

35 Italian Dinner Recipes

**Delicious and Traditional
Italian Meals To Prepare**

The Italian Cuisine And
Italian Recipes Collection

Pamela Kazmierczak

35 Italian Dinner Recipes – Delicious and Traditional Italian Meals To Prepare

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By Pamela Kazmierczak

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Introduction

Welcome to the first volume of the Italian Cuisine and Italian Recipes Collection. Inside this volume you will find a variety of traditional Italian meals to prepare for dinner.

This is the dinner collection, so inside you will find meals perfect to prepare every night of the week. This collection includes great recipes such as pasta dishes and dishes with beef, veal, chicken and seafood. Besides the dinner recipes, you will also learn how to make homemade pizza dough and sauces!

I hope that this recipe book will help you find some choices that you and your family will love!

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I have been publishing cookbooks on Amazon for awhile now – want to see other books I have published? Check out my [Author Page](#).

After awhile I wanted to do something to thank all of my loyal customers, whether it is people who spent money on my books or downloaded them during a promotion.

I decided to create a website with brand new recipes and let all my customers know about it, so they could get one or two new free recipes from me everyday! Please visit my Website [Life Food Happiness](#) to check out my other recipes! I hope you enjoy them!

Of course, I always want to do things to make my customers happy. So I decided that on my website I would also publish a daily post on which of my cookbooks on Amazon are free that day! So if you are thinking of downloading a cookbook but not sure which one to try and you enjoy my recipes, you might want to know more about my [free kindle cookbooks](#).

Be sure to check out my website and bookmark it. Feel free to leave comments and let me know what you think!

Finally – If you do enjoy this cookbook, I would appreciate it if you could go back to [Amazon and leave me a review](#)! I am always looking for input on how to improve my current cookbooks and what people do like, so I can keep that in mind when creating future cookbooks!

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Pamela Kazmierczak

Basic Marinara Sauce

This sauce has SO many uses, including many of these recipes. It tastes light and fresh and compliments many different kinds of dishes, from pizza to pasta to meatloaf. This batch makes a LOT, but it can easily be frozen for up to 6 months.

Ingredients:

- 2 - 28 ounce cans crushed tomatoes
- 2 - 6 ounce cans tomato paste
- 8-10 large garlic cloves, crushed and minced
- 1 large onion, finely chopped
- 5 Tablespoons of olive oil
- 3 Tablespoons of oregano
- 6 Tablespoons of Italian seasoning
- 2 teaspoons of basil
- 1 teaspoon of thyme
- 2 Tablespoons of sugar or Splenda
- 1 teaspoon of salt
- Cracked black pepper

Directions:

Heat oil in large sauce pan and add onion and garlic, cooking until soft and fragrant – don't burn the garlic!

Add tomato paste and stir to combine with onions and oil. Add both cans of crushed tomatoes. Add all remaining ingredients, including black pepper to your taste, and let simmer for at least one hour, stirring every 10 minutes or so.

Continue simmering for another hour if possible. Remove from heat and cool.

Notes:

DO NOT use a sugar substitute with aspartame, like Equal, Nutrasweet, etc. It will give the sauce an off-taste. Sugar is best, but Splenda baking sugar substitute works pretty well.

If you are planning to freeze this sauce, let it cool completely before portioning into freezer bags and putting in your freezer. To thaw a frozen portion, place entire bag in a pot of warm (not hot) water for 20-30 minutes before adding to a recipe.

Basic Alfredo Sauce

This super creamy, thick sauce can be used in a variety of dishes – it even makes fantastic macaroni and cheese (no more orange box stuff)! Please note: this is not in any way, shape or form low-fat or low-calorie. This is good, old-fashioned, decadent, straight-to-your-thighs alfredo sauce.

Ingredients:

- 4 Tablespoons of butter
- 1 Tablespoon of olive oil
- 2 garlic cloves, minced
- 2 cups of heavy cream
- ½ cup of parmesan cheese (not from a can)
- ½ cup of mozzarella cheese
- ¼ cup of romano cheese (optional)
- Salt and pepper to taste

Directions:

Melt butter and olive oil together over med-low heat.

Add garlic and sauté 2 minutes until soft and fragrant.

Add cream, salt and pepper and bring to a simmer, stirring frequently.

Add parmesan and romano cheeses and continue simmering for about 10 minutes.

Add mozzarella and stir until smooth. Remove from heat and transfer to serving bowl or other container, so the pot doesn't leave a burned mess on the bottom.

Notes:

For a healthier, slightly thinner sauce, you may substitute half-and-half or whole milk for the cream. Do not use skim milk, as the consistency will not be silky and smooth.

Romano cheese is now easily found in most grocery stores, and will give the sauce a more complex flavor, but it is not required.

Cream sauces do not freeze well, but will keep in the refrigerator for 2-3 days tightly sealed. Make sure the sauce is completely cool before putting it in the refrigerator, or harmful bacteria can grow.

Basic Pizza Crust

This pizza crust is quick, easy, and makes a thin crust that puffs slightly on the outer edges. This recipe makes enough dough for 2 12-inch pizzas. Remaining dough can be refrigerated or frozen.

Ingredients:

2 ½ cups of plain flour
1 package of active dry yeast
1 cup of warm water (around 110 degrees)
¼ teaspoon of salt
½ teaspoon of sugar
1 Tablespoon of olive oil

Directions:

Combine warm water, sugar and yeast and stir gently. Set aside for 8-10 minutes until yeast is frothy.

Add flour, salt and oil to a large bowl and add yeast/water.

Mix with hands until everything is combined and knead for 5-10 minutes until dough is smooth and elastic, adding more flour when needed.

Cover with a towel and let rise for 30 minutes.

Divide dough in half and either store or roll out immediately.

Notes:

You can substitute whole wheat flour for no more than 1 cup of the plain flour. Do not use only whole wheat flour or your dough will be

tough and flat.

If you want to freeze the dough, form into a flattened disc, rub with a bit of olive oil, and wrap tightly in a freezer bag.

Mama's Magical Meatballs

Yes, that's really what they're called! These meatballs are tender and juicy and go perfectly with pasta or served as a game-day snack.

Ingredients:

2 pounds of meatloaf mix (beef, pork and veal)
1 egg, beaten
1 cup of parmesan cheese
 $\frac{3}{4}$ cup of Italian breadcrumbs
3 cloves garlic, minced
2 teaspoons of cracked black pepper
2 teaspoons of salt
2 teaspoons of oregano
2 teaspoons of basil
2 Tablespoons of olive oil

Directions:

Combine all ingredients in a large bowl and knead with hands until evenly mixed.

Heat olive oil in large skillet over high heat.

Shape into meatballs and fry in skillet until just browned.

If serving with pasta and sauce, place browned meatballs into simmering sauce and cook for about 30 minutes. If not, remove browned meatballs and place them on a foil lined baking sheet and bake at 350 degrees for 25-30 minutes.

Notes:

If you can't find meatloaf mix, ground beef or even ground turkey works wonderfully.

If you want to freeze the meatballs for later, place UNCOOKED on a baking sheet in a single layer and freeze. Once frozen, place in a freezer bag. They will keep for up to 3 months.

To prepare, place frozen into simmering sauce and cook until heated through.

Mama's Meatball Grinders

This is a simple weeknight meal that practically makes itself!

Ingredients:

1 pound of mama's magical meatballs (see recipe)
4 cups of basic marinara sauce (see recipe)
6 sub rolls, split open
1 cup of mozzarella cheese

Directions:

Preheat broiler and line a baking sheet with foil.

Pour sauce into large saucepan and bring to a simmer.

If meatballs are frozen, place directly into the sauce and continue simmering for 30-45 minutes. If meatballs are raw, heat 1 Tablespoon of olive oil in a skillet and brown the meatballs on all sides, about 5-6 minutes per batch.

Place in the sauce to continue cooking.

To assemble grinders: place meatballs in roll and cover with extra sauce.

Place under the broiler for 5 minutes to toast bread.

Sprinkle with cheese and return to broiler for 2-3 minutes until cheese is melted.

Serve with a crisp green salad.

Notes:

If you have smaller children, you can easily make meatball sliders – just use dinner rolls instead of hoagies and broil for 2-3 minutes only to melt cheese.

Chicken Marsala

Italian food doesn't have to be heavy! This chicken Marsala is mild and light and goes great over linguine and served with a fresh salad.

Ingredients:

2 large boneless, skinless chicken breasts, rinsed and patted dry
½ cup of plain flour
1 ½ teaspoons of salt
1 teaspoon of cracked pepper
1 teaspoon of garlic powder
1 teaspoon of Italian seasoning
¼ cup of vegetable or canola oil
2 Tablespoons of butter
1 cup of mushrooms, sliced
1 cup of Marsala wine, room temperature
½ cup of sherry wine

Directions:

Split chicken breasts so that you have 4 halves. Pound to ¼ thick and sprinkle with ½ t. salt, ½ t. cracked pepper and ½ t. garlic powder. Set aside.

Add flour, remaining salt, pepper and garlic, along with Italian seasoning to a shallow pan and set aside.

Heat oil in a heavy skillet over med-high heat but do not let it smoke.

Dredge chicken in seasoned flour until completely coated.

Place chicken facing away from you into hot oil and cook for 2 minutes, turn, and cook for another 2 minutes.

Remove from skillet and drain on paper towels. Drain all but 2 Tablespoons of oil from skillet and return to heat.

Add butter. Add mushrooms and cook for 2 minutes.

Add Marsala and sherry and stir to coat mushrooms. Bring to a simmer and add chicken back into the sauce.

Simmer 5-10 minutes until sauce has thickened.

Notes:

Do not worry if the chicken is not completely done after frying 2 minutes per side. It will finish cooking in the simmering sauce.

If you can't find sherry, or would prefer not to use it, substitute chicken broth instead. Try not to use chicken boullion, as it will make the sauce very salty.

Canned mushrooms are fine if you can't find fresh ones – just add them during the last 5 minutes of cooking.

Classic Stuffed Shells

This dish is perfect for freezing extras and taking to potlucks – it's also a very easy weeknight meal.

Ingredients:

12 jumbo pasta shells, slightly undercooked, drained
1 pound of hamburger meat, cooked and drained
1 16 ounce container of ricotta cheese
1 ½ cups of mozzarella cheese, divided
½ cup of parmesan cheese (not out of a can)
1 teaspoon of cracked black pepper
1 teaspoon of garlic powder
1 teaspoon of Italian seasoning
1 cup of basic marinara sauce (see recipe)

Directions:

Preheat oven to 375 degrees.

Combine all ingredients EXCEPT marinara and ½ cup of the mozzarella in a medium bowl.

Pour about ¼ c. of the marinara into the bottom of a 9 x 13 baking dish and rotate to coat the bottom.

Set up and assembly line on your counter – shells, meat mixture, baking dish.

Spread a large spoonful of meat mixture inside each shell and place open-side-up into baking dish in a single layer. Repeat for all shells.

Pour remaining marinara sauce over shells. Cover and bake for 30 minutes.

Remove cover, top with remaining mozzarella cheese, and return to the oven for 5-10 minutes to melt cheese.

Notes:

You can substitute cottage cheese for the ricotta – some people even like it better! Make sure you use small curd and drain it well before adding.

If you are having trouble stuffing the shells, hold them horizontally across your palm and squeeze either end – this will pop them open.

Don't worry about the shells being undercooked. They will finish cooking in the oven.

Spinach and Mushroom Stuffed Shells

These are great to serve for vegetarian guests, and even meat-eaters will love them because the mushrooms make them hearty and filling.

Ingredients:

- 12 jumbo pasta shells, slightly undercooked, drained
- 2 Tablespoons of olive oil
- 5 button mushrooms, sliced
- 5 crimini mushrooms, sliced
- 1 small onion, chopped finely
- 4 cloves of garlic, chopped finely
- 2 cups of fresh baby spinach, rinsed and patted dry
- 2 teaspoons of Italian seasoning
- 1 egg, beaten
- 1 teaspoon of salt
- 1 teaspoon of cracked black pepper
- 1 16 oz container of ricotta cheese
- 3 cups of basic marinara (see recipe)
- 1 ¼ cups of mozzarella cheese, divided

Directions:

Preheat oven to 350 degrees.

Pour about ¼ cup of marinara in the bottom of a 9 x 13 baking dish and rotate to coat. Set aside.

In a large skillet, heat the oil and sauté the garlic and onion until fragrant. Don't burn the garlic!

Add mushrooms and continue to cook for 3 minutes.

Add entire amount of spinach and Italian seasoning and toss with mushrooms and onion. Cook until spinach is wilted and mushrooms are soft. Remove from heat and pour into a large bowl.

Add egg, salt, pepper, ricotta and 1 cup of mozzarella to spinach and mushrooms and combine very well.

Stuff each shell and place open-side-up in baking dish in a single layer.

Top with remaining marinara sauce.

Cover and bake for 30 minutes.

Remove cover, top with reserved mozzarella, and return to oven for 5-10 more minutes to melt cheese.

Notes:

You can substitute cottage cheese for the ricotta – some people even like it better! Make sure you use small curd and drain it well before adding.

It looks like a lot of spinach – it will wilt down to about 1/3 of its volume.

If you are short on time, you can skip the fresh spinach and add 1 box of thawed, drained spinach.

If you are having trouble stuffing the shells, hold them horizontally across your palm and squeeze either end – this will pop them open.

Don't worry about the shells being undercooked. They will finish cooking in the oven.

Stuffed Seafood Alfredo Shells

Rich, creamy version of everyone's favorite. Serve with a crisp green salad and bruschetta for a company-ready meal.

Ingredients:

24 jumbo pasta shells, slightly undercooked, drained
1 cup of ricotta cheese
1 cup of mozzarella cheese
½ cup of parmesan cheese (not from a can)
3 ounces of cream cheese
2 cloves of garlic, diced finely
½ teaspoon of salt
8 ounces of crab meat, chopped (imitation is fine)
8 ounces of frozen shrimp, thawed and chopped
4 ounces of white fish (cod, halibut, tilapia, etc) cooked and flaked
2 cups of basic alfredo sauce

Directions:

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Spray the bottom of a 9 x 13 baking dish with cooking spray and set aside.

Combine remaining ingredients EXCEPT alfredo sauce in a large bowl, stirring gently to avoid breaking the seafood.

Stuff each shell and place open-side-up in baking dish in a single layer – it might be a tight fit, but don't stack them.

Pour alfredo sauce over all the shells, cover, and bake 30 minutes.

Notes:

Don't substitute cottage cheese for the ricotta – it will not taste right.

This recipe can easily be halved.

Don't substitute canned tuna for the white fish – the taste will be too strong. It can easily be omitted if you can't find or don't want to cook the fish.

If you are having trouble stuffing the shells, hold them horizontally across your palm and squeeze either end – this will pop them open.

Don't worry about the shells being undercooked. They will finish cooking in the oven.

Classic Chicken Parmesan with a Kick

Ingredients:

1 pound of spaghetti, cooked al dente
2 large boneless, skinless chicken breasts, rinsed and patted dry
1 cup of plain flour
1 cup of Italian breadcrumbs
1 egg, beaten
1 teaspoon of garlic powder
1 teaspoon of salt
1 teaspoon of cracked black pepper
½ teaspoon of crushed red pepper flakes
2 Tablespoons of olive oil
2 Tablespoons of butter
2 cups of basic marinara sauce
1 cup of grated mozzarella

Directions:

Split chicken breasts into 4 halves and pound to ¼ inch thickness.

Season with salt, pepper, and garlic powder and set aside.

Heat olive oil and butter together in a heavy skillet but do not allow it to smoke.

Prepare chicken assembly line on your counter – place flour, beaten egg and breadcrumbs in three shallow dishes with breadcrumbs closest to the hot oil.

Dredge chicken first in flour, shaking off excess. Dip in beaten egg and then breadcrumbs, until thoroughly coated. Repeat for remaining 3 chicken breasts. Discard leftover flour and breadcrumbs.

Place chicken gently into hot oil, facing away from you, and cook for 5 minutes on each side until chicken is completely cooked and golden brown. Remove from skillet and drain on paper towels.

Heat marinara in skillet and stir in crushed red pepper flakes – simmer for 5 minutes.

Top chicken with hot marinara and grated mozzarella and serve over spaghetti.

Notes:

This recipe can be made without the “kick” – just leave out the crushed red pepper flakes. Pepper flakes can be reduced to ¼ teaspoon for just a small kick.

Steps can be repeated for additional chicken breasts – they are excellent as sandwiches later or even the next day.

Healthy Chicken Parmesan – Yes, Healthy!

You can have all the great flavor of traditional chicken parm for a lot less calories! Serve with a green salad, minus the pasta, or serve over spaghetti for a treat.

Ingredients:

- 2 large boneless, skinless chicken breasts, rinsed and patted dry
- 1 egg white, beaten until frothy
- 1 cup of Italian breadcrumbs
- ¼ cup of low-fat parmesan cheese
- 1 teaspoon of salt
- 1 teaspoon of cracked black pepper
- 1 teaspoon of garlic powder
- 1 cup of basic marinara sauce (see recipe)
- 1 cup of skim mozzarella cheese

Directions:

Preheat oven to 425 degrees. Line a baking sheet with foil, spray with cooking spray, and set aside.

Split each chicken breast in half and pound each piece to an even thickness.

Season with salt, pepper and garlic.

Combine breadcrumbs and parmesan cheese in a shallow dish. Dip chicken breast in egg white to coat and then dredge in the breadcrumbs, thoroughly covering the chicken.

Place on baking sheet and bake for 15-20 minutes or until cooked through. Spoon ¼ cup of sauce over each breast, top with ¼ cup of

mozzarella and return to oven 5 minutes or until cheese is melted.

Notes:

Turn once during baking to avoid getting the “crust” on one side of the chicken.

For more versatility, omit sauce and cheese and use for salads or sandwiches.

For kids, cut the chicken into strips and bake according to directions. Serve with marinara sauce for dipping.

Italian Everything Pizza (Supreme)

A good, hearty (healthy) pizza for cold nights.

Ingredients:

½ batch of basic pizza dough
¼ cup of cornmeal
½ cup – 1 cup of basic marinara
½ pound of Italian sausage, sweet or spicy
1 package of pepperonis
1 green bell pepper, diced
1 red onion, diced
5-7 mushrooms, sliced
1 small can of black olives, sliced
3 small pepperoncini, sliced
2 cups of mozzarella cheese

Directions:

Preheat oven to 400 degrees.

Lightly dust work surface with cornmeal and place pizza dough in the center. Beginning in the middle of the dough, press outward towards to edges, making a medium sized disc.

Transfer to pizza pan or baking stone and continue to press the dough outward toward the edges until you are out of room.

Brush the dough with olive oil and place in preheated oven for 10 minutes.

While the dough is in the oven, brown sausage, onion, green pepper and mushrooms in a skillet over med-high heat until meat is cooked

through and vegetables are soft – about 7-8 minutes. Drain if necessary.

Remove pizza crust from oven and spread sauce in a thin, even layer.

Cover with half the mozzarella cheese. Spoon toppings on top of the cheese layer evenly EXCEPT olives, pepperonis and pepperoncini.

Top with remaining cheese. Place pepperoni on top of cheese and add olives and pepperoncini evenly on top.

Return to oven to 5-7 minutes until cheese is thoroughly melted.

Notes:

Crust will be softer when baked on a pizza stone. If you want a crispier crust, bake in a perforated pizza pan or directly on the oven rack.

Finished pizza will be approximately 12 inches.

Summertime Pizza Margherita

This is one of the most classic (and original) versions of pizza – it's best in the summertime when there is an abundance of garden-fresh tomatoes and herbs, but it's wonderful all year round.

Ingredients:

½ batch of basic pizza crust
3 large, very ripe tomatoes, chopped and seeded
3 cloves of garlic, crushed
2 teaspoons of coarse salt
1 teaspoon of cracked black pepper
5-6 fresh basil leaves
2 Tablespoons of olive oil
¼ cup of cornmeal
8 ounces of fresh mozzarella, sliced about ¼ in. thick

Directions:

Preheat oven to 400 degrees.

Place 1 Tablespoon of olive oil and chopped tomatoes in a sauce pan over medium Heat and cook until tomatoes begin to break down.

Take crushed garlic and coarse salt and crush with the back of a spoon to make a paste.

Add to tomatoes and continue cooking. While tomatoes cook, lightly dust work surface with cornmeal and place pizza dough in the center.

Beginning in the middle of the dough, press outward towards to edges, making a medium sized disc.

Transfer to pizza pan or baking stone and continue to press the dough outward toward the edges until you are out of room.

Brush the dough with olive oil and place in preheated oven for 10 minutes.

Remove pizza crust from oven and top with tomatoes and slices of mozzarella cheese.

Return to oven for 5-7 minutes. While pizza is in oven, stack basil leaves on top of each other and roll into a straw shape, then slice in thin slivers.

Remove pizza from oven when cheese is melted and bubbly, and sprinkle with basil.

Notes:

Fresh mozzarella can be found at most grocery stores now – don't substitute for grated if you can help it!

If tomatoes are out of season, or you would prefer to use canned – one large can of whole, peeled tomatoes will work just fine.

Fresh basil is essential to authentic pizza margherita, but if you only have dried, crush 2 teaspoons in your palm and sprinkle it on after pizza comes out of the oven.

Healthy Stuffed Zucchini

This is healthy, low-fat way to use the abundance of summer zucchini. It can easily be made meatless.

Ingredients:

2-3 medium to large zucchinis, washed and dried
1 pound of ground turkey
1 medium onion, chopped
1 green bell pepper, chopped
 $\frac{3}{4}$ cups of Italian breadcrumbs
1 egg, beaten
1 Tablespoon of Italian seasoning
1 cup of basic marinara sauce
1 cup of mozzarella cheese
Salt and pepper to taste

Directions:

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Spray a 9 x 13 baking dish with non-stick spray and set aside.

Combine turkey, onion, green pepper, breadcrumbs, seasoning and egg in a large bowl.

Split zucchini lengthwise and scoop out middle, leaving about $\frac{1}{4}$ on all sides – save the squash!

Season with salt and pepper. Spoon meat mixture into zucchinis and place in prepped pan.

Bake uncovered for 30 minutes. Spoon marinara over zucchinis and return to oven for another 15 minutes.

Top with mozzarella and leave in oven another 5 minutes, or until cheese is melted.

Notes:

Depending on the size of the zucchini, a serving is 2 halves.

Ground chicken, pork or beef can be substituted for ground turkey.

The scooped out squash is great for making zucchini bread – store it in the fridge in a zip-top bag until you are ready to bake!

Zingy Italian Sausage and Peppers

This is great comfort food on a cold day. It's also a good way to use up leftover bratwursts or other grilled sausages.

Ingredients:

4 hot or sweet Italian sausages
1 medium onion, quartered and sliced
1 green bell pepper, seeded and sliced
2 cloves of garlic, minced
2 Tablespoons of olive oil
¼ teaspoon of crushed red pepper flakes

Directions:

Heat 1 Tablespoon of oil in skillet and fry sausages over med-low heat until browned and cooked almost done – about 10-12 minutes. Remove from skillet and set aside.

Add remaining ingredients and cook until vegetables are softened.

Slice sausages and return to skillet, tossing with vegetables and 1 Tablespoon of olive oil.

Serve on toasted Italian rolls or over cooked penne.

Notes:

If you are using leftover sausages, slice them and add them to the skillet with the vegetables.

Omit the crushed red pepper if you are using hot sausages (unless you like it REALLY hot).

If making grinders, place 2 thin slices of provolone cheese on top and slide under the broiler for 3-5 min.

Penne with Prosciutto and Peas

This is a simple, classy dish that tastes like comfort food but is good enough for company. It's very nice served with crusty Italian bread.

Ingredients:

4 ounces of prosciutto ham, thinly sliced
1 Tablespoon of olive oil
2 cloves of garlic, minced
1 cup of heavy cream
1 cup of white wine
1 cup of peas, frozen (do not thaw)
½ cup of parmesan cheese (not in a can)
1 pound of linguine, cooked and drained

Directions:

Heat olive oil in skillet over medium heat and cook garlic until fragrant – do not burn it!

Stir in wine and cook for 2 minutes.

Add cream and bring to a simmer.

Add prosciutto and cook for 2 minutes. Add peas and parmesan.

Cook for another 2 minutes.

Add cooked pasta to skillet and toss to coat.

Serve hot with crusty Italian bread.

Notes:

You may substitute half and half for the cream, but the sauce will be thinner as a result. Do not use milk, as this will make the sauce too thin and runny.

Do not use cooking wine – use a good white wine you would drink from a glass and serve the rest with dinner!

Eggplant Parmesan

Perfect for vegetarians and meat-eaters. The eggplant is hearty and it's a good way to get kids to eat veggies – smothered in marinara sauce and cheese!

Ingredients:

- 1 medium eggplant, sliced in ½ inch discs
- 1 egg, beaten
- 1 cup of Italian breadcrumbs
- 1 teaspoon of garlic powder
- 1 teaspoon of salt
- 1 teaspoon of cracked black pepper
- ½ - 1 cup of canola oil
- 2 cups of basic marinara sauce (see recipe)
- 2 cups of grated mozzarella
- 1 pound of spaghetti, cooked and drained

Directions:

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Pour ¼ cup of marinara into 9 x 13 baking dish and rotate to cover bottom. Set aside.

Heat canola oil in heavy skillet until very hot but not smoking.

Place beaten egg and breadcrumbs in separate, shallow dishes.

Season the eggplant slices with salt, pepper and garlic powder.

Dip each slice in egg, then coat with breadcrumbs.

Carefully place half the eggplant slices into the oil and fry 30 seconds to 1 minute on each side, or until golden brown.

Remove and drain on paper towels. Repeat with the other half.

Place each slice of eggplant into baking dish and cover with remaining marinara.

Cover and bake for 30 minutes. Uncover, sprinkle with cheese, and return to oven for 5-7 minutes until cheese is melted.

Serve 2 slices per person over pasta.

Notes:

Choose medium eggplants over large ones, even if you have to use 2 to get the required number of slices. Large eggplants have more seeds, which make the bitter.

For a healthier version, skip the frying step and bake the eggplant slices on a baking sheet for 30 minutes before covering with sauce and cheese.

Cheesy Manicotti Florentine

This is a great vegetarian dish that's hearty and cheesy and full of nutrients.

Ingredients:

1 box of manicotti shells, slightly undercooked, drained
1 box of frozen spinach, thawed and drained
½ cup of ricotta cheese
½ cup of cottage cheese
1 ½ cup of mozzarella cheese
2 cups of basic marinara sauce (see recipe)
Salt and pepper to taste

Directions:

Preheat oven to 350 degrees.

Pour about ¼ cup of marinara sauce into a 9 x 13 baking dish and rotate to coat bottom. Set aside.

Combine ricotta, cottage cheese, 1 cup of the mozzarella and spinach in a bowl, and add salt and pepper to taste.

Spoon mixture into a ziptop bag and snip one corner.

Squeeze filling into each manicotti shell and place in baking dish.

Pour remaining marinara sauce over manicottis. Cover and bake for 30 minutes.

Remove cover, sprinkling remaining mozzarella on top.

Return to oven 5-7 minutes or until cheese is melted.

Notes:

If you can't find or don't like ricotta cheese, you can use 1 cup of cottage cheese instead. Small curd works best.

If you want a meatier manicotti, you may add cooked ground beef or turkey to the marinara before adding to the dish.

Best Ever Baked Spaghetti

Perfect for nights when you just want to throw something in the oven and come out with a filling dinner.

Ingredients:

½ pound of spaghetti, cooked and drained
1 pound of ground beef
2 cloves of garlic, minced
1 medium onion, diced
3 cups of basic marinara sauce (see recipe)
2 cups of mozzarella cheese

Directions:

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Spray a 9 x 13 baking dish with cooking spray and set aside.

Brown ground beef, along with onion and garlic, until cooked through and vegetables are softened.

Stir in marinara sauce.

Place 1/3 of the spaghetti in prepared pan. Top with 1/3 of the beef and 1/3 of the cheese. Repeat two more times, ending with the last of the cheese.

Bake uncovered for 15-20 minutes until cheese is brown and bubbly.

Notes:

Feel free to substitute ground turkey or Italian sausage for ground beef.

Any variety of vegetables can be added to the sauce: green peppers, mushrooms, black olives, etc.

Serve with a green salad and dinner can be on the table in 30 minutes!

Ham and Asparagus Frittata

A frittata is just an Italian quiche without the crust. This is perfect for those on a high-protein diet or who are big fans of “brinner” – breakfast for dinner!

Ingredients:

- 12 eggs, beaten
- 3 Tablespoons of olive oil
- 1 pound of asparagus, rinsed
- 1 pound of cubed ham
- 1 cup of cheddar cheese
- 1 teaspoon of salt
- 1 teaspoon of cracked black pepper

Directions:

Preheat oven to 350 degrees.

Boil asparagus until just tender, about 5-7 minutes.

Remove from heat and drop immediately into ice water to stop the cooking.

When cool enough to touch, chop into 1-inch pieces and set aside.

In an ovenproof skillet, heat oil over medium heat.

Add the 12 beaten eggs and season with salt and pepper.

Toss in ham, asparagus and cheese and stir gently.

Cook 5-7 minutes until bottom is set, then transfer to oven.

Bake until top is set, around 10 minutes.

Notes:

An ovenproof skillet, such as cast iron is VERY important. Do not use non-stick, as the non-stick coating can melt at high temperatures.

Chicken Piccata

This light, lemony chicken dish is perfect for summer dinners.

Ingredients:

2 boneless, skinless chicken breasts, rinsed and patted dry
½ cup of plain flour
1 teaspoon of salt
1 teaspoon of cracked black pepper
1 teaspoon of garlic powder
2 Tablespoons of butter
1 Tablespoons of olive oil
½ cup of chicken broth
½ cup of white wine
4 teaspoons of lemon juice
2 Tablespoons of capers
1 pound of pasta, cooked and drained.

Directions:

Split chicken breasts into 4 halves.

Season with salt, pepper and garlic.

Melt oil and 1 Tablespoon of butter together over med-high heat.

Dredge chicken breasts in flour and place carefully into hot oil, facing away from you.

Cook about 5 minutes per side, until chicken is cooked through.

Remove from skillet and drain on paper towels.

Add remaining butter to skillet and add chicken broth and wine.

Simmer until sauce begins to thicken, about 12 minutes.

Add lemon juice and remove from heat.

Serve chicken over pasta and spoon sauce over both. Sprinkle with capers.

Notes:

Capers are an acquired taste for many – if you are unsure or have small children, omit them until you have had a taste.

Don't use cooking wine – use a nice wine you would drink from a glass, and serve the rest with dinner!

If you want to omit the wine altogether, simply replace it with more chicken stock.

St. Louis Style Toasted Ravioli

These little treats are a tradition in St. Louis, Missouri. Serve with warm marinara for dipping.

Ingredients:

24 frozen cheese raviolis, thawed
1 egg, beaten
1 cup of Italian breadcrumbs
 $\frac{3}{4}$ cup of canola or vegetable oil
 $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of parmesan cheese
1 cup of basic marinara sauce (see recipe)

Directions:

Heat canola oil in heavy skillet over med-high heat to 350 degrees.

Place beaten egg and breadcrumbs in shallow dishes.

Dip raviolis in egg and then breadcrumbs, thoroughly coating each one.

Fry in small batches for one minute, until golden brown.

Sprinkle immediately with parmesan and salt and drain on paper towels.

Serve with warm marinara.

Notes:

You can also use fresh raviolis – cooking time will be slightly less.

Quick and Easy Ravioli

These raviolis use wonton wrappers to cut down on both cooking and prep time.

Ingredients:

1 package of wonton wrappers or dumpling wrappers
1 cup of ricotta cheese
½ cup of parmesan cheese
1 teaspoon of cracked black pepper
1 egg, beaten
2 cups of basic marinara or alfredo sauce (see recipes)

Directions:

Remove wonton wrappers from package and wrap in a damp paper towel. You don't want them to dry out.

Mix cheeses and pepper in a small bowl and put a large pot of salted water on to boil.

To assemble raviolis: lay one wonton wrapper down and place NO MORE than 1 teaspoon of filling in the center.

With your finger or a small, clean paintbrush, brush beaten egg around the edges of the wrapper.

Place another wrapper on top and press from the middle outward, sealing the ravioli and removing all air bubbles.

Repeat for as many raviolis as desired. 1 package makes 24 raviolis.

Boil in small batches for 2-3 minutes until cooked. Drain and serve with sauce of choice.

Notes:

It's important not to overfill the raviolis, or they will burst during cooking.

Other fillings can be added to the cheese, such as cooked meats, mushrooms, spinach, etc. Cook all vegetables and meats prior to making the raviolis and mix them in with the cheese mixture.

Do not substitute cottage cheese for the ricotta – it is too wet and will cause the raviolis not to seal properly.

Cheesy Savory Pasta Carbonara

Carbonara is simply pasta with bacon and eggs – a perfect mix!

Ingredients:

3 large egg yolks
6-8 slices of bacon, diced
1 small onion, finely chopped
2 Tablespoons of olive oil
3 cloves garlic, minced
½ cup of parmesan cheese (not from a can)
2 Tablespoons of cream or half-n-half
1 pound of spaghetti, cooked and drained

Directions:

Beat egg yolks and cream in a small bowl and set aside.

Heat oil over med-high heat and cook onion, garlic, and bacon until bacon is crispy.

Toss in a large bowl with pasta until evenly mixed.

Just before serving, add in cheese and egg/cream mixture and toss to combine.

Serve with a crisp salad.

Notes:

Don't worry about adding the egg – the hot pasta will cook it as it's tossed.

For an authentic taste, substitute pancetta for the bacon.

Classic Lasagna

Who doesn't love meaty, cheesy lasagna?

Ingredients:

1 pound of ground beef
1 pound of Italian sausage
1 large onion, diced
4 cloves of garlic, minced
3 teaspoons of Italian seasoning
1 ½ teaspoons of cracked black pepper
4 cups of basic marinara sauce (see recipe)
3 cups of cottage cheese OR 3 c. ricotta cheese
2 eggs, beaten
4 cups of mozzarella cheese, divided
16 lasagna noodles, cooked

Directions:

Preheat oven to 350 degrees.

Brown ground beef, Italian sausage, onion and garlic over med-high heat.

Add marinara sauce and simmer for 30 minutes.

Prepare a 9 x 13 baking dish with cooking spray and set aside.

Combine cottage/ricotta cheese, eggs, seasoning, pepper, parmesan cheese and 2 c. mozzarella.

To assemble lasagna: begin with one layer of noodles, 1 layer of sauce/meat, and one layer of cheese mixture. Repeat at least 3

times, ending with noodles on top.

Cover with remaining mozzarella.

Bake loosely covered for 30 minutes.

Remove cover and return to oven for about 10 minutes, until cheese on top is browned.

Notes:

This can easily be made without the meat – just add a can of chunky diced tomatoes.

Creamy Veggie Lasagna

Decadent lasagna without the meat and loaded with healthy veggies.

Ingredients:

2 cups of carrots, diced or sliced thinly
2 cups of zucchini, diced or thinly sliced
1 cup of mushrooms, sliced
4 garlic cloves, minced
2 Tablespoons of olive oil
1 small can of diced tomatoes
½ teaspoon of cracked black pepper
1 teaspoon of salt
2 teaspoons of Italian seasoning
2 cups of ricotta cheese
1 egg, beaten
2 cups of basic alfredo sauce (see recipe)
½ cup of parmesan cheese
3 cups of mozzarella cheese
12 lasagna noodles, uncooked

Directions:

Preheat oven to 350 degrees.

Heat oil in large skillet and cook vegetable until tender, about 7-10 minutes.

Remove from heat, add tomatoes and set aside.

Combine ricotta, egg and parmesan cheese in a small bowl.

To assemble: Pour ½ cup of alfredo sauce in bottom of a 9 x 13 baking dish and turn to coat. Put down a layer of noodles, follow with a layer of ricotta and then vegetables, finishing with a layer of mozzarella. Repeat twice more, ending with noodles on top.

Pour remaining sauce over noodles. Cover and bake for 45 minutes.

Uncover and continue baking for 15 minutes. Let stand before serving.

Notes:

Any combination of vegetables can be used – try squash, artichoke hearts, asparagus.. whatever is in season!

You can substitute cottage cheese for the ricotta.

Hearty Stuffed Artichokes

Don't be scared of this odd-looking vegetable – it's tasty and good for you!

Ingredients:

4 medium to large artichokes
2 cups of Italian breadcrumbs
¼ cup of parmesan cheese
2 cloves of garlic, minced
2 teaspoons of oregano
1 teaspoon of salt
1 teaspoon of cracked black pepper
1/3 cup of olive oil, plus extra
1 cup of water

Directions:

Preheat oven to 375 degrees.

Rinse and trim artichokes, removing the stem so that they sit flat, and removing the points off the leaves.

Work your fingers in between the rows of leave to loosen them and make room for the stuffing.

Combine breadcrumbs, parmesan cheese, garlic oregano, salt and pepper and add the olive oil slowly until the crumbs hold together. You may not use all of the oil or you may need slightly more.

Stuff the breadcrumb mixture into the leaves of each artichoke, starting from the bottom layers and working up.

Place artichokes right side up in a shallow baking dish. Pour the water into the dish and drizzle each artichoke with olive oil.

Cover and bake for about an hour.

Remove cover and bake another 10 minutes.

Cool slightly before serving.

Notes:

Covering is important – you want to steam the artichokes until they are tender and the leaves are easily removed.

Classic, Cheesy Baked Ziti

Always a family favorite, and so easy to make!

Ingredients:

1 pound of penne pasta, slightly undercooked and drained
2 cups of cottage cheese
3 cups of mozzarella cheese
3 cups of basic marinara sauce

Directions:

Preheat oven to 350 degrees.

Combine half the mozzarella and all the cottage cheese with the penne.

Pour half the sauce into a 9 x 13 baking dish sprayed with cooking spray.

Turn to coat. Pour in pasta and top with remaining sauce and mozzarella.

Bake for 25-30 minutes until cheese is melted and bubbly.

Notes:

You can substitute ricotta if you don't like cottage cheese.

The pasta will finish cooking in the oven.

Spraying the pan is important. Really.

Basic Risotto

Risotto is something that many people are frightened of, but it's really very simple. Once you know the method, you can make a variety of flavors the same way.

Ingredients:

6 cups of chicken broth
1 medium onion, finely chopped
2 garlic cloves, minced
1 ½ cups of Arborio rice
4 Tablespoons of butter
1 cup of parmesan cheese
Salt and pepper to taste

Directions:

IMPORTANT: You must follow the directions exactly or your risotto will not have the right texture or flavor.

Boil the chicken broth and reduce to a simmer – do NOT remove from heat.

Melt the butter in a large sauce pan and sauté onion and garlic lightly until soft and fragrant.

Add the rice and stir to coat, cooking until all moisture has been absorbed.

Add 1 cup of broth and stir constantly until all liquid has been absorbed. Repeat, stirring constantly.

After about 20 minutes, the risotto should have a silky, creamy texture, and the rice should be tender.

Remove from heat and stir in $\frac{3}{4}$ cup of parmesan cheese.

Season with salt and pepper to taste, sprinkle on remaining parmesan cheese, and serve hot.

Notes:

You can substitute vegetable broth for the chicken broth for a vegetarian option.

Once you have mastered the method, the flavor combinations are endless. Just make sure you cook vegetables or even meats prior to adding the rice to the pan.

Variation suggestions: wild mushrooms, spinach, pumpkin, sausage

Osso Bucco

This is a fabulous meal for a cold, blustery day. The meat falls off the bones into a tasty, spicy sauce.

Ingredients:

- 8 veal shanks
- 1 cup of carrots, diced
- 1 cup of celery, diced
- 1 cup of onion, diced
- 3 garlic cloves, minced
- 1 can of diced tomatoes
- 3 Tablespoons of olive oil
- ¼ cup of butter
- ½ cup of plain flour
- 1 ½ cup of chicken broth
- 2 cups of white wine
- 1 teaspoon of thyme
- 2 bay leaves
- 1 teaspoon of cracked black pepper

Directions:

Preheat oven to 350 degrees.

Season veal shanks with salt and pepper and dredge in the flour.

Heat oil in an ovenproof dutch oven and brown the veal on both sides but do not cook through.

Remove from dutch oven and set aside.

Add butter to the pot and toss in the carrots, celery, onion, garlic, and tomatoes. Cook until veggies have softened.

Pour in white wine and stir to deglaze the pot.

Add chicken brother and herbs, stirring to combine.

Return veal shanks to the pot, cover, and cook in the oven for 2 hours.

To serve: Remove veal from pot – at this point you can either spoon the juice over the veal, or puree the sauce, veggies and all, and pour that over the veal.

Notes:

An ovenproof dutch oven is essential. Stovetop pans can't stand up to oven heat for long periods.

If you choose to puree the sauce, remove the bay leaves prior to doing so.

Veal shanks are available from the butcher's counter in most supermarkets – if you can't find them, beef shanks will work, but you will need to adjust cooking time.

You can substitute more chicken brother for the wine if you don't have any or wish to omit it

Quick and Easy Pizza Bread

Everyone loves pizza, everyone loves to make their own pizza, and there's so little work involved that it's perfect for a busy weeknight.

Ingredients:

2 loaves of French bread
2 cups of basic marinara (see recipe)
4 cups of mozzarella cheese
Toppings of choice (pepperoni, sausage, ham, bacon, onions, green peppers, pineapple... whatever!)

Directions:

Preheat oven to 400 degrees.

Split both loaves of bread lengthwise and top with ½ cup of marinara.

Top with a thin layer of cheese.

Add toppings of choice and top with another layer of cheese.

Place two halves on a foil-lined baking sheet and bake for 15-20 minutes, until bread is crunchy and cheese is melted.

Notes:

There are no limits on the topping combinations – this is a good way to try new veggies and cheeses or to use up leftovers like meatballs, cooked chicken and ends of veggies.

Pork Chops Cacciatore

Perfect for serving over rice, complete veggies and protein in on pot!

Ingredients:

- 4 thick-cut pork chops
- 1 cup of mushrooms, sliced
- 1 medium onion, diced
- 1 green bell pepper, chopped
- 4 garlic cloves, minced
- 1 28 ounce can of diced tomatoes
- ½ can of tomato paste (small)
- 1/3 cup of sliced green olives (optional)
- 1 cup of chicken broth
- ½ cup of white wine
- ½ cup of plain flour
- 4 Tablespoons of olive oil
- 3 teaspoons of Italian seasoning
- 1 bay leaf
- ¼ teaspoon of crushed red pepper flakes (optional but tasty)
- Salt and pepper to taste

Directions:

Heat oil in a large, heavy skillet over med-high heat.

Season chops with salt and pepper and dredge in flour. Brown on both sides, but do not cook through. Remove from pan and set aside.

Add mushrooms, onion, garlic and pepper and cook for 2-3 minutes to soften.

Add in herbs and tomato paste and cook another 2 minutes, until the paste is evenly distributed.

Pour in canned tomatoes, broth, wine and bay leaf and bring to a boil.

Reduce heat and simmer 10 minutes.

Return chops to pan and nestle into the sauce.

Cover and simmer on the stovetop for about an hour.

Let stand 5 minutes for sauce to thicken. Serve over rice.

Notes:

Remove the bay leaf before serving.

Green olives have a sharp salty flavor. Add more or less, or omit to your tastes.

Additional chicken broth can be substituted for the wine.

Chicken Spedini a la Sandy

Herby, spicy marinated chicken, perfect for tossing in salad or served on a crusty, buttered roll.

Ingredients:

1 pound of boneless, skinless chicken breasts
1 cup of olive oil
½ cup of white wine
½ cup of chicken broth
4 garlic cloves, crushed
Juice of one lemon (about ¼ cup)
½ cup of parmesan cheese
1 teaspoon of cracked black pepper
1 teaspoon of salt
¼ - ½ teaspoon of crushed red pepper flakes
1 teaspoon of oregano
1 teaspoon of basil

Directions:

Cut chicken into 1-inch cubes.

Combine remaining ingredients in a gallon-sized zip-top bag (or large bowl) and marinate chicken for AT LEAST an hour. Two hours is better and longer is wonderful.

When ready to cook, turn broiler on high and line a baking sheet with foil.

Thread marinated chicken onto skewers and broil for 10 minutes, until chicken is cooked through.

Serving options: leave chicken on skewer and serve with rice; remove chicken from skewers and toss into a green salad; place one skewer of chicken in a crusty, buttered roll and serve as a sandwich with marinara for dipping.

Notes:

If you don't like spicy, reduce or omit the red pepper flakes – it does make it very tasty, though.

You can substitute chicken broth for the wine, or wine for the chicken broth.

Try to use fresh lemon juice – bottled lemon juice can be bitter, which combined with the wine can give the chicken a very sharp taste.

Italian Steak Braciolo

This steak roll looks very fancy, but it's so easy you can prepare it any night of the week.

Ingredients:

- 1 flank steak, 1 ½ - 2 pounds
- 2/3 cup of Italian breadcrumbs
- 2/3 cup of grated parmesan cheese
- ½ cup of mozzarella cheese
- 1 teaspoon of oregano
- 2 garlic cloves, minced
- ½ cup of red wine
- ½ cup of beef broth
- 3 cups of basic marinara sauce (see recipe)
- 4 Tablespoons of olive oil
- 1 teaspoon of salt
- 1 teaspoon of cracked black pepper

Directions:

Preheat oven to 350 degrees.

Combine breadcrumbs, cheeses, garlic, oregano and 2 Tablespoons of oil in a small bowl and set aside.

Season the flank steak with salt and pepper and spread the cheese mixture evenly over the top.

Beginning at the small end, roll firmly, tucking in the filling where it spills out.

Secure the roll with either twine or skewers.

Heat remaining oil in a large, ovenproof skillet.

Place the braciolo in the skillet and sear on all sides. Remove.

Pour in wine and broth to deglaze the pan.

Add marinara and stir to combine.

Return braciolo to pan and baste in sauce.

Cover loosely with a foil tent and bake in the oven for 1 hour, basting every 20 minutes.

After 1 hour, remove foil and continue baking for another 20-30 minutes, or until beef is cooked to desired doneness.

Remove from oven and let stand 5-7 minutes.

Remove braciolo from pan and slice diagonally in ½ inch slices.

Spoon the sauce over the slices and serve with rice or mashed potatoes.

Notes:

The long cooking process is what makes the flank steak tender and moist – don't skimp!

You can substitute more broth for the wine, although the wine does give a rich flavor.

Lemon Rosemary Salmon

Perfect for a light, airy meal with lots of flavor and no guilt.

Ingredients:

1 salmon filet, cut in 3-inch slices
1 lemon, sliced thinly
1 garlic clove, crushed
1/3 cup of olive oil
Sprigs of fresh rosemary
Salt and pepper to taste

Directions:

Preheat oven to 400 degrees.

Run your fingers across the surface of the salmon to catch any tiny bones that may have been left.

Cut into portions, about 3 inches per serving.

Place crushed garlic in a small bowl with olive oil and microwave for 30 seconds.

Line a baking sheet with foil and spray with cooking spray.

For each piece of salmon, brush with the garlic-infused oil, place 3 thin slices of lemon on the flesh, top with a sprig of rosemary, and place skin-side-down on the baking sheet.

Bake 8-10 minutes and check for doneness. Salmon should flake easily and appear light pink in color.

Remove from oven and serve.

Notes:

Serving options include serving as-is with a salad, flaking and tossing into a salad, or even mixing with a very light aioli and serving on a soft roll as a sandwich.

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All The Best,

Pamela Kazmierczak