- 1/4 teaspoon of garlic powder
- 1/4 teaspoon of onion powder
- 3 tablespoons of Extra Virgin Olive Oil – divided
- 1 small onion – chopped
- 1 eight ounce package of baby portabella mushrooms - thinly sliced
- 1/4 cup of grated Parmesan cheese
- 3/4 cup of low sodium marinara sauce
- 1/2 cup of shredded fat free, part-skim mozzarella cheese
- 2 tablespoons of fresh basil - chopped

Here's what you do:

1. Rinse, dry, and slice your tofu into fourths so that you have four long squares.
2. Put your breadcrumbs in a shallow bowl and crush it with the bottom of a glass so that they become a crumbly powder resembling cornmeal.
3. Mix your sea salt, garlic powder, and onion powder into the breadcrumbs.
4. Place each steak of tofu into the breadcrumbs and coat all sides well. Chop your onion and sauté it in a large skillet, on medium, with about 2 teaspoons of your olive oil.
5. Add your sliced mushrooms to the onion and oil and continue sautéing for about 3-5 minutes until onions are translucent and mushrooms are brown – set aside
6. Add a bit more oil to the pan and brown your tofu on all sides.
7. After all sides are browned, coat the top of each steak with Parmesan.
8. Cover the pan while keeping the heat on low and let the cheese cook into the coating for about 1 minute.
9. Scoop about 2-3 Tablespoons of mushrooms and onions and place it over the Parmesan on each steak.
10. Spoon about 2 Tablespoons of marinara on top of the mushrooms and onions. Sprinkle a little mozzarella on top of the marinara.
11. Re-cover the steaks and let them cook on low for about 2 more minutes. Garnish with a little freshly chopped basil.

Homemade Ravioli & Vegetable Soup



 This recipe is delicious and lots of fun to make! It may seem long and complicated, but actually it is not at all! It's perfect for one of those cold, rainy nights when your family is stuck in the house and you are looking for something fun to do together. Make your own ravioli, and enjoy a big bowl of hot soup! You will enjoy every minute of it.

First make your ravioli....



Homemade Ravioli & Vegetable Soup

Here's what you need:

3 cups of whole wheat flour
1½ cups of water (approximately)

Here's what you do:

1. Combine your flour and about ¾ cups of water in a food processor.
2. Hit pulse repeatedly until the flour and water begin to pull away from the sides and form a ball.
3. Keep gradually adding in more water until the dough forms a good ball in the processor. Be careful not to add too much water though so that the dough doesn't become sticky. If you do end up with too much water, add in a bit more flour.
4. When the dough has formed a soft ball, take it out of the processor and place it on a well floured surface. Knead the dough gently for about 12 minutes, adding in a little flour or a little water as needed to create a soft, pliable ball of dough.
5. Wrap the ball of dough in plastic wrap and put it in the refrigerator for about 30-40 minutes.
6. After it has rested, take it out and roll it on a lightly floured surface until it is about 1/8 inch thick. Take a fluted square or circular pasta cutter and cut your ravioli shapes. As you cut up most of the dough, re-roll so that you can make more. Make sure you end up with an even number of cuttings. Make your soup base while your dough is resting in the refrigerator....

Here's what you need:

1 tablespoon of Extra Virgin Olive Oil
1 green bell pepper – washed, seeded, and chopped
1 yellow onion – peeled, washed, and chopped
2 cloves of garlic – minced
1 large can of fire roasted peeled and crushed tomatoes
2 cups of hot water
1 package of organic baby spinach – (5-8 ounces) – chopped
2 medium zucchinis – chopped
¼ teaspoon of crushed red pepper
1 vegetable bouillon cube
1 teaspoon of dried oregano
1 teaspoon of sea salt
1 teaspoon of ground black pepper

Homemade Ravioli & Vegetable Soup

Here's what you do:

1. Heat your oil in a large soup pot on medium heat.
2. Add your chopped bell pepper, onion, and garlic.
3. Cook on medium heat, stirring often, for about 3 minutes.
4. Add tomatoes, water, spinach, zucchini, crushed red pepper, vegetable bouillon, oregano, salt, and pepper.
5. Bring to a boil, then reduce heat to simmer while you prepare your raviolis.
6. Next make your filling while your soup base is simmering....

Here's what you need:

- 3-4 tablespoons of Extra Virgin Olive Oil
- 1 6-8 ounce package of sliced portabella mushrooms – finely chopped
- 4 shallots – washed and finely chopped
- 2 cloves of garlic – minced
- ¼ teaspoon of sea salt
- ¼ teaspoon of ground black pepper
- ½ teaspoon of dried basil
- 6 ounces of part-skim, fat free mozzarella cheese – finely shredded
- ¼ cup of Parmesan cheese

Here's what you do:


1. Heat your olive oil in a medium sized saucepan. Chop your mushrooms and shallots & add to the oil. Mince your garlic and add to the oil
2. Season with salt, pepper, & basil. Sauté until all ingredients are soft and oil is absorbed.
3. Turn off heat and add in your two cheese and stir together well.

Next, prepare your ravioli:

1. Take two of your squares or rounds of dough.
2. Spoon about a teaspoon of filling onto the center of one piece of dough.
3. Place another piece of dough on top and press edges together until they are firmly sealed all the way around the filling.
4. At this point your soup base should be at a light boil. Place each ravioli into the soup base until all are in the soup.
5. Continue lightly boiling until raviolis are rising to the top. This will take about 10 minutes.

Spinach Tortellini & Broth



 This delicate and inviting dish is perfect for an appetizer or main dish. It's a light and soothing compliment to a long tiring day when you want something satisfying but simple to make.



Spinach Tortellini & Broth

Here's what you need:


- 2 tablespoons of Extra Virgin Olive Oil
- 1 twelve-ounce package of spinach tortellini (use whole wheat if you'd like)
- 2 cloves of garlic – minced
- 4 cups of baby spinach - chopped (or a 5 ounce package of frozen chopped spinach)
- 10 ounce jar of basil pesto
- 2 cups or more of chicken broth or 2 cups of vegetable broth
- 2 cups of hot water
- 2 ounces of Parmesan cheese - shredded
- ¼ teaspoon of red pepper flakes, to taste
- 2 teaspoons of pine nuts, to taste

Here's what you do:

1. Cook your pasta according to package directions & set aside.
2. Wipe down a large skillet with about 2 tablespoons of oil.
3. Sauté your minced garlic until it begins to brown.
4. Add chopped fresh spinach. If using frozen defrost, squeeze the water out, and add to pan. Cook until wilted.
5. Gradually add broth and pesto to the pan and cook until heated through.
6. Add water to broth and simmer for about 10 minutes.
7. Place a scoop of pasta into a bowl and pour about a cup of broth mixture over the pasta & let it rest for about 5 minutes.
8. Top your pasta & broth with grated Parmesan, red pepper flakes, and pine nuts.
9. Serve with warm garlic toast or hot whole wheat bread.

Mushroom Chicken Piccata on Angel Hair Pasta



 What a beautiful and tasty dish this is! It is creamy, healthy, and oh so succulent. The pasta is delicate and picks up the rich flavors of the mushroom sauce well and the chicken on top crowns the dish with a hearty texture that is simply divine. If you don't want to use chicken, no worries, just substitute it with firm tofu cut in cubes and dredged and sautéed like you would the chicken. It's just as scrumptious, and beautiful on the plate.



Mushroom Chicken Piccata on Angel Hair Pasta

Here's what you need:

6 ounces of whole-wheat angel hair pasta
 1/3 cups of whole wheat flour - divided in half
 2 cups of reduced-sodium chicken broth (can substitute vegetable stock)
 1/4 teaspoon of sea salt
 1/4 teaspoon of ground black pepper
 4 skinless, boneless chicken breasts (can substitute firm tofu cut into cubes)
 3 teaspoons of Extra Virgin Olive Oil, divided
 1 ten ounce carton of sliced white mushrooms
 3-4 cloves of garlic – minced
 2 Roma tomatoes – washed, seeded, and chopped
 1/2 cup of white wine
 2 tablespoons of fresh lemon juice (1 large lemon should be enough)
 1/4 teaspoon of sea salt
 1/4 cup of fresh parsley – chopped (about 1 small bunch should be plenty)
 2 tablespoons of capers – rinsed
 2 teaspoons of canola oil

Here's what you do:

1. In a large pot, bring about 8 cups of salted water to a boil. Add your pasta and boil until slightly tender. This should take about 4 to 6 minutes. Be very careful not to over cook. When it is done, drain it and immediately rinse with tap water and set it aside in a medium bowl.
2. While the pasta is cooking, whisk together five teaspoons wheat flour and your chicken broth (or vegetable stock) in a bowl until it is smooth.
3. Place the rest of your flour in a shallow dish. Season your chicken breasts with salt and pepper and dust both sides in the flour. If you are using tofu, pat it dry and cut it into cubes, then season it, and toss it in the flour.
4. Heat about two teaspoons of olive oil in a skillet on medium heat and brown the chicken about 3 minutes on each side until it is completely done. If using tofu, just brown it until it is slightly browned on all sides.
5. Place the chicken or tofu to a plate with a paper towel on it to remove any oil residue. Cover




Mushroom Chicken Piccata on Angel Hair Pasta

the plate with foil to keep it warm. Pour your remaining teaspoon of olive oil into the pan and heat it back up on medium heat.

6. Sauté your mushrooms, garlic, and chopped tomato in the oil stirring constantly until the mushrooms wilt and the garlic begins to turn brown. This should take about five minutes. Add your white wine and let it simmer until all liquid is reduced by about half. This should take about 2 minutes.
7. Pour your broth and flour mixture over your mushrooms and garlic then squeeze your lemon juice over it.
8. Add about ¼ teaspoon of sea salt and simmer, stirring constantly until the sauce begins to thicken. This should take about 5 minutes. Add in your chopped parsley and capers and drizzle with canola oil. Set aside about ½ cup of this sauce and pour the rest over your pasta in a medium bowl. Toss the pasta gently to coat it well with the sauce.
9. When you serve it, place a serving of pasta on your plate, then set one of your breaded chicken breasts (or tofu) on top of the pasta. Drizzle a bit of the mushroom sauce over the top of the chicken (or tofu if you are substituting)

Roasted Portobello with Cheesy Spinach Quinoa



 I first had this dish at a restaurant in Florida, and since I kept thinking about it long after dinner, I knew I had to try to recreate it. Of course, I put my own little Italian twist on it, but one thing is for sure, it will become one of your favorites that will leave you thinking long after dinner is over.

Roasted Portobello with Cheesy Spinach Quinoa

Here's what you need:

4 large Portobello mushrooms, washed with stems removed
 1½ cups of Balsamic vinegar
 1 shallot – finely diced
 2 tablespoons of fresh thyme – finely chopped
 Pinch of sea salt
 1 cup of part-skim ricotta cheese
 1 cup fresh spinach, finely chopped
 ½ cup of finely shredded Parmesan cheese
 2 tbsp Kalamata Olives, finely chopped
 ½ teaspoon of Italian seasoning
 1 cup of white quinoa
 2 cups of vegetable stock
 ½ small yellow onion - finely chopped
 1 clove of garlic – minced
 ½ teaspoon of dried oregano
 ½ teaspoon of dried basil
 1 tablespoon of Extra Virgin Olive Oil
 ¼ teaspoon of sea salt
 ¼ teaspoon of ground black pepper

Here's what you do:

1. Place your Portobello mushroom caps in a casserole dish. Combine your Balsamic vinegar, chopped shallot, chopped thyme and a pinch of salt. Stir it up really good.
2. Baste your mushrooms with your vinegar mixture. Cover the dish and let it marinate in the refrigerator for thirty to forty-five minutes.
3. Line a cookie sheet with parchment paper and place a cooling rack over the paper. Place your marinated mushroom caps on the cooling racks with the gill side up first and place them in a 350 degree oven. Roast your mushroom caps for about seven minutes. After seven minutes, turn the caps over – gill side down - and roast them for another seven minutes on the other side.
4. Place your roasted mushroom caps back into the casserole dish and In a small bowl, mix your ricotta, spinach, parmesan, olives, and Italian seasoning. Smash it all together with a fork.

Roasted Portobello with Cheesy Spinach Quinoa

5. Turn your mushroom caps back over to gill side up and place a spoonful of spinach mixture in the middle of the cap and bake for about 10 minutes. Prepare your quinoa as follows:
6. Bring vegetable stock to a boil and add quinoa. Let it simmer until the stock is absorbed and quinoa is tender. Chop your onion and garlic and sauté in a tablespoon of olive oil until tender.
7. Add your basil and oregano, salt and pepper.
8. Stir well, then blend into your quinoa. To plate your mushroom, place the mushroom cap with spinach mixture onto your plate. Spray a little oil into a measuring cup and scoop about a ¼ cup of quinoa into the measuring cup and press it down.
9. Flip it over on top of the mushroom so that a mound of quinoa is on top of the mushroom. Serve!

✿ Delightful Bruchetta



☕ Everyone needs a favorite appetizer dish, right? It seems like at least twice a month, there is a day when I need to slap something together for a quick snack to take to an event or when a friend calls and says she is going to “drop by a little later.” I do love it when friends come by, but I really like to have a little something special to nibble on while we visit.

This dish is perfect for the spur of the moment appetizer need... not to mention it is delicious and good for you! I prefer to use fresh ingredients, but you can keep most of the ingredients in the pantry for a quick fix too!

Delightful Bruchetta

Here's what you need:

One whole wheat loaf of French bread – sliced
(you can also use left over wheat rolls from dinner the night before)
Extra Virgin Olive Oil (4 Tablespoons total)
2 cloves of minced garlic
8 basil leaves chopped (can used dried instead of fresh)
½ teaspoon of Italian seasoning
1 jar of sun dried tomatoes in oil (use about ½ cup) and/or 7 fresh Roma tomatoes chopped
1 package of frozen chopped spinach
4 tablespoons of crumbled Tomato Basil Feta cheese

Here's what you do:

1. Slice your bread into 1" rounds and place them on a cookie sheet.
2. Using 2 Tablespoons of the olive oil, brush the surface of each round of bread and broil for about 2 minutes until slightly brown.
3. Chop your basil leaves, sun dried tomatoes, and Roma tomatoes (if you are using both).
4. Thaw and squeeze out the chopped spinach. Put the spinach onto a cutting board and chop it up more finely.
5. Combine 2 Tablespoons of olive oil, minced garlic, chopped basil, Italian seasoning, tomatoes, spinach, and Feta cheese.
6. Spoon the above combination onto each round and spread out to cover most of the round.
7. Place rounds back into the oven and broil again for about 5 minutes to melt the cheese into the other ingredients and toast the edges of the bread.

✦ Formaggio Tostato Italiano



☕ Every Italian meal is not complete without a good slice of garlic toast or cheese toast to soak up the sauce left on the plate. Besides, we all need a good balance of fiber and cheese in our diet right!? Well, this cheese toast is not your average cheese toast.

Yes, you could grab a boring box of garlic toast from the grocery store, but if you really want to impress and prepare an extra special meal, and you have plenty of time to make something special, whip up this AMAZING, delicious cheese bread, and your guests will rave over your culinary gifts!

Formaggio Tostato Italiano

Here's what you need:

1 tub of Squacquerone or crescenza stracchino cheese
 (*If you can't find one of these, any spreadable Italian cheese is good)
 ¾ cup of milk
 ½ cup of butter set out until it reaches room temp
 ½ cup of Greek yogurt
 3½ Cups of all-purpose wheat flour
 1 tablespoon of sea salt
 1 tablespoon of baking powder
 1 egg white
 1 tablespoon of Extra Virgin Olive Oil
 1 teaspoon of dried oregano
 4-6 cherry tomatoes for garnish

Here's what you do:

1. Stir together the milk, butter, yogurt, and egg white in a medium sized bowl.
2. In a separate large bowl, mix the wheat flour, sea salt, and baking powder. Blend it together good with a fork. Fold in the milk mixture into the flour mixture and knead all ingredients together using your hands. The dough will eventually pull away from the sides of the bowl. You can add flour or water as necessary to get a consistency that is not sticking to your fingers, but not crumbling and dry either. Put a damp cloth over the bowl with the dough in it and let it sit at room temperature for about 30 minutes.
3. After resting about 30 minutes – not you but the dough – Dump the dough out onto a surface that is lightly floured with wheat flour. Lightly dust your hands and pinch the dough into 10-12 pieces. Set each piece on your floured surface.
4. Take each piece and roll it into a ball. Flatten the ball out a good bit between your palms, then stretch and press until it is about 1/8-inch thick. Your rounds will be about 6-8 inches around. After all dough is flattened, get your skillet ready.
5. Lightly oil an iron skillet with olive oil on medium to low heat. Gently place each round of dough into the skillet until you cant fit any more. Cook the dough about 1-2 minutes on each side. You will want to pierce the dough in several places with a fork to prevent air pockets from forming.

Formaggio Tostato Italiano

6. As you finish each round, place it on a plate with a paper towel on it until you have finished cooking all rounds. Place a towel over the done rounds as you finish the others so they will stay warm.
7. When you have finished all rounds, spread about a Tablespoon of cheese over each round and place them on a cookie sheet. Sprinkle a little oregano over the cheese on each round. Place them in a warm oven just long enough to make the oregano melt into the cheese a little.
8. If I am serving these cheesy flatbreads on a platter, I like to garnish them with a thin slice of cherry tomato placed in the middle of the bread. However, my family don't usually give me time to garnish the bread before they are grabbing it up and eating it!

✿ Tomato Basil Artichoke Crostini



☕ A crostini is a popular style of Italian appetizer where you create delectable artwork on a canvas of bread! The most common type of bread to use is a baguette sliced in diagonal shape to make the base a bit oblong.

There is no end to the colors and flavors you can “paint” on your canvas; just let your taste buds guide your imagination. Artichokes are one of my favorite appetizer ingredients though, so here’s how I like to use them to make an amazing treat for your guests!

Tomato Basil Artichoke Crostini

Here's what you need:

- 1 whole wheat baguette (or wheat rolls even!)
- 2 tablespoons of Extra Virgin Olive Oil
- 6 Roma tomatoes - washed, seeded, and chopped
- 1 fourteen ounce jar of artichoke hearts - drained and chopped
- 1 tablespoon of lemon juice
- 2 tablespoons of fresh basil – chopped
- ½ teaspoon of Italian seasoning
- ½ teaspoon of oregano
- 2 tablespoons of Extra Virgin Olive Oil
- ½ teaspoon of sea salt
- ¼ teaspoon ground pepper
- Fat free skim mozzarella cheese - shredded

Here's what you do:

1. Slice the baguette or rolls into about 24-30 ½ inch slices, being sure to slice in a diagonal to make the slice longer. Place your slices on an ungreased cookie sheet.
2. With a basting brush, baste olive oil on each slice of bread.
3. Bake your bread in a 325 degree oven for about 7 minutes until they are slightly browned and crisp. Set your bread aside to cool.
4. While your bread is baking, get your topping started. Chop your tomatoes, artichoke hearts, and basil on a cutting board and throw it all in a bowl together.
5. Sprinkle lemon juice over your veggies. Add your olive oil, salt, pepper, Italian seasoning, and oregano to your veggies and toss it all to combine.
6. Spoon a hill of veggies onto each slice of toasted bread and sprinkle a little mozzarella over the veggies.
7. Return your toast to the oven, baking just long enough to melt your cheese.

✿ Homemade Pesto & Baby Bocconcini Crostini



☕ Nothing speaks Italian like a traditional pesto, and it is really easy to make! These delightful appetizers are a mouth pleasing favorite at our house. I like to make the pesto ahead of time and keep it in the refrigerator for a quick spread.

If you do make it ahead of time, put it in a sealable bowl and pour a little olive oil over it to keep it moist while it is in your refrigerator.

Homemade Pesto & Baby Bocconcini Crostini

Here's what you need:

- 1 whole wheat baguette or wheat rolls – sliced in ½ thicknesses
- 2 tablespoons of Extra Virgin Olive Oil
- 3 large bunches of fresh basil (should be about 4 cups)
- ¼ cup of pine nuts
- ¼ cup of walnuts
- 2 cloves of garlic – minced
- ½ cup of Extra Virgin Olive Oil
- ½ cup of Nutritional yeast or Parma – grated (a non-dairy vegan Parmesan cheese substitute)
- 1 teaspoon coarse sea salt
- About 12 baby bocconcini balls (small balls of fresh mozzarella)
- Dried oregano & sun dried tomato for garnish

Here's what you do:

1. Slice your bread directly across the loaf into ½ inch thick, round slices.
2. Using a basting brush, apply olive oil to each slice and bake in a 350 degree oven until bread is toasted. Remove from oven and set aside to finish preparing your pesto.
3. While bread is toasting, prepare your pesto. Using a blender or food processor, combine your basil, pine nuts, walnuts, and garlic.
4. Blend these while drizzling in your olive oil until they form a paste.
5. If your basil begins to climb, just push it back down so that it chops up with everything else.
6. Add your yeast or cheese and salt. Continue to blend until it is smooth. Slice your baby bocconcini balls in half.
7. On each slice of bread, spoon about a tablespoon of pesto and top with a baby bocconcini with slice side down.
8. Garnish with a sprinkle of dried oregano and a small slice of sun dried tomato.

✿ Nutty Oregano Crusted Potato Wedges



🍷 Here is a nutty, scrumptious appetizer or side dish that will make your mouth water and it looks beautiful on a plate next to some grilled vegetables and maybe even a grilled Portobello steak.

After all, everyone likes a little steak and potatoes every once in a while.

Nutty Oregano Crusted Potato Wedges

Here's what you need:

4 large Idaho baking potatoes
3 tablespoons of Extra Virgin Olive Oil
1/2 cup of nutritional yeast
1/4 cup of raw almonds
1/4 cup of raw cashews
1/4 teaspoon of garlic powder
1/2 teaspoon of dried oregano
1/2 teaspoon of sea salt

Here's what you do:

1. Wash, dry and cut your potatoes into wedges by first cutting them in half, then cut the halves in half, then eighths so that you have eight small potato wedges from each potato.
2. Place your potato wedges on a cookie sheet and brush them with olive oil.
3. Take the next six ingredients and put them in a blender or food processor and pulse repeatedly until it is all finely chopped and resembles parmesan cheese.
4. Sprinkle the nutty mixture generously over the potato wedges.
5. Bake the wedges in a 400 degree oven for about 30-40 minutes until the potatoes are tender and slightly browned.

✿ Avocado Roma Piadina



☕ Piadina is an Italian flat bread that is often grilled and very tasty. My kids love it served as a simple chip with cinnamon sugar baked on it, but when I fix it for guests,

I like to serve it as an appetizer finger food that is rolled, sliced and speared with an olive on the side.

Avocado Roma Piadina

Here's what you need:

3½ cups of organic spelt (whole grain) flour
 ½ teaspoon of baking soda
 1 teaspoon of sea salt
 1 stick of non-fat margarine
 12 tablespoons of water
 4 tablespoons of Extra Virgin Olive Oil (or coconut oil)
 ½ teaspoon of dried oregano
 ¼ teaspoon of garlic salt
 3 medium sized Roma tomatoes – cleaned, seeded, and diced
 1 large avocado – peeled and diced
 2 cups of baby spinach – chopped
 2 tablespoons of balsamic vinegar
 2 cloves of garlic – minced
 2 teaspoons of lemon zest
 ½ teaspoon of ground black pepper
 2 cups of shredded soy cheese
 1 eight ounce jar of pimento stuffed olives
 Tooth picks

Here's what you do:

1. In a medium sized mixing bowl, combine together your flour, baking soda, and salt. Stir it around with a fork then put a dough hook on your mixer and add your non-fat margarine about a tablespoon at a time while you run the hook through on low. It should take about 2 minutes to get it all blended.
2. Continue to run the mixer on low while you add about 12 Tablespoons of water gradually while the hook continues to work the water in, forming dough.
3. Once the dough is completely formed and is pulling away from the sides, take it out of the bowl and place it on a flat surface that has been dusted with flour. (I actually use an old pillowcase that I keep rolled up with a rubber band on it – a trick I learned from my grandma)
4. Clean and dust your hands and knead the dough for about 5-7 minutes to get it to form a smooth ball. Divide the dough into about 4-5 sections and flatten each one into circle about ¼ inch thick. Wrap each circle in plastic wrap and put them in the refrigerator for about 20-30

Avocado Roma Piadina

minutes.

5. Remove the circles from the refrigerator and return them to the floured surface and roll them out a little flatter to about 1/8 inch thickness – they should be about 8-10 inches around.
6. In a small glass bowl, combine 4 Tablespoons of olive oil, dried oregano, and garlic salt.
7. Using a pastry brush, apply a light coating of olive oil mixture to both sides of the circles before putting them one at a time into the skillet. (you can also grill them). Heat a skillet (or grill) that has been wiped with olive oil.
8. Brown each circle for about 3 minutes on each side then drain on a paper towel as you remove them from the heat. Let your piadinas cool while you prepare the other ingredients. Wash, seed, and dice your Roma tomatoes.
9. Wash, peel, and chop your avocado into small bite-sized pieces. Wash, pat dry, and chop your spinach. Combine your vinegar, garlic, lemon zest, and pepper in the glass bowl used earlier to baste the piadinas.
10. With a pastry brush, baste one side of each piadina with the vinegar mixture. Sprinkle your shredded soy cheese onto the entire surface of each piadina leaving about 1/2 inch from the edge bare, then top it with your diced tomatoes, avocado, and chopped spinach. Roll each round with the veggies inside and secure the edges with toothpicks.
11. With a sharp knife, slice each piadina into four 2" slices and secure the edge with a toothpick that has an olive on it.

🍄 Mushroom & Gorgonzola Bread Bowl



☕ This recipe is one of my favorites to fix on game day when I have company coming over and they want to sit around in the living room around the television and snack while watching the ball game. It has flavors just as exciting as the game on the television, and your guests will remember it as one of their favorites.

Mushroom & Gorgonzola Bread Bowl

Here's what you need:


- 1 one round loaf of whole wheat bread
- 3 tablespoons of Extra Virgin Olive Oil
- 2 tablespoons of butter
- 1 large yellow onion – chopped
- 2 scallions chopped
- 1 clove of garlic – minced
- 1 small bunch of cilantro – finely chopped
- 1 one pound carton of sliced mushrooms – chopped
- 4-6 ounces of Gorgonzola cheese

Here's what you do:

1. Preheat your oven to 350 degrees.
2. Cut about a 1½ inch slice off the top of your bread and set aside your “lid”.
3. Pinch out pieces of bread from the inside of your loaf creating about a one inch thick bread bowl. Put your pinched out pieces of bread as well as the lid on sheet of tin foil or a cookie sheet.
4. Bake these pieces of bread until they are lightly toasted and almost crispy. This should take about 7-10 minutes. Fold a sheet of tin foil over your toasted bread so that you can keep them warm. Melt your butter and oil together in a medium skillet on medium heat.
5. Add your yellow onions, scallions, garlic, and cilantro to the oil and butter and sauté until translucent and beginning to brown. This should take about 10 minutes.
6. Add your sliced & chopped mushrooms and continue to sauté until they are tender. This should also take about 10 minutes.
7. Reduce your heat to low and crumble your Gorgonzola cheese over the onions and mushrooms. Stir this mixture until it is all completely blended. This should take about 5 minutes. Be careful not to let this cheese mixture begin to bubble.
8. Pour the mixture into your bread bowl.
9. Put your lid back on and serve on a plate with your pinched and toasted pieces all around. Your guests will dip the bread pieces into the dip and put them on their plate.

Sicilian Green Olive Pasta Salad



 This marinated pasta salad is very refreshing and light. It is full of color and looks great on your table in a glass bowl. It is perfect to serve as an appetizer or dish for a dinner party. Plan ahead though because it is best when you have been able to marinate the ingredients for a few days.

Sicilian Green Olive Pasta Salad

Here's what you need:

3 cups of large, green, pitted olives
 3 ribs of celery – finely sliced
 1 carrot – finely sliced
 1 red onion – finely chopped
 1 clove of garlic – finely chopped
 ½ cup of capers – drained
 1 tablespoon of fresh oregano – finely chopped
 ½ teaspoon ground black pepper
 ½ cup of Extra Virgin Olive Oil
 ½ cup of Balsamic vinegar
 12 ounce package of spiral wheat pasta (I prefer wheat fusilli doppia rigatura)

Here's what you do:

1. Drain, rinse, and slice your olives.
2. Finely slice your celery, carrot, red onion, and garlic.
3. Drain your capers and mix all of these ingredients in a large bowl.
4. Stir in your oregano, pepper, and olive oil and cover with a lid or foil.
5. Marinate in the refrigerator for anywhere from 1 to 3 days.
6. On the day you want to serve your salad, take the bowl of marinated vegetables out of the refrigerator and let it stand to become room temperature.
7. While this is sitting, bring your pasta to a boil and cook according to package instructions.
8. When pasta is done, drain and rinse with lukewarm water, then drain again.
9. Fold your marinated vegetable ingredients over into your pasta and pour ½ cup of Balsamic vinegar over it and toss gently.

✦ Butternut Gnocchi



☕ The smooth, warming taste and texture of this homemade gnocchi is a joy to place on your table. It has a slight sweetness mixed with the saltiness of the cheese that makes for a fun side dish or appetizer. It also adds a little color to your plate which is good news for those of us who consider our cooking a work of art!

Butternut Gnocchi

Here's what you need:

- 1 pound of butternut squash – cut in half long-ways and seeded
- 1 tablespoon of Extra Virgin Olive Oil
- 1 potato (about 13 ounces – Russet is best) – peeled and quartered
- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup of non-dairy vegan Parmesan cheese - grated and divided into $\frac{1}{2}$ cup and $\frac{1}{4}$ cup
- 1 jumbo sized egg – beaten
- $1\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoons of ground nutmeg
- 1 teaspoon sea salt
- $1\frac{3}{4}$ cups of whole wheat flour (may need extra)
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup butter melted with $\frac{1}{2}$ cup canola oil
- 2 tablespoons fresh sage – finely chopped

Here's what you do:

1. Preheat your oven to 400 degrees. Cut your squash in two halves, lengthwise. Scoop out the seeds and discard them. Place your squash halves on a cookie sheet with the cut sides facing up. Brush the cut face of the squash halves with olive oil.
2. Roast the squash halves for about an hour and a half or until they are very tender. You can check by piercing them with a fork. If it goes in easily and there are a few brown spots on the surface, they are done.
3. While your squash is roasting, boil your potato in a saucepan of salted water until the potato is tender. This should take about 20 minutes. Drain off the water and press the potato through a potato ricer while it is still warm. Let it cool completely.
4. Once the potato is cool, scoop out about 2 cups of riced potato and set aside until your squash is done and slightly cooled. Once your squash halves are done and cooled a bit so that they are warm to the touch, using a tablespoon, scoop the meaty flesh out from each squash half and put the meat into a food processor.
5. Puree the squash meat in the processor until it is smooth. Pour pureed butternut squash into a medium saucepan on medium heat and stir it steadily until the juice evaporates and the squash thickens. This should take about 5 to 7 minutes. Set the squash puree aside to cool.
6. Once it has cooled completely, scoop out about 1 cup of squash puree.
7. Mix squash, potato, $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of Parmesan cheese, your beaten egg, ground nutmeg, and salt in

Butternut Gnocchi

- large bowl. Gradually add 1¾ cups wheat flour to the squash mixture as it becomes a dough.
8. Knead the dough gently in a large bowl until it holds together and is fairly smooth. Add a little flour a little at a time if the dough is still sticky to the touch.
 9. Once a good, soft ball of dough is formed, fold it out onto slightly floured surface. Knead the dough a bit more until it is smooth. Divide the dough into about eight balls. Cover two cookie sheets with parchment paper.
 10. Dust the parchment lightly with wheat flour. Take one of your dough balls and roll it out on your floured surface so that it forms a rope about ½ inch thick. Cut the rope into small pieces about ½ inch thick. These are your gnocchis.
 11. Dust a fork with flour and slightly press it onto each gnocchi piece so that it has gentle ridges on one side. Place each gnocchi on the dusted parchment paper on the cookie sheets.
 12. Keep doing this until all of your dough is made into gnocchi. Cover the cookie sheets with plastic wrap and chill about 1 ½ hours. (You can actually make your gnocchi about 6-8 hours ahead of time and keep it in the refrigerator)
 13. When your gnocchi is ready to cook, drop the pieces into salted, boiling water and cook for about 15 minutes until the gnocchi is tender. (You know it is done when it floats to surface. Let it cook an additional 30 seconds or so after it reaches the top of the water).
 14. Remove the gnocchi from the water using a strainer or slotted spoon. Let it cool on the parchment paper you used on the cookie sheets to same parchment-lined baking sheets.
 15. While your gnocchi is cooling, melt your butter in a saucepan on medium heat and stir in your canola oil. Stir your sage into the butter for about a minute so that it becomes tender. Add your gnocchi to the butter mixture.
 16. Coat the gnocchi well with the butter and continue to cook it for about five to seven minutes. Season the gnocchi with sea salt and a little ground black pepper. Pour gnocchi off into a medium sized bowl and sprinkle it with about ¼ cup of Parmesan cheese.

🌿 Vegetables Soto Aceti on Grilled Radicchio



🍽️ This is probably the prettiest salad I have ever seen and the tastiest too! So you might be asking, “Why should a salad be pretty?” Well, I believe that if you view cooking not only as an art of taste, but a visual art as well, it becomes a much more exciting experience.

When you look at a dish and it is inviting to the eyes, you begin to anticipate the experience of tasting the combination of flavors, and this makes eating the dish much more satisfying. I just have one word of caution here. If you start the meal with this salad, you are setting the bar pretty high, so plan your main dish accordingly!

Vegetables Soto Aceti on Grilled Radicchio

Here's what you need:

- 3 large stalks of broccoli - cut into very small florets
- 1 head of cauliflower – cut into very small florets
- 2 large carrots – peeled and sliced
- 1 jar of artichoke hearts
- ½ pound of Kalamata olives – sliced
- 3 tablespoons of Balsamic vinegar
- ½ cup of Extra Virgin Olive Oil
- ½ teaspoon of Italian seasoning
- 1 teaspoon of fresh oregano – finely chopped
- ¼ teaspoon of dried crushed red pepper
- 1-2 pinches of sea salt and pepper to taste
- 1 head of radicchio – cut into fourths
- 4 tablespoons of Extra Virgin Olive Oil

Here's what you do:

1. Steam your broccoli, cauliflower, and carrots until the broccoli turns a bright green and both are crisp-tender. This should take about four to five minutes.
2. After the cauliflower and broccoli are done, rinse both with cold water and drain.
3. Add your sliced olives and artichoke hearts with the cauliflower, broccoli, and carrots.
4. Place Balsamic vinegar in small bowl. Wisk briskly while drizzling in your oil.
5. Add Italian seasoning, oregano, and crushed red pepper. This is your dressing.
6. Pour your dressing over the vegetables and toss to coat well.
7. Season to taste with sea salt and pepper.
8. Set vegetables aside to marinate while you prepare your radicchio.
9. Cut the head of radicchio in half then cut the halves in half.
10. Brush each quarter with olive oil and sprinkle a little salt on each side.
11. Grill your radicchio on both cut sides until slightly charred on both sides.
12. Chop the radicchio into bite-sized pieces and put it in the middle of a salad plate.
13. Toss your marinated vegetables again and scoop out about a cup and place them on top of the grilled radicchio.
14. Serve at room temperature.



Sweet Pepper Spinach Orzo



☺ I really like to cook things that are not only delicious but also look festive on the plate. Here's a beautiful dish that is not only amazing in taste, but it is colorful and very healthy! I like to serve it as a side dish to baked chicken or veal parmesan, but it can easily be turned into a main course by browning sliced chicken breast before adding in the garlic and onion. Enjoy!



Sweet Pepper Spinach Orzo

Here's what you need:

- 2 cloves of garlic – minced
- ½ of a medium sized red onion – finely chopped
- 2 teaspoons of Extra Virgin Olive Oil
- 8 cups of fresh spinach – chopped (or 1 box of frozen chopped spinach)
- 1 tablespoon of Balsamic vinegar
- ½ teaspoon of sea salt
- 1/8 teaspoon black ground pepper
- 2 cups hot cooked Orzo pasta
- ½ cup of roasted sweet red peppers - chopped

Here's what you do:

1. In a medium sized sauce pan, cook your Orzo according to package directions then set aside.
2. While your orzo is cooking, take a large skillet and put about 2 Teaspoons of olive oil in it and heat on medium.
3. Add your minced garlic and chopped red onion and sauté for about 2 minutes or until both are tender.
4. Add your shopped spinach and sweet red peppers and cover with a lid.
5. Simmer for about 3 to 4 minutes until the spinach is tender and wilted.
6. Add your vinegar and your salt & pepper, then fold in the rice. Stir the rice into the spinach and pepper mixture gradually so as not to smash the rice too much.
7. Serve as a side dish or as a main course.



Roasted Red Pepper Polenta



☕ This creamy, festive side dish will compliment any meal. It's Italy meets Mississippi since polenta is actually an Italian version of grits....fried! The main difference is that the Italians like to spice things up with a bit of romance, which is where the roasted red peppers come in. They add a sweetness and texture that compliments the recipe nicely.

Don't be afraid of the fried part though. I go lightly on the oil and just brown the polenta enough to make it hold together in a delightful little cake. You can top it with a tomatoey sauce or a little cheese. You are going to love it!



Roasted Red Pepper Polenta

Here's what you need:

2 cups of polenta
 4 cups of vegetable broth
 ½ cup of yellow onion – finely chopped
 2 cloves of garlic – minced
 ½ teaspoon of sea salt
 ¼ cup of white cooking wine
 2 tablespoons of Extra Virgin Olive Oil
 2 tablespoons of Balsamic Vinegar
 ¼ teaspoon of dried oregano
 ¼ teaspoon of dried Italian seasoning
 ½ cup of sliced black olives
 ½ cup of sweet roasted red peppers – chopped
 ¼ teaspoon of ground black pepper

Here's what you do:

1. In a saucepan, sauté onion and garlic in about 2 teaspoons of olive oil for about 2 minutes.
2. In a separate medium sized pot, mix together your polenta, sautéed onion, and garlic, sea salt, and vegetable broth. Bring the mixture to a boil and simmer for about 20 minutes, stirring often so that it doesn't stick. If it gets too thick, add a little vegetable broth.
3. You should end up with the consistency of grits.
4. Add in your wine, olive oil, balsamic vinegar, oregano, and Italian seasoning and continue simmering and stirring for about another five to seven minutes so the flavors can mingle and polenta continues to thicken. Add in your olives and sweet roasted red peppers and stir well.
5. Set the mixture aside to cool – Let it cool for to room temperature for about 2 hours.
6. After the polenta has cooled, it will have thickened even more. Take a skillet with about a Tablespoon of olive oil in it and heat the oil on medium heat.
7. With a large spoon, scoop out about 2 Tablespoons of polenta and place each scoop in the skillet and press down flat with a spatula.
8. Brown it on both sides then remove from heat and set on a paper towel to drain any excess oil.



Italian Roasted Vegetable and Arugula Salad



☕ When you say you are serving a salad with your meal, most people would expect to get a cold salad, but this roasted salad is a warm, inviting surprise that makes an exciting introduction to your meal. It is extremely healthy yet not so filling that you aren't ready for the rest of your meal. Instead, your guests will be looking for more!



Italian Roasted Vegetable and Arugula Salad

Here's what you need:

- 1 large cauliflower – cleaned and cut into florets
- 5 red bell peppers – cleaned, seeded, and cut into bite sized pieces
- 4 cloves of garlic - chopped
- 1½ tablespoons of Extra Virgin Olive Oil
- 1 teaspoon of fresh thyme – chopped
- 1 teaspoon of fresh oregano - chopped
- 1 teaspoon of sea salt
- 1 teaspoon coarsely ground black pepper
- 3 ounces of baby arugula – washed and torn
- ½ cup Vegetable broth
- 2 teaspoons of red-wine vinegar

Here's what you do:

1. Preheat your oven to 500 degrees.
2. Cut up your cauliflower and bell peppers, and chop your garlic.
3. Pour your olive oil over the vegetables and toss well.
4. Add your thyme, oregano, salt, and pepper and continue to toss.
5. Take a large, rectangular casserole dish and spread your veggies evenly into the dish.
6. Roast for about 30 minutes until the veggies are tender. You will want to take them out and turn them after about 15 minutes.
7. After veggies are slightly charred, remove them from the oven and take some of your garlic and bell peppers out of the mixture and put them in a blender. Add your vegetable broth, vinegar, and a little sea salt and pepper to taste. Blend this until smooth.
8. Add your baby arugula to the remaining roasted veggies and toss it around until the arugula is soft. Scoop some of the veggie mixture out and put on a plate then drizzle sauce mixture over the veggies before serving.



Italian Baked Beans



☕ Baked beans are a staple at picnics, but if you're like me, one thing you dread about the traditional picnic is all the totally unhealthy foods people place out on the table.

You can feel your hips growing as you walk down the line and fill your plate! If you make these scrumptious Italian baked beans, however, you can feel good about your baked beans because these are delicious and offer a healthy alternative to traditional baked beans. Now you can enjoy the picnic without the food guilt!



Italian Baked Beans

Here's what you need:

½ pound of Fry's Polony Sausage – chopped
 1 tablespoon of olive oil
 4 cloves of garlic – minced
 1 medium sized yellow onion – chopped
 1 cup of apple cider
 1 eight ounce can of tomato sauce
 1/3 cup of Sucanat granulated cane juice (whole cane sugar)
 ¼ cup of balsamic vinegar
 6 teaspoons of Honey Dijon mustard
 ¾ teaspoon of sea salt
 ½ teaspoon ground black pepper
 5 fifteen ounce cans of cannellini beans – drained

Here's what you do:

1. Preheat your oven to 400 degrees.
2. Slice your Polony sausage up to bite-size pieces.
3. Put your olive oil in a skillet and heat on medium heat.
4. Add your Polony sausage, onions, and minced garlic to the skillet and brown it on all sides.
5. In a medium sized bowl, whisk together your cider, tomato sauce, cane sugar, vinegar, Dijon mustard, salt, and pepper.
6. Drain each can of beans and spoon them over into a 9x13 casserole dish.
7. Stir in your onion mixture then your cider mixture and blend well. Do not cover.
8. Bake in your 400 degree oven for about an hour or until it is getting thick and bubbly on the edges. You might want to take it out occasionally and stir it up a little.



Rosemary Crusted Potatoes



☕ Don't you love it when you start cooking dinner and suddenly the kitchen fills with family members standing around making conversation while they take in the rich smells of Italian cuisine? That's exactly what happens every time I cook my Rosemary Crusted Potatoes. They are actually crusted with a good bit more than rosemary, but that's just what we call them.

There's just something about the mixture of cheese and rosemary that draws people to the kitchen, and that's when the fun really begins!



Rosemary Crusted Potatoes

Here's what you need:

6-8 small new red potatoes
4 tablespoons of Extra Virgin Olive Oil
1 clove of garlic – minced
1 pint of sliced mushrooms – chopped
1 teaspoon of fresh rosemary – chopped
1 teaspoon of fresh thyme – chopped
¼ teaspoon of ground black pepper
¼ teaspoon of sea salt
½ cup of grated fat-free skim mozzarella cheese
½ cup of fresh parsley – finely chopped

Here's what you do:

1. Preheat your oven to 400 degrees.
2. Place your potatoes in a pot with about 6 cups of water and bring the water to a boil. Boil them for about 10 minutes or until they are tender when tested with a fork.
3. Pour off the water, and set aside to cool in a glass 9x13 casserole.
4. Once the potatoes cool, cut each one in half.
5. In a medium sized skillet, heat your olive oil on medium heat and add your garlic, mushrooms, rosemary, thyme, salt, and pepper. Stir it all together well, stirring continuously for about a minute and a half.
6. Pour your seasoned oil over your potatoes, add your grated cheese, and toss them gently to coat the sliced potatoes well.
7. Sprinkle any remaining cheese over the top.
8. Bake in your 400 degree oven for about 15 minutes until the edges begin to brown.
9. Garnish with chopped parsley and serve!!



Angel hair Pesto Pasta



☺ This delicate dish of delectable delight is not only elegant, but it is full of flavor. It is a superb accompaniment to any entrée or you can make it into a main dish by sautéing a pound of shrimp in butter, garlic, and parsley and mixing it all together.

I usually mix up a double batch of the pesto to save for later when my mother ask me if I have any more of “that angel hair stuff” left from dinner. The pasta cooks up fast, and in about 15 minutes, you do have more of “that angel hair stuff” and your kiddos are very happy.



Angel hair Pesto Pasta

Here's what you need:


8 ounces of whole wheat angle hair pasta
1/2 cup of Extra Virgin Olive Oil
1/3 cup of green Olives – with pimentos – finely chopped
1/3 cup of pitted black olives
1 bunch of fresh basil (should be about 1/2 cup chopped)
1/4 cup of pine nuts – finely chopped
1/4 cup of walnuts - finely chopped
2 cloves of garlic – minced
1/2 cup of Nutritional yeast or Parma – grated
1/2 teaspoon sea salt
1/4 teaspoon of ground black pepper
1/4 teaspoon crushed red pepper

Here's what you do:

1. Take a medium sized saucepan and boil 6-8 cups of salted water.
2. Add your angel hair pasta and cook according to package instructions – al dente.
3. While your water is heating to boil your pasta, chop all of the other ingredients.
4. Put your chopped ingredients into a blender or food process and pulse about 4-6 times, adding in your olive oil gradually after each pulse to finely chop and mix all ingredients.
5. Be careful not to over cook your pasta. Angel hair is delicate and can over cook quickly.
6. When pasta is done, drain it and while it is still hot, put it in a medium sized glass bowl.
7. Spoon your pesto into the pasta, blending gently as you introduce each spoon full.
8. Serve as a side dish, garnished with a few sprigs of fresh parsley.

Italian Almond Lentil Salad with Lemon Vinaigrette



 This is one of my mama's favorite dishes when winter would roll around and everyone started getting the sniffles. I never knew why until I got a little older and learned the secret of lentils. I learned that there is not a vegetable more healthy, appetizing, and affordable than lentils!

They are guaranteed to boost your immune system and your appetite. So when Mama was throwing lentils a hundred different ways on our plates, it wasn't just because she loved lentils; it was because they were cheap and warded off the sniffles!

Italian Almond Lentil Salad with Lemon Vinaigrette

Here's what you need:

....to make your salad

- 1 pound of green lentils
- 2 tablespoons of sea salt
- 2 scallions – chopped
- 2 cups of seedless red grapes cut in half
- 1 cucumber – peeled and diced
- 1 yellow bell pepper – diced
- 1 sweet red bell pepper - diced
- 1 - 11 ounce can of white shoepeg corn - drained

....to make your vinaigrette:

- ½ cup of fresh squeezed lemon juice
- ½ cup of Extra Virgin Olive Oil
- ½ teaspoon of coarse sea salt
- ¼ cup of finely chopped cilantro
- ¼ teaspoon of coarsely ground black pepper
- 1 cup of toasted Almond slivers – chopped

Here's what you do:

....to make your lentil salad


1. Rinse your lentils under cold tap water and remove any bits of soil or rocks which is common in lentils. In a large pot, bring about 8 cups of water to a boil.
2. Once the water starts boiling, add your lentils. Let them boil for about 15 minutes and add your sea salt while boiling for another 15 minutes.
3. After about 30 minutes, remove the lentils from the heat, cover with a lid, and set them aside for another 10 minutes to let them soak up a bit more of the salted water.
4. Drain your lentils and put them into a large serving bowl – preferably clear glass.
5. Add your yellow and red bell peppers, corn, and grapes and toss it all together.

.....to make you vinaigrette

1. Take a medium sized glass or metal bowl and pour your lemon juice in.
2. With a wire whisk, gradually add your olive oil in while whisking vigorously to create a cloudy vinaigrette. Add in your salt, pepper, and cilantro and stir well.
3. Plate your lentil salad on your plate and pour about ½ cup of vinaigrette over it. Top it all with chopped almonds.

Italian Artichoke & Sweet Pepper Salad



 This is a colorful salad with a smooth yet tangy taste. It's very festive and perfect for a dinner party or just a cozy lunch with a friend. It's filling and satisfying. You can keep most of these ingredients handy to throw it together easily when you have last minute guests too!

Italian Artichoke & Sweet Pepper Salad

Here's what you need:


- 1 sixteen ounce Jar of roasted sweet red peppers – drained and cut in strips
- 10 small grape tomatoes – sliced in half
- 1 seven & ½ ounce jar of marinated artichoke hearts, quartered and undrained
- 1 seven ounces pimiento-stuffed olives – drained
- 1 six ounce can of ripe olives - pitted, drained & sliced
- 2 tablespoons of Balsamic vinegar
- 3 tablespoons of Extra Virgin Olive Oil
- ½ pound fat free, skim mozzarella cheese – shredded
- 1 teaspoon dried basil
- 1 teaspoon dried parsley
- ¼ teaspoon of ground black pepper
- Serve with whole wheat sliced rosemary toasted baguettes
- Whole wheat Italian baguette
- ½ teaspoon of dried rosemary
- ¼ teaspoon of garlic salt
- 3 tablespoons of Extra Virgin Olive Oil

Here's what you do:

1. Take your peppers, tomatoes, artichoke hearts, & olives and combine them in a large glass bowl. Toss them together well. Add your vinegar and oil and continue to toss to blend.
2. Add your mozzarella cheese, basil, parsley, and pepper.
3. Toss to blend again then chill in the refrigerator while you prepare your bread.
4. To make your rosemary baguettes, take an Italian baguette and slice it in diagonal fashion to make elongated slices about ½ inch thick. Combine 3 Tablespoons of olive oil with ½ teaspoon of dried rosemary & ¼ teaspoon of garlic salt.
5. Using a pastry brush, brush the oil mixture onto the slices of bread and toast in the oven for 5-7 minutes.
6. Slice bread in bite size slices and serve with your salad.

Spinach & Artichoke Pasta Salad



 Pasta salad is a favorite dish at social gatherings, and this recipe is not only easy, but it makes for a colorful centerpiece to a serving table. Its simple blend of flavors explodes into a party on your plate!

Spinach & Artichoke Pasta Salad

Here's what you need:


- 1 twelve ounce package of whole wheat organic vegetable spirals
- 1 can of artichoke hearts – drained
- 2 cups of fresh chopped spinach
- ¼ cup of fresh lemon juice – about 3 lemons squeezed
- 1 eight ounce fat free sour cream
- ¼ cup of fat free olive oil mayonnaise
- ¼ teaspoon of sea salt
- ¼ teaspoon of ground black pepper
- 2 tablespoons of dried chopped parsley
- 1 six ounce can of sliced and pitted ripe olives

Here's what you do:

1. Boil your pasta according to package instructions in about 8 cups of salted water and drain.
2. While your pasta is boiling, chop your artichokes and spinach - combine together.
3. Squeeze your lemons and add them to the vegetables.
4. In a small bowl, combine your sour cream, mayonnaise, salt, pepper, and parsley.
5. Add your cream mixture to your artichoke and spinach combination.
6. Pour this mixture over your pasta and gently toss.
7. Gently stir in your ripe olives.
8. Serve in a glass serving dish so your guests can see all the colors.

Italian Custard Fruit Tart



 All your favorite fruits on this amazing custard based platter! Bring this to a potluck and you'll have everyone asking for second helpings!



Italian Custard Fruit Tart

Here's what you need:

...to make the Yummy Flaky Crust, you need:

5 cups of all-purpose flour

1 cup of raw sugar

1 1/3 cups of butter

4 egg yolks

Zest of 1 lemon

...to make the Heavenly Smooth Custard, you need:

1 fresh vanilla pod

1 pint milk

4 egg yolks

1/2 cup of agave nectar

2 tablespoons flour

1/2 pint whipping cream

Topping fruit such as raspberries, black berries, fresh sliced strawberries, kiwi, peaches, figs, etc.

Here's how you make the crust:

1. So that it's easy to remove, line a tart pan with baking paper.
2. Preheat the oven to 320 degrees F.
3. In a large bowl, mix the flour and raw sugar together with a fork. Cut the butter into pieces and cut it into the sugar and flour mixture until crumbly.
4. Create a hole in the centre of the mixture and add the lemon zest and the egg yolks.
5. Combine ingredients together using a fork. As it thickens, use your hands (lightly floured) to knead into a smooth pastry dough.
6. Completely enclose the dough in plastic wrap. Put it in the refrigerator and let it rest for at 30-90 minutes.
7. After at least 30 minutes in the refrigerator, roll the pastry out on a flat, lightly floured surface to about a half-inch thickness. Make sure it stays in a circle and spread to the same size as the tart pan.
8. Place the dough in the tart pan and cover it with baking paper. Set another baking dish or bowl



Italian Custard Fruit Tart

that is smaller on top of the paper and dough to weigh it down to prevent rising and air pockets.


9. Bake your pastry for about 5-20 minutes until it is golden brown. Allow pastry to cool uncovered.

Here's how you make the custard:

1. Slice the vanilla pod and gently boil it in a saucepan with a pint of milk for about 3 minutes. Remove the vanilla pod, but scrape the seeds out and put them back into the milk.
2. Beat the egg yolks with the agave nectar until the mixture is light and foamy. Gradually add in flour and continue to mix until well blended.
3. Gently add vanilla milk, whipping constantly with a whisk. Pour the mixture above back into the saucepan you used to boil the milk.
4. Heat the mixture, stirring constantly in the same direction until the custard thickens then remove it from the heat.
5. Cover the custard with plastic wrap so it doesn't film over. It will continue to thicken as it cools. While the custard is cooling, whip the whipping cream until thickened.
6. Once the custard is completely cooled to room temperature, fold in whipped cream. Fill the pastry with your custard mixture and scatter fruit over the top.
7. Do not refrigerate. Serve immediately with a little raw sugar sprinkled on top of the fruit.

Italian Trumpet Cookies



 Here is an Italian cookie recipe that my grandmother used to make. I'm not really sure why it is considered Italian except maybe for the dates and the shape of the cookies. You know how it is; when Mama says it's so, it's so!

So... if you are looking for a scrumptious Italian cookie that is also healthy, go for this delightful recipe. It is sure to satisfy the most ferocious sweet tooth!



Italian Trumpet Cookies

Here's what you need:

....To make the cookies:

1 cup of butter – cut in ½ inch squares

4 cups of whole wheat pastry flour

2 cups of sugar-free, low-calorie frozen yogurt, softened

Raw granulated sugar to sprinkle on outside of cookie

(*Sometimes I also like to melt a bag of semi-sweet chocolate chips and drizzle it over the cookies after they are cooled.)

.... To make the filling:

1 cup of chopped walnuts

3 cups of brown raisins

1 pound of organic medjool dates

½ cup of brown sugar

1 teaspoon of ground cinnamon

2-3 tablespoons of water

Here's what you do:

1. First prepare your cookie dough by cutting your squares of butter into your flour with a fork. You will want to keep mashing the butter into the flour until it becomes coarse and crumbly.
2. Add your softened ice cream to the flour mixture and mix well until it forms a soft dough.
3. Divide your dough into four parts and wrap each in wax paper and refrigerate for about 1 ½ to 2 hours. While your dough is refrigerating, you can make your filling.
4. Here's how you make the filling: Chop up your raisins, dates, and nuts into very fine pieces. You can also grind them in a food processor.
5. Put your chopped filling into a saucepan and add your cinnamon, brown sugar, and water.
6. Simmer on low until the fruits are soft and the filling begins to thicken. Stir it frequently to distribute the heat and keep it from sticking.
7. Once it is thick, set it aside to cool. If you need to cool it quickly, you can put it in a plastic bowl and put it in the refrigerator.



Italian Trumpet Cookies

8. After the dough has rested in the refrigerator for about an hour and a half, take one portion out and remove the wax paper and put it on a smooth surface that has been lightly dusted with your pastry flour. Roll the dough out into about 1/8 inch thickness.
9. With a 2" fluted dough cutter, cut your dough into cookies. You can use a round or square cutter, but I prefer square.
10. With a teaspoon, scoop out about a 1/2 teaspoon of filling and place it in the middle of each square.
11. Fold the opposite corners of the square over to meet each other, overlapping so that you can seal the dough together and cover the filling. It should look like a little trumpet!
12. Lightly sprinkle a little raw sugar over the entire cookie.
13. Place the trumpet cookies on a cookie sheet and bake in a 350 degree oven for about 10 minutes. Once the cookies begin to brown, they are done.
14. While your first batch of cookies is baking, you can start on your second batch of dough and prepare the same way until all four sections of dough are done.

🌿 Italian Gelato Sundae



☕ What's better than a gelato sundae? A fat free gelato sundae, that's what! This recipe satisfies the most voracious sweet tooth, and yet it is guilt free because it's fat free! It is sure to make the perfect ending to your fairy tale romantic Italian dinner.

Italian Gelato Sundae

Here's what you need:

....for the gelato

- 1 teaspoon of unflavored gelatin
- 2¼ cups of skim milk
- 1 cup of nonfat dry milk powder
- ½ cup of egg substitute
- 2 teaspoons of vanilla
- ½ cup of Swerve natural granular sugar substitute

....for the topping

- 1 and 2/3 cups of fat-free whipping cream (divided)
- ½ cup of espresso
- 12 ounces of chocolate carob chips
- 3 tablespoons of powdered sugar substitute (see instructions below)
- 1 teaspoon of almond extract
- ½ cup of chopped slivered almonds

(to make powdered sugar substitute)

- ½ cup of powdered milk
- ½ cup cornstarch
- ¼ cup granulated sugar substitute

Here's what you do:

....to prepare your gelato

1. Put your skim milk in a medium sized sauce pan and distribute lightly the gelatin over the milk. Turn your heat on low and stir until the gelatin is completely dissolved. Turn off the heat and set it aside to cool until it reaches room temperature.
2. Get a blender or food processor and combine your powdered milk, egg substitute, vanilla and sugar. Blend until smooth. Pour your gelatin mixture into the blender with the rest of the ingredients and mix well for about 5 seconds.
3. Pour the mixture into a glass bowl and put it in the refrigerator until it is chilled completely.



Italian Gelato Sundae

4. After it has chilled, take it out and stir it really good then pour it into an ice cream maker.
5. Freeze the gelato according to ice cream maker instructions.

....to prepare your topping:

1. Put 2/3 cups of whipping cream and espresso in a medium sized sauce pan and simmer it on low heat for about 5 minutes.
2. Remove the espresso mixture from the heat and add the carob chips. Stir the mixture until the chips melt and the topping is smooth.
3. Put your remaining cup of whipping cream into a large bowl and beat well with a mixer.
4. Add 3 tablespoons of your powdered sugar substitute gradually, mixing continuously.
5. Add in your almond extract and continue mixing until it thickens to form gentle peaks.

.....to put it all together

1. Scoop out two scoops of frozen vanilla gelato into a serving bowl.
2. Top the gelato with your espresso mixture.
3. Scoop some of your almond whipped cream and put it on top of the espresso mixture.
4. Sprinkle your chopped almonds on top and serve!! Guilt-free decadence!!

☞ No-guilt Tiramisu



☕ Everybody knows what it's like to have a serious sweet tooth, but no one likes the guilt one feels after splurging on a bunch of sweets to satisfy that sweet tooth.

Well, here's a fabulous Italian dessert that is sure to satisfy your craving without the guilt of too much indulgence. To make it even better, it is super easy! So indulge and have fun!

No-guilt Tiramisu

Here's what you need:

5 ounces of non-fat ricotta cheese
1 packets of Stevia natural sweetener
1/4 cup of potato starch
1/4 cup of powdered milk
1/2 teaspoon of vanilla extract
1/8 teaspoon of ground cinnamon
1 Angel food cake – sliced in 1 inch slices then cut the slices in half
4 tablespoons of strong coffee, divided
2 tablespoons of chocolate carob chips - melted

Here's what you do:

1. Combine your ricotta, sweetener, potato starch, powdered milk, vanilla, and cinnamon in a bowl.
2. Slice your angel food cake into fingers by cutting 1" thick slices, then cutting those slices in half.
3. Line up your ladyfingers in the bottom of a loaf pan.
4. Drizzle half of your coffee over the ladyfingers.
5. Spoon your ricotta mixture over your ladyfingers and spread it out smoothly over all of the ladyfingers.
6. Stack another layer of angel food ladyfingers on top of the first layer.
7. Drizzle the rest of your coffee over the top of the second layer of ladyfingers.
8. Drizzle your melted carob chips over the top of the ladyfingers and put them in the refrigerator for a little while to let the carob set.