

CIAO FLORENTINA

the rustic kitchen

"If you like food that tastes like you've been cooking your butt off all day and that's simple to execute, then Florentina's book is a must have! She gets what the old world's traditions are all about; friends, family and some seriously simple food that will knock off your socks."

- Chef Fabio Viviani



PEACE, LOVE & FOOD

Photograph by
MIHA MATEI

The Rustic Kitchen

By Florentina Lile

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I had a vision of this book about 2 years ago. From the name to the details on the cover, I would see it every night I went to sleep. I didn't even have those funny looking kids (the dogs) at the time but somehow I pictured them there.

My collection of simple rustic but very loved recipes that I grew up with or just made up somewhere down the line on this journey I call my life- now shared with people all over the globe.

Somehow it all came together flawlessly at the last minute, from the wicker basket to the red bike, to the shocking cooperation of Peluci and Tesla (the kids) plus the passionate energies of two of my dear friends brought this project to life!

Lifestyle and food photographer Miha Matei (www.MihaMatei.com) whose works of art have graced many books and magazine covers is responsible for the magic of "The Rustic Kitchen" cover. Where she flawlessly captured my silly personality, my simple lifestyle, and my passion for rustic living and the ridiculous love for my mischievous furry kids: Peluci and Tesla that I can't ever imagine life without.

My friend Cameron Davison, book author and editor of the Ciao Florentina Magazine worked his magic against the clock and transformed all my scattered notes into a real book that you can save forever. I'm forever grateful.

Many thanks to my favorite hair stylist Gino Rizzi of (www.rizzihairdesign.com) who I trust to work his magic on my hair for any occasion but especially on a project such as this one that I will share with the world and will cherish forever.

Passion and love is the only driving force behind this project.

Dedicated to the greatest grandpa that ever lived, who always made the TIME for me, told me stories that had no endings because he always fell asleep somewhere halfway through... The man who taught me one of the greatest lessons of my life: that real food, a simple rustic and nutritious home cooked meal is the greatest excuse to get people together and keep those you love close to you and close to home. Love is the secret ingredient that makes it all worthwhile and Peace is the only side dish you will ever need.

Peace, Love & Food!

Florentina



Appetizers

Fried Calamari Recipe

(Serves 4)

1 lb. squid- cleaned and cut into 1/3 inch rings
1 c. all purpose flour
1 tbs. paprika
1/2 tsp. sea salt
2 egg whites
1/4 c. whole milk
Canola oil

1. Heat up (2) two-inches of the canola oil in a medium sauce pan to 375 degrees F.
2. Beat the egg whites lightly and whisk in the milk.
3. Mix the flour, paprika and sea salt together in a plastic bag.
4. Add the squid to the egg whites mixture then toss to coat in the flour in the plastic bag. Transfer to a colander to get rid of the excess flour and with dry hands start adding them to the hot oil.
5. Fry until light golden in color, no longer than (2) two minutes or they will become rubbery. I find that 90 seconds is the perfect time for me. Using a slotted spoon, transfer the calamari to a plate lined with paper towels. Sprinkle with more sea salt to taste and squeeze some lemon juice on top. Serve immediately with lemon wedges and homemade marinara sauce.

Crispy Wings Recipe

(Serves 4)

3 lbs. chicken wings -organic (tips discarded)
1 stick salted butter – melted
Lemon juice -freshly squeezed from one small lemon
3 garlic cloves -grated
1 tbs. fresh Italian parsley -minced
1 tbs. extra virgin olive oil
Dry Rub Mix
1 1/4 tsp sea salt
1/4 tsp. black pepper -freshly cracked
1/2 tsp. garlic powder
2 tsp. dehydrated minced onion or garlic powder
1/2 tsp. sweet paprika
1/4 tsp. nutmeg -freshly grated
1/4 tsp. red pepper flakes + more to taste

1. Rinse the chicken wings and dry them very well with paper towels.
2. Toss the wings with (1) one tbs. extra virgin olive oil and sprinkle with the spice mix. Set on a platter and refrigerate uncovered for 2 hours. (This will help dry out the moisture, resulting in very crispy skin.)
3. Preheat your oven to 450 F degrees and arrange the chicken wings on a broiler pan. Roast for 25-30 minutes or until the internal temperature reaches 160 F degrees.
4. Remove wings from the oven and toss to coat in the Lemon Butter Garlic Sauce and serve sprinkled with the minced parsley.

Lemon Garlic Butter Sauce Recipe

Warm up the butter in a sauce pan on low flame, add the grated garlic and cook for about 45 seconds. Whisk in the lemon juice and remove from heat.

Guacamole Recipe

(Serves 4)

2 large ripe avocados
1/2 onion – diced
1 tsp. extra virgin olive oil
1 -2 tbs. lime juice -freshly squeezed
1/2 c diced tomatoes
Sea salt & black pepper to taste

(1) One small jalapeno -diced without seeds if you like it mild or with seeds if you like it very spicy (or you may use Serrano chilies but keep in mind they are about 5 times hotter than the jalapenos).

In a medium bowl mash one of the avocados with the back of a fork, and dice the other. Gently mix them with the lime juice, olive oil, diced onion, jalapenos and tomatoes. Season with the sea salt & black pepper and serve with chips and salsa, tacos and Nacos.

Crab Cakes Recipe

(Makes 8)

The meat from 1 1/2 lbs. of King Crab legs
1 small onion –diced
2 garlic cloves -grated
1/4 c. olive oil or canola oil for frying
2 tbs. butter
2 tbs. mayo
1/2 tsp. garlic powder
1/3 tsp. sea salt + more to taste
Freshly ground black pepper to taste
15 Ritz crackers -crushed
1/4 c. fresh chopped Italian parsley
1 extra large egg -lightly beaten with 1 tbs. milk
2 c. bread crumbs -plain

1. Heat up the butter in a sauté pan over medium heat. Sauté the onion until translucent, add the garlic and cook for another 30 seconds making sure not to burn it. Set aside and let cool for a minute.
2. In a large mixing bowl gently combine the crab meat, sautéed onions and garlic, egg, sea salt, black pepper, mayo, crackers and parsley. Shape into 3/4" thick patties.
3. Spread the bread crumbs in a shallow dish and coat the patties on each side. Set on a tray and cover with wax paper then refrigerate and chill for 2 hours.
4. In a cast iron skillet heat up 1/4 cup of the olive oil or canola oil and cook the crab cakes until golden brown on each side (about 3 minutes). Drain the excess oil on paper towels and serve hot with lemon wedges.

Cherry Tomato Crostini Recipe

(Makes 8)

8 slices of a baguette 1/2 inch thick
1/4 c extra virgin olive oil
1 c organic cherry tomatoes -halved or sliced
1/4 tsp sea salt + more to taste
1/2 tsp lemon juice -freshly squeezed
1 garlic clove
Parmigiano reggiano for grating
10 basil leaves -sliced (optional)

1. Gently toss the tomatoes with the lemon juice, (2) two tbs. of the olive oil and season with the sea salt. Set aside. (You may also add a pinch of oregano if desired.)
2. Heat up a cast iron grill pan on med flame until hot. Grill your bread for about 3 minutes on each side or until it has nice grill marks.
3. Rub one side of each crostini with the garlic clove and brush with some of the olive oil. Sprinkle with a pinch of sea salt. Top with the tomato mixture and grate some parmigiano reggiano on top. (Sprinkle with the basil if using it.)

Set on a nice platter, pour yourself a glass of wine and enjoy.

Rustic What?

What is a crostini? How about bruschetta? Oh the confusion ...!

It is very simple actually: crostinis are just cute, miniature versions of bruschetta. Bruschetta is a grilled slice of bread rubbed with garlic and brushed with olive oil, or topped with your favorite things. It's a rustic open-faced sandwich, one of my favorite things I grew up eating.

Peach and Mango Salsa

(Serves 6)

2 ripe mangoes- peeled and diced
2 ripe large peaches – peeled and diced
1 c. sliced grape tomatoes
1 red bell pepper – diced
1 or 2 jalapenos – seeded and diced
1 small red onion -diced
1/3 c. cilantro leaves – roughly chopped
15 basil leaves – thinly sliced
1 tsp. sea salt + more to taste
1/2 tsp. sweet paprika
1/2 tsp. red pepper flakes + more to taste
Freshly cracked black pepper to taste
The zest from (1) one lime
The juice from (1) one juicy lime
1 tbs. raw honey
3 tbs. extra virgin olive oil

1. Whisk together the olive oil, lime juice, honey, lime zest, sea salt, paprika and red pepper flakes. Taste and adjust seasoning.
2. Pour the dressing over the diced fruit and vegetables. Toss gently to coat. Sprinkle with the cilantro and basil leaves, toss gently and serve next to quesadillas, chips or grilled pork chops.

Chive and Sour Cream Biscuits

(Makes 12)

2 c. all purpose flour + more for dusting
2 tsp. baking powder
1/2 tsp. baking soda
1/2 tsp. sea salt
4 tbs. sour cream
1 1/2 c. heavy cream
3 tbs. salted cold butter -grated
3 -4 tbs. snipped fresh chives

1. Heat up your oven to 400 F degrees.
2. In a large bowl whisk in the dry ingredients then grate in the butter and mix with your fingers.
3. Whisk the sour cream, heavy cream & chives together then fold them into the dry ingredients to form a soft dough making sure everything is incorporated without over mixing.
4. Knead the dough just enough to make it hold together (about 30 seconds) then roll it out into 3/4 inch sheet and cut out 12 rounds with your biscuit cutter.
5. Line a stainless steel cookie sheet with parchment paper and arrange the cold biscuits on it. Bake in the preheated oven for 18-20 minutes until golden brown on top. Cool on a cooling rack and serve.

Tip: When cutting the dough with the biscuit cutter **Do Not** twist the cutter, because it seals the edges and your biscuits won't grow and puff up as they should.

Roasted Eggplant Dip Recipe - Salata de Vinete

(Serves 4-6)

2 large eggplants
1/3 c. homemade mayo (just enough to hold everything together)
3 tbs. onion -grated (or to your taste)
1/2 tsp. sea salt + more to taste
Freshly cracked black pepper to taste

1. Rinse eggplants and dry them off with a towel then poke them with a knife or a fork all around. Grill the eggplants on a hot grill on medium flame until charred on all sides and soft. (About 20 minutes) Allow them to cool until comfortable to handle. Cut in half and scoop out the flesh with a spoon. Transfer to a food processor and pulse until smooth. Let cool to room temperature.

2. Once the eggplant has cooled down, gently mix in the mayo and grated onion. Season it with the sea salt and black pepper. Serve with a little crostini or fresh bread. May be served at room temperature or chilled.

Tip: You may also bake the eggplants in the oven but you will be missing out on the smoky flavor from the grill.

Green Olive and Roasted Pepper Spread

(Makes 3-4 cups)

- 2 c. green olives
- 1 large red bell pepper -roasted
- 1/4 c. extra virgin olive oil
- 1 large garlic clove -grated
- 1/4 tsp. freshly cracked black pepper + more to taste
- Sea salt to taste

Add all of the above ingredients to a food processor and chop coarsely. Adjust seasonings and serve on sandwiches, meats, as a dip or appetizer.

Roasted Pepper & Chickpea Dip

(Serves 4 +)

- 15 oz can chickpeas
- 1 red bell pepper -roasted
- 1/4 c. Extra Virgin olive oil
- 1 1/2 tbs. lemon juice -freshly squeezed
- 2 sprigs lemon thyme
- 1 tbs. capers -rinsed
- 2 garlic cloves
- 1/4 tsp. sea salt + more to taste
- Freshly cracked black pepper to taste

Drain the chickpeas and reserve the liquid. Add all of the above ingredients to a food processor and pulse pouring in the olive oil in a steady stream, until you obtain a creamy smooth consistency. Add some of the chickpea liquid if needed. Adjust seasonings and serve at room temperature or cold with garlic crostini.

Tip: I usually like to roast my own peppers on the grill or under the broiler but you may use jarred ones instead.

Tuna Appetizers

(Serves 6)

- 1 can tuna in water -drained
- 1/2 red bell pepper
- 1/2 green or yellow bell pepper
- 1/2 red onion -diced
- 1/3 c. fresh dill -minced
- Sea salt & black pepper to taste
- Mayo – just enough to hold it together
- 1 celery stalk with leaves -diced
- Multi-grain crackers

Mix all of the above ingredients and chill overnight. Serve on multi-grain crackers and decorate with some fresh dill.

Grilled Shrimp

(Serves 2)

8 large shrimp -wild caught, cleaned, deveined and tails on
2 tbs. extra virgin olive oil
2 parsley sprigs
1/2 tsp. garlic powder
1/4 tsp. sea salt
1/4 tsp. red pepper flakes
1/4 tsp. sweet paprika
2 tbs. freshly squeezed lemon juice
2 garlic cloves -crushed with the side of a kitchen knife
2 wooden skewers soaked in water for 20 minutes

1. Whisk all the marinade ingredients together and pour over the shrimp. Toss to coat gently and allow to sit at room temperature for 15 minutes.
2. Fire up the grill to 375 degrees F.
3. Drain excess moisture from the shrimp and thread four of them on each skewer. Set them on the grill and allow it to cook on medium high flame for 2 minutes on each side or until they turn pink and curl up. Remove from the grill and drizzle with some lemon juice.



Soup Recipes

Chicken Noodle Soup

(Serves 4)

2 lb. organic chicken – bone in, skin on and cut into pieces
1 small onion -whole 2 large carrots -whole
2 parsley roots -whole
1 celery stick with leaves -whole
2 parsley sprigs
4 thyme sprigs
2 bay leaves
1 1/2 tbs. sea salt + more to taste
4 qt. water
5 oz. thin egg noodles
1/2 c. chopped flat leaf Italian parsley

1. Add all of the above ingredients to a large cast iron pot reserving the noodles, salt and chopped parsley. Cover with the water and bring to a gentle simmer, never boil or the broth will be cloudy. Skim the foam off the top every 15 minutes to get a clear broth. Add the salt.
2. Allow the soup to simmer for 1 1/2 hours then strain it through a fine sieve. Transfer the broth back to the pot and cook the egg noodles for about 5 minutes or until done. (After one hour check the carrots and parsley root, remove from the soup and reserve if they are cooked)
3. Meanwhile discard the onion, parsley sprigs, celery, thyme sprigs and bay leaves. Dice the carrots and parsley root and reserve. Discard the skin and bones from the chicken and shred the meat. 4. Divide the meat and the vegetables between four bowls, and then ladle the hot broth and noodles over them. Sprinkle with the chopped parsley and serve with freshly cracked black pepper on top.

Roasted Butternut Squash and Apple Soup

(Serves 8 +)

1 butternut squash (3 lbs.) -peeled, seeded & cut into one inch pieces
2 apples -granny smith -cut into 1 inch pieces
1 medium onion -diced
1 carrot -sliced
4 tbs. butter
1/2 c. white wine
3 c. vegetable stock or chicken stock
1/2 c. heavy cream
1 tsp. sea salt + more to taste
Black pepper to taste -freshly cracked
1/2 tsp. red pepper flakes + more to taste
7 thyme sprigs -only leaves
1 bay leaf
Chives
Freshly grated nutmeg

1. Preheat your oven to 400 F. In a large baking dish toss the apples, butternut squash, carrot slices, red pepper flakes, bay leaf, sea salt, pepper and thyme with (1) one tbs. of melted butter. Roast uncovered for 30-45 minutes or until tender.
2. Heat up the 3 tablespoons of butter over medium-low flame in a cast iron pot. Sauté the diced onions with a pinch of sea salt until translucent. Add the wine and let it reduce by half. Add the roasted squash and apples to the pot together with the vegetable or chicken stock. Bring to a simmer and allow it to cook together for 5 minutes. Discard the bay leaf and using a hand held blender puree the soup until smooth. Add the cream and cook an additional 3 minutes.
3. Adjust seasonings and serve hot with a drizzle of cream, snipped chives and a pinch of freshly grated nutmeg.

Silky Pea Soup

(Serves 4+)

- 1 small onion -diced
- 1 small carrot -diced
- 1/2 celery stick -diced
- 2 tbs. butter
- 1 tbs. extra virgin olive oil
- 4 tbs. all purpose flour
- 5 c. chicken stock or vegetable stock -warm and low sodium
- 1 bay leaf
- 4 c. frozen petite peas
- 2 tbs. heavy cream + more for drizzling
- 1/4 c. snipped chives
- 3/4 tsp. sea salt + more to taste
- Freshly cracked black pepper to taste

1. In a heavy bottom cast iron pot heat up the butter and olive oil on medium-low flame. Add the diced onion with a pinch of sea salt and cook until translucent. Add the carrots and celery and cook a few more minutes until they start to soften.
2. Stir in the flour until it's all incorporated in the cooking fat and let it toast for about a minute making sure not to burn it. Whisk in the stock until all the lumps are gone and bring to a simmer. Add the bay leaf and allow it to simmer gently for 15 minutes, until thickened and the floury taste is gone.
3. Add the frozen peas and simmer until just heated through. Season with the sea salt and remove from heat. Using a hand held blender puree the soup until smooth. Bring the soup back to a simmer and add the 2 tablespoons of cream. Simmer an additional 5 minutes, adjust seasonings and serve with a drizzle of fresh cream and a pinch of the snipped chives.

Meatball Soup Recipe - Romanian Ciorba de Perisoare

(Serves 8)

- 1/4 c. extra virgin olive oil
- 3 large carrots -diced
- 1 large parsley root -diced
- 1/2 c. celery root -diced
- 3 celery stalks wt leaves -diced
- 1/2 green bell pepper -diced
- 1/2 yellow bell pepper -diced
- 1 medium onion -diced
- 1 - 28 oz. can diced tomatoes
- Juice from 1 lemon or 1 lime + more to taste
- 1/4 c. celery leaves -minced
- 2 bay leaves
- 1 1/2 tsp sea salt + more to taste
- 2 qt. water
- 3 tbs. snipped chives -optional
- Sour cream for serving

Meatball Ingredients:

- 1 lb. organic ground pork
- 1 slice bread soaked in milk and squeezed well
- 1/3 c. white rice
- 1/4 c. minced parsley
- 1/2 tsp. sea salt
- 1/4 tsp. black pepper -freshly cracked
- 1/3 onion -grated
- 1 small egg
- 2 tsp. ginger root -grated
- 1 pinch of nutmeg -freshly grated
- 1/2 tsp. baking soda

1. Heat up the olive oil in a large enameled cast iron pot. Add the diced onion with a pinch of sea salt and sauté until translucent, about 5 minutes. Add the diced carrot, parsley root, celery root, bell peppers and celery together with the bay leaves and give it a good stir. Cook for an additional 5 minutes.
2. Add the canned tomatoes and the water and bring to a slow simmer. Season it with the sea salt. Allow the soup to simmer on very low flame while you prepare the meatballs.
3. To make the meatballs combine all the meatball ingredients in a large bowl and shape them into golf ball size. Add them one by one to the soup and bring it back to a simmer before covering with a tight lid. Allow to cook on low flame (just gentle simmering) for 20 minutes. Remove from flame and without peaking inside allow it to sit for 10 minutes for the rice in the meatballs to cook completely.
4. Squeeze in the lemon or lime juice and serve with a dab of sour cream and a sprinkling of the minced celery leaves and snipped chives on top.

Creamy San Marzano Tomato Soup

(Serves 6)

- 2 - 28 oz cans San Marzano tomatoes -whole
- 1 large Maui Onion -diced
- 3 garlic cloves -minced
- 1 carrot -diced
- 1 celery stalk -diced
- 1 parsley root -diced
- 1 bay leaf
- 3 – 4 c. vegetable stock or chicken stock -low sodium
- 1/4 c. heavy cream -optional
- 1/4 c. extra virgin olive oil
- 1 tsp. sea salt
- 20 basil leaves -torn

1. Heat up the olive oil on medium flame in a large enameled cast iron pot. Add the onion and a pinch of sea salt and sauté for about 5 minutes. Add the diced carrot, celery, parsley root and bay leaf. Sauté together for an additional 10 minutes until the veggies begin to soften and add the garlic. Cook one additional minute.
2. Roughly crush the tomatoes with your hand and add them to the sofrito. Give everything a good stir then add the stock. Bring to a gentle simmer and allow it to cook for 30 minutes.
3. Stir in the cream and simmer a few more minutes. Remove from the flame and blend your soup with an immersion blender until desired consistency is achieved. (For a rustic texture only give it a buzz or two and leave some tomato chunks in there.) Add the fresh basil reserving a couple of leaves for decoration, ladle the soup into bowls and finish with a few drops of extra virgin olive oil and a few drops of cream. Garnish with some tiny basil leaves.

Summer Squash Soup

(Serves 2+)

- 1 lb. yellow squash -grated
- 1/2 c. onion -minced
- 1/2 carrot -grated
- 2 1/2 c. chicken stock -low sodium
- 8 oz. can diced tomatoes
- 1 tbs. all purpose flour
- 1 bunch dill -minced
- 3 tbs. heavy cream
- 2 tbs. EV olive oil
- 1 tsp. sea salt and freshly cracked black pepper to taste

1. In a medium stock pot heat up the olive oil on medium flame. Add the onions and a pinch of salt and sauté until translucent (about 5 minutes).
2. Add the flour and whisk together with the oil then allow it to cook together for (1) one minute.
3. Add the grated squash and carrot to the pot and sauté together for 3 minutes then add the chicken stock and bay leaf. Give it a good stir, bring to a simmer and allow it to cook together on low flame for 20 minutes.
4. Add the diced tomatoes and let cook for another 5 minutes then transfer the soup to a blender and pulse together until smooth.
5. Transfer the soup back to the pot and bring to a simmer. Season with sea salt and black pepper to taste then stir in the cream and the fresh dill and allow to simmer together for 2 more minutes on low flame.
6. Remove from heat and serve warm with a fried squash blossom.

Pasta E Fagioli or Pasta with Beans

(Serves 8)

1/4 c. extra virgin olive oil
1 large carrot -diced
1 celery stalk with leaves -diced
1 small onion -diced
3 garlic cloves -minced
1 red bell pepper -diced
2 – 15 oz. can fire roasted tomatoes –diced
2 – 15 oz. cans white cannellini beans
2 bay leaves
6 thyme sprigs
1 tbs. oregano -dried
1 tsp. red pepper flakes
3 parsley sprigs
15 basil leaves- thinly sliced
4 oz. mini cheese ravioli (or your favorite small shaped pasta)
2 tbs. sea salt + more to taste
1/2 tsp. black pepper -freshly cracked
3/4 lb. Italian hot sausage – casing removed (or a mixture of sweet and hot)
2 qt. chicken stock or vegetable stock

1. Heat up 2 tbsp of the olive oil in a large cast iron Dutch oven over medium flame. Add the sausage and break it up into big chunks with a flat wooden spoon. Sear until nice and golden, a few minutes. Transfer to a plate and keep warm.
2. Add the remaining olive oil to the pan with the sausage drippings and the diced onion with a pinch of sea salt and sauté for 5 minutes. Add the red pepper flakes, let them infuse the oil for one minute then add the carrots and celery and cook for 5 more minutes. Add the bell pepper and cook an additional 5 minutes. Add the garlic and cook for 45 seconds. It is very important to add your ingredients one by one to build layers of flavor in your dish.
3. Add the diced tomatoes with their juices to the pot, stir in the beans and add the stock, bay leaves, parsley sprigs, oregano and sea salt. Bring to a gentle simmer, add the sausage back into the pot and allow it to cook for 45 minutes, partially covered.
4. Remove the soup from the heat, stir in the fresh basil and adjust seasoning. Discard the bay leaf, thyme and parsley sprigs. Serve warm with fresh bread or grilled cheese sandwiches (funwiches).
5. If preparing this soup a day in advance, boil the pasta in a separated pot in salted water and add to the soup when you serve it. Otherwise add the pasta to the soup about 10 minutes before removing it from flame.



Side Dishes & Salads

Orange Brussels Sprouts with Butternut Squash and Chorizo

(Serves 4)

3 c. butternut squash – diced
3 c. Brussels Sprouts -quartered
1/2 lb. fresh chorizo cut into 1 inch pieces
2 oranges – reserve 2 strips of the peel and zest and juice them
1 pinch red pepper flakes
Freshly ground black pepper to taste
1 pinch sea salt + more to taste
1 pinch sweet paprika
1 bay leaf
5 basil leaves -torn
4 tbsp extra virgin olive oil + more for drizzling
Parmigiano reggiano cheese- flaked with a vegetable peeler

1. In a large skillet heat up 2 tbsp. of the olive oil and add the butternut squash. Sprinkle it with a pinch of sea salt, the red pepper flakes and paprika. Add the bay leaf and toss everything together to coat then let the squash cubes sear until golden brown on all sides. Stir in 1/4 of the reserved orange zest and deglaze the pan with 1/2 of the orange juice scrapping any brown bits from the bottom of the pan. Allow it to simmer together until the juice evaporates completely and the sugar becomes concentrated and starts to caramelize. Remove from heat and keep warm.

2. Meanwhile in a large cast iron pan/skillet heat up the rest of the olive oil and sear the chorizo until golden brown on all sides. Move it to the side of the pan and add the brussels sprouts to cook in all the drippings and juices. Stir in the reserved orange peels and season with extra black pepper. Once the brussels sprouts start to get some color stir in the rest of the orange juice making sure to scrape all the brown bits from the bottom of the pan. Allow it to simmer until the juices evaporate completely and the sugars start to caramelize leaving the sprouts with a nice golden brown color. Remove from heat and gently combine with the butternut squash and some of the remaining orange zest.

3. Transfer to a serving bowl and sprinkle with the rest of the reserved orange zest, a drizzle of extra virgin olive oil and the basil leaves. Using a vegetable peeler shave a few flakes of the parmigiano reggiano cheese and serve.

Rustic Paprika Potatoes

(Serves 4)

2 1/2 lbs. colorful new potatoes -washed and halved or quartered
2 onions -sliced (yellow or red or one of each)
1/4 c. extra virgin olive oil
1/3 c. Italian parsley -minced
2 1/2 tsp. sweet paprika
1 tbs. sea salt freshly cracked black pepper to taste

1. Bring a large pot of water to a boil and season it with 1tbs of the salt. Add the washed potatoes to the pot and allow them to simmer for about 15 – 20 minutes or until cooked through. Drain well in a colander and allow cooling for 10 minutes.
2. Meanwhile in a large skillet heat up the olive oil and add the sliced onions with a pinch of sea salt. Cook until the onions soften and start to get some color. Stir in the paprika and cook on low flame for one more minute. Remove from heat and stir in 1/4 c. of the chopped parsley.
3. Add the potatoes and gently mix all the ingredients together with a spatula. Serve warm with freshly cracked black pepper and a good drizzle of extra virgin olive oil. Finish with a pinch of the minced parsley on top.

Mushroom Quinoa

(Serves 4)

3 tbs. extra virgin olive oil
1 1/2 c. quinoa seeds
2 1/2 c. water
1/2 tsp. sea salt
1/2 yellow onion -chopped
10 white mushrooms -sliced
3 green onions -thinly sliced
1 c. cherry tomatoes -halved or sliced
Handful of baby spinach -roughly chopped

1. Rinse the quinoa seeds in a fine mesh strainer under running water. Drain well.
2. Heat up the olive oil in a pot over medium – low flame. Add the onion and the sea salt and cook for 5 minutes. Add the sliced mushrooms and bay leaf and cook an additional 10 minutes.
3. Stir in the quinoa then add the water and bring to a boil. Turn the flame to low, cover with a tight lid and simmer for 15 minutes. Turn off the heat and allow it to sit covered for 15 minutes. Fluff it up with a fork, discard the bay leaf and stir in the green onions, spinach and tomatoes reserving some of each for garnish. Serve warm or cold.

Blood Orange Cranberry Sauce

(Serves 4)

12 oz. fresh cranberries
1/4 c. granulated sugar
The juice from 2 blood oranges
The zest from 1 orange
1 tsp. vanilla extract

Add the cranberries, sugar and orange juice to a sauce pan. Bring to a simmer and cook on low flame for 5 minutes or until the cranberries pop and start to soften. Stir in the vanilla & orange zest and cook for one more minute. Allow to cool and serve at room temperature or refrigerate.

Sautéed Mushrooms in White Wine

(Serves 4)

1/4 c. extra virgin olive oil
1 medium onion -diced
1 lb. Cremini mushrooms -sliced
3/4 c. white wine
3/4 tsp. sea salt
Freshly cracked black pepper to taste
Fresh minced herbs for garnish if desired (minced parsley, thyme, oregano...)

1. Heat up the olive oil in a large enameled cast iron sauté pan over medium flame. Add the onion to the pan and cook until it starts to get some color all over, making sure not to burn it. (Approximately 15 minutes).
2. Add the sliced mushrooms to the pan with a pinch of sea salt and give them a nice stir (the salt will help bring out the moisture from the mushrooms). Allow to cook uncovered until all the liquid has evaporated and they start to brown a little.
3. Add the wine and with a spatula scrape all the brown bits from the bottom of the pan. Season with the sea salt and allow it to cook until the wine has evaporated and the flavors have concentrated. Add the black pepper to your taste and serve as a side dish or a topping for burgers, chicken or roasts.

Rustic Potato and Egg Salad

(Serves 4)

4 lbs. organic Yukon gold or russet potatoes
1 medium red onion -thinly sliced
6 organic eggs -hard boiled, cooled & sliced
1/3 c. extra virgin olive oil
1/4 c. red wine vinegar +more to taste
1 tsp. sea salt +more to taste
Freshly ground black pepper to taste

1. Whisk the olive oil and red wine vinegar together then toss with the onion. Season with the sea salt and allow the flavors to marry while the potatoes are cooking.
2. Wash the potatoes and simmer with the skins on until soft when pierced with a knife (about 40 min). Drain them and allow it to sit until cool enough to handle. Peel the skins off of the potatoes and slice them in 1/3 inch slices. Boil the eggs and cut them into 1/4 inch slices.
3. In a large bowl gently toss the potatoes and eggs with the olive oil red wine vinegar dressing and the marinated onions. Adjust seasonings and serve with some freshly cracked black pepper on top.

Potato Salad A La Rouse - Salata de Beouf

(Serves 4)

3 large Yukon gold potatoes
4 large carrots
1 c. green peas -frozen & thawed or warmed through
5 dill pickles
1/4 c. – 1/3 c. dill pickle juice (the brine that the pickles are packed in)
3/4 c. – 1 c. homemade mayo
1 tbs. minced dill
1/2 tsp. sea salt +more to taste
Freshly ground black pepper to taste
1 chicken breast -poached or roasted & shredded (optional)
2 tbs. coarse sea salt

1. Add the potatoes and carrots to a large pot, skins on, and cover with cold water. Bring to a simmer and add 2 tbs. sea salt. Allow to simmer on medium flame for about 45 minutes or until cooked through. Drain in a colander and allow it to cool until comfortable to handle. Peel and discard the skins, then allow the potatoes & carrots to cool down completely.
2. Dice the pickles, carrots and potatoes into 1/2 inch cubes and transfer to a large bowl. Add the green peas, chopped dill and the chicken and toss gently with the mayo. Add 1/4 cup of the pickle juice, sea salt and black pepper and mix gently until everything is incorporated and nicely coated.
3. Adjust seasoning and serve at room temperature or chilled, next to grilled chicken or pork chops.

Cole Slaw

(Serves 4)

1/2 lb. red cabbage -shredded
1/2 lb. white cabbage -shredded
1 red bell pepper -thinly sliced
1/4 c. apple cider vinegar
1/4 c. extra virgin olive oil
3 tbs. raw honey
1/2 tsp. sea salt
Pinch of cayenne pepper

Whisk together the olive oil, vinegar, honey and the spices. Adjust seasonings to your taste and toss with the cabbage and bell pepper. Refrigerate and allow the flavors to marry for a few hours or overnight.

"Creamy Peas"

(Serves 2)

3 tbs. extra virgin olive oil
1/3 c. onion –minced
2 1/2 c. green peas –frozen
1 c. chicken stock -low sodium
1/4 c. heavy cream
3 tbs. all purpose flour
1 tbs. butter -salted
sea salt and black pepper to taste

1. Heat up the olive oil in a saucepan and sauté the onions on medium-low flame until softened & translucent (about 5 minutes).
2. Whisk in the flour and let cook for a minute on very low heat then whisk in the chicken stock until it starts to thicken. Stir in the peas.
3. Allow to simmer together on very low flame until the peas are heated through (10 minutes) then stir in the cream. Season it to taste with the sea salt and black pepper.
4. Remove from heat and stir in the butter for a silky finish.
5. Serve hot in a tomato shell, next to chicken, steaks or grilled meats.

"Creamed Spinach"

(Serves 2)

3 tbs. extra virgin olive oil
1/2 lb. baby spinach
4 garlic cloves - smashed with the side of a knife
1/3 c. heavy cream
1tbs. cold butter
1/4 tsp. sea salt
Freshly cracked black pepper to taste
A dash of freshly grated nutmeg

1. Heat up the olive oil on med heat in a large sauté pan. Add the garlic and let it infuse the oil until golden (don't burn or it will become bitter).
2. Add the spinach and give it a toss with the tongues. Once it has wilted, 3-4 minutes, remove from heat and transfer to a small colander to drain. Discard the garlic cloves.
3. Meanwhile heat up the cream in a small saucepan on low flame. Bring to a slow simmer and allow it to cook until thickened, about 5 minutes. Remove from heat and stir in the wilted spinach. Season it with the sea salt, black pepper and nutmeg. Stir in the butter for a silky finish.

Creamy Polenta

(Serves 4)

5 c. spring water
1 c. whole milk
1 c. yellow cornmeal -medium grind
2 tbs. butter -cold
1 tsp. sea salt
1/4 c. parmigiano reggiano (optional)
1 bay leaf

1. Bring the water and milk to a boil, add the salt and bay leaf & turn down the flame. Start pouring in the cornmeal in a steady stream while whisking constantly until everything is incorporated.
2. Allow it to simmer and switch to a wooden spoon. Stir every 10 minutes until desired thickness is achieved (45 min -1 hour)
3. Taste to make sure the grains are tender, remove from heat and stir in the cold butter and the parmigiano reggiano.

Heirloom Tomato and Cucumber Salad

(Serves 4)

2 lbs. Organic Heirloom Tomatoes cut into wedges
1 English Cucumber – seedless thinly sliced
6 Scallions -sliced
2 tbs. lemon juice -freshly squeezed
1/3 c. extra virgin olive oil
1/2 tsp. Sea Salt + more to taste
Black Pepper to taste -freshly cracked

Whisk the olive oil, lemon juice, sea salt and black pepper together. Pour over the sliced tomatoes, cucumber and scallions and toss to coat gently. Serve next to roasts, chicken, steaks.

Spinach & Strawberry Salad

(Serves 2)

1/2 lb. baby spinach
1 c. strawberries -sliced or quartered
1 c. walnuts -toasted or glazed-whatever you prefer
parmigiano reggiano shavings
The zest from 1 lemon

Salad Dressing:

3 large strawberries or 8 small
1/4 c. EV olive oil
1 tbs. lemon juice -freshly squeezed
3 tbs. honey
1/4 tsp. sweet paprika
1/4 tsp. sea salt
Freshly cracked black pepper to taste
Pinch of freshly grated nutmeg

1. Puree the strawberries with a little bit of the olive oil in the food processor then transfer to the salad bowl and whisk in the rest of the olive oil, lemon juice and honey. Season with the sea salt, pepper, nutmeg & paprika and add more to taste.
2. Add the spinach and sliced strawberries on top of the dressing, sprinkle with the nuts and lemon zest and give it a gentle toss for everything to coat nicely.
3. Serve with shavings of parmigiano regianno on top.

Calamari Salad

(Serves 4)

2 lb. squid -cleaned & cut into 1/2 inch rings
1/2 red onion -thinly sliced
1 bell pepper (green, red or a mixture) -sliced
2 c. cherry tomatoes -halved
1/3 c. Extra Virgin Olive Oil
1 1/2 tbs. lemon juice -freshly squeezed
Sea salt & black pepper to taste
1/3 c. Italian flat leaf parsley -chopped

1. Bring a pot of salted water to a boil, add a wine bottle cork to it (I don't know how this works but it keeps the squid from becoming rubbery – truth in cooking 101) and cook the squid for no more than 2 minutes. Drain in a colander then add the cooked squid to a bowl of ice.
2. Once the squid has cooled down mix together with the sliced peppers, onions and parsley and toss to coat in the lemon juice and olive oil. Season it with the sea salt and black pepper to taste, cover and refrigerate for 5 hours or overnight for the flavors to marry.
3. Serve chilled in martini glasses with lemon wedges.

Lazy Sunday Salad in the Style of Crete

(Serves 4)

- 1 lb. bay greens mix: baby greens, baby dandelion leaves, edible flower petals, chives, dill, chervil leaves, parsley leaves
- 1 lb. heirloom tomatoes cut into wedges or chunks
- 1 English cucumber cut into 1 inch chunks
- 1 c. Greek green olives
- 5 green onions -sliced (the pale green part only)
- 3 red bell peppers roasted & marinated
- 4 oz. Greek feta cheese -sliced into 1/3 inch thick slices
- 2 tbs. fresh oregano leaves
- Coarse sea salt
- 1/4 c. extra virgin olive oil

1. Divide the baby greens between four plates. Top each plate with the cucumber chunks, olives and heirloom tomato wedges. Add 5 feta cheese slices to each plate and set a couple of roasted bell pepper strips next to each slice of cheese.

2. Sprinkle the salad with the green onions and oregano leaves and finish it with a good drizzle of extra virgin olive oil and a pinch of good quality sea salt. Serve with lemon wedges and bruschetta.

Roasted Red Bell Peppers Recipe

- 3 red bell peppers -washed
- 2 tbs. Extra Virgin Olive Oil
- 4 tsp. red wine vinegar
- 1/2 tsp. sea salt

1. Roast the peppers on a fire grill turning them frequently until charred all over. You can also roast them under the broiler for a few minutes on each side until completely black. Transfer to a bowl and cover tightly with plastic wrap. Allow to rest for 15 minutes or until cool enough to handle.

2. Peel the charred skins from the peppers (they should come right off at this point), and discard together with the core & seeds.

3. Once cleaned slice the peppers into 1" strips and drizzle with the red wine vinegar. Toss with the olive oil and sea salt and serve with the salad.

Panzanella Salad alla Fiorentina

(Serves 4)

8 slices Ciabatta bread
16 oz. mini heirloom tomatoes -halved
15 oz. can artichoke hearts -halved
1 c. black Kalamata olives -halved
1 large garlic clove
8 oz. bocconcini fresh mozzarella- drained and patted dry
15 basil leaves -torn
2 tbsp. extra virgin olive oil
Sea salt to taste
Dressing:
1/4 c. extra virgin olive oil
1 tbsp. red wine vinegar

1. Heat up a cast iron skillet and grill the Ciabatta bread on both sides until nice and golden. Transfer to a cutting board and allow it to cool for a few minutes. Rub each slice of bread with the garlic clove then brush it with some of the olive oil. Sprinkle with a good pinch of sea salt and cut them into 1 (one) inch cubes and transfer to a large bowl.
2. In the same cast iron skillet, grill the artichoke hearts until they have nice grill mark all over. Transfer them to the bowl with the bread cubes.
3. Add the tomatoes, olives and fresh mozzarella to the bowl together with the basil leaves and set aside.
4. Whisk together the ¼ cup olive oil and 1 (one) tbsp. of red wine vinegar then pour the dressing over the ingredients. Gently toss to coat then cover the salad and allow it to sit at room temperature for 30 minutes before serving for the flavors to marry. Serve with extra fresh basil leaves on top.

TIP: For a winter version of Panzanella use roasted peppers and roasted butternut squash with tons of fresh thyme.

Bacon Oven Roasted Potatoes

(Serves 4)

2 lbs. golden roasting potatoes-washed and quartered
5 thyme sprigs
5 garlic cloves-whole
1/2 tsp. sea salt
2 tbs. Extra Virgin Olive Oil
5 orange peels
8 strips thin cut bacon -cut into 1" inch pieces

1. Cover the cut potatoes with ice cold water and allow it to sit for 20 minutes. Discard the water and rinse the potatoes in a colander with ice cold water.
2. Transfer them to a medium pot, cover with cold water by 1" inch and bring to a simmer. Allow them to simmer for 5 minutes then drain in a colander and allow them to air dry for a few minutes.
3. Meanwhile heat up the oven to 425 degrees with a large cast iron skillet in it. Transfer the potatoes to the hot baking dish and toss them together with the olive oil, sea salt, thyme, and bacon and garlic cloves.
4. Bake for 35 to 45 minutes making sure to toss the potatoes with the tongs every 10-15 min. Potatoes are done when soft in the center and golden brown on the outside.



Panini

Tomato Basil & Fontina Grilled Cheese Panini

(Serves 1-2)

4 slices sourdough loaf
1c. fontina cheese -shredded
4 heirloom tomato slices
8 basil leaves- thinly sliced
2-3 tbs. salted butter –softened

1. Butter one side of each slice of bread and top one slice with some of the cheese. Top with the tomato slices, basil and more cheese. Top with the other slice of bread.

2. Meanwhile heat up a cast iron grill skillet on medium low heat. Set the Panini in the hot skillet buttered side down; loosely cover with aluminum foil and let cook slowly on low flame for about 5 minutes or until golden brown. Flip the Panini with a spatula, loosely cover and cook for another 5 minutes or until golden and the cheese has melted. Let cool for a couple of minutes then slice in half and serve.

Mozzarella, Spinach & Artichoke Grilled Cheese Panini

(Serves 1-2)

2 slices sourdough loaf
1 c. smoked mozzarella cheese -shredded
1 c. fresh spinach
2 artichoke hearts sliced into 1/4" slices
1 garlic clove –crushed
1 tbs. extra virgin olive oil
1 1/2 tbs. salted butter-softened
1/4 tsp. sea salt

1. Heat up your cast iron grill pan on medium low heat. In a small sauté pan heat up the olive oil, add the garlic and cook until it starts to get some color. Add the spinach and sauté until wilted. Season it with the sea salt and drain in a small colander.
2. Butter one side of each slice of bread and top with half of the cheese. Top with the artichoke hearts and then the sautéed spinach followed by the rest of the cheese. Top with the other slice of bread.
3. Set the funwich in the grill pan -butter side down. Cover loosely with aluminum foil and grill on low flame for approx 5 minutes or until golden brown. Flip the funwich, cover loosely with the foil and let cook another 5 minutes or until golden brown and the cheese has melted. Allow to cool for a couple of minutes then slice and serve.

Chocolate, Strawberry & Brie Grilled Cheese Panini

(Makes 2)

- 4 slices sourdough bread
- 5 oz. double cream brie cheese -shredded
- 4 strawberries- sliced
- 6 strawberries -whole
- 2 tbs. salted butter -softened
- 2 oz. dark chocolate -finely chopped

1. Heat up your cast iron grill pan on low heat until hot.
2. Butter one side of each slice of bread and sprinkle two of the slices with half of the cheese. Layer it with strawberry slices, top with chocolate and sprinkle with the rest of the cheese. Top with the other slice of bread.
3. Set the sandwich in the skillet butter side down, cover loosely with aluminum foil and grill on low flame for 5 minutes or until golden brown. Flip and cook another three minutes or until golden brown and the cheese and chocolate have melted. Allow to cool for a couple of minutes on a cooling rack, then slice and serve garnished with the fresh strawberries.

Mushroom Grilled Cheese Panini

(Makes 2)

4 slices Ciabatta bread
1 c. fontina cheese –shredded
2 tbsp. olive oil
2 tbsp. butter- softened
8 brown button mushrooms –sliced
½ small onion thinly sliced
Small onion thinly sliced

1. Heat up two tbsp. of olive oil in a large skillet and sauté the onions with a pinch of sea salt until they start to caramelize and are golden in color.
2. Add the mushrooms to the pan with the onions and cook together until the mushrooms begin to brown. Deglaze the pan with a little splash of water making sure to scrape up all the brown bits from the bottom of the pan. Repeat the process a couple of times until desired texture and flavor is achieved. Season it to taste with the sea salt.
3. Spread one side of each slice of bread with the butter and sprinkle the other side with some of the cheese. Top it with the mushroom mixture and more cheese. Top with the other slice of bread.
4. Heat up a cast iron grill skillet on medium low heat. Set the Panini in the hot skillet buttered side down; loosely cover with aluminum foil and let cook slowly for about 5 minutes or until golden brown. Flip the Panini with a spatula; loosely cover it and cook an additional three minutes until golden and the cheese has melted. Serve hot out of the pan.

Spaghetti Grilled Cheese Panini

(Makes 2)

- 2 c. leftover spaghetti and meat sauce
- 1 c. mozzarella cheese (shredded)
- 4 slices sourdough loaf
- 8 basil leaves -thinly sliced
- 2 tbs. salted butter (softened)

1. Butter one side of each slice of bread then heat up a cast iron grill pan over medium-low heat.
2. Sprinkle half of the cheese over the unbuttered side of the bread. Top with the spaghetti then sprinkle the fresh basil and the rest of the cheese. Top with the other slice of bread.
3. Place the sandwich in the pan, cover loosely with aluminum foil and let cook on low heat until golden brown (approx. 5 min).
4. Flip and cook another 5 minutes or until golden brown and the cheese has melted.

Chicken & Sun Dried Tomato Grilled Cheese Panini

(Makes 2)

2 slices sourdough loaf
1 c. fontina cheese –shredded
½ c. marinated sun dried tomatoes
½ c. roast chicken –thinly slices
8 basil leaves- thinly sliced
2-3 tbs. salted butter –softened

1. Butter one side of each slice of bread and top one slice with some of the cheese, the chicken, tomatoes, basil and the rest of the cheese. Top with the other slice of bread.

2. Meanwhile heat up a cast iron grill skillet on medium low heat. Set the Panini in the hot skillet buttered side down; loosely cover with aluminum foil and let cook slowly on low flame for about 5 min or until golden brown. Flip the Panini with a spatula, loosely cover and cook for another 5 minutes or until golden and the cheese has melted. Let cool for a couple of minutes then slice in half and serve.



Pasta & Risotto Recipes

Tomato Basil Capellini

(Serves 2)

1/2 lb. capellini pasta -cooked according to the instructions on the package
1 1/2 c. sweet cherry tomatoes -halved
3-4 garlic cloves – grated
4 tbs. extra virgin olive oil
10 basil leaves -thinly sliced
1/4 c. of the pasta water + more if needed
Freshly grated parmigiano reggiano
The juice from 1/2 lemon -freshly squeezed
The zest from 1 lemon
1/2 tsp. sea salt or to your taste
Freshly cracked black pepper to taste

1. Heat up the olive oil in a sauté pan over medium low heat. Add the garlic and cook for about 45 seconds until it releases its flavors (do not let it get any color).
2. Add the tomatoes and allow them to simmer on low flame until they start to release their juices (3-5 minutes). Add the pasta water, stir gently and remove from heat.
3. Add the lemon juice and lemon zest, season with the salt and pepper then toss with the capellini. Sprinkle with the fresh basil and a drizzle of Extra Virgin olive oil. Serve with freshly grated parmigiano reggiano on top.

Chicken Parmigiana & Fettuccine Alfredo

(Serves 2-4)

8 organic chicken breast tenderloins -pounded
1 egg + 2 tbs. milk -lightly beaten
1/2 c. parmigiano reggiano cheese -freshly grated
2 c. plain bread crumbs
1/4 c. olive oil
1 c. marinara sauce -homemade
1 1/2 c. whole milk mozzarella cheese -shredded
1/2 tsp. sea salt
1/2 tsp. black pepper -freshly ground
8 oz. egg noodle fettuccine

1. Heat up the olive oil in a cast iron skillet. Season each side of the chicken fillets with a pinch of the salt and pepper.
2. Mix the parmigiano reggiano cheese and the bread crumbs together. Dredge the fillets in the egg and then the bread crumb mixture, coating evenly. Shake any excess and cook in the olive oil until golden brown, about 3 minutes on each side. Transfer to a paper towel and allow it to drain.
3. Meanwhile bring a pot of water to a boil, salt it generously and cook the noodles according to the instructions on the package or if you made your own fresh pasta, about 3 minutes.
4. Heat up the oven to 350 F degrees and transfer the chicken to a cookie sheet, sprinkle with half of the mozzarella and spoon some of the marinara sauce on top. Sprinkle with the rest of the mozzarella and bake in the oven until the cheese has melted. About 5 minutes. Meanwhile prepare the Alfredo sauce:

Alfredo Sauce Recipe

2 1/2 c. organic heavy whipping cream
3 tbs. cold butter
1/2 -3/4 c. parmigiano reggiano -freshly grated
A dash of Nutmeg -freshly grated

1. Heat up the cream in a sauce pan over medium flame. Once it starts to simmer start adding the parmigiano reggiano a little bit at a time, whisking constantly until the sauce starts to thicken. (About 4 minutes)
2. Once the sauce has thickened remove from flame and whisk in the cold butter and nutmeg. Toss with the fettuccine and serve with freshly cracked black pepper on top next to the chicken parmigiana.

Spaghetti & Shrimp

(Serves 2)

1 lb. wild caught shrimp (prawns) -peeled & deveined
1/2 lb. spaghetti
2 tbs. extra virgin olive oil + 2 garlic cloves - (smashed with the side of a chef's knife)
2 tbs. extra virgin olive oil+ 1 1/2 tbs. butter
1/3 c. onion –diced
4 garlic cloves -minced
1/2 bell pepper (green or red) -thinly sliced
1/1/4 c. (approx. 3/4 lb.) cherry, vine ripened tomatoes -halved
1/4 tsp. sea salt + more to taste
1/4 tsp. freshly ground black pepper + more to taste
2 tbs. lemon juice -freshly squeezed + more to taste
The zest from 1 lemon
1/4 c. pasta water
One pinch red pepper flakes
8 basil leaves -thinly sliced

1. Bring a large pot of salted water to a boil and cook the pasta according to directions on the package.
2. Meanwhile season the shrimp with 1/4 tsp. of sea salt and a pinch of red pepper flakes and a couple of drops of lemon juice (keep cold).
3. In a large sauté pan heat up 2 tbs. of the olive oil on medium flame. Add the 2 large garlic cloves and cook for one minute until golden just enough to release its flavors. Discard the garlic and add the shrimp and let cook until it turns pink and starts to curl (approx. one minute). Transfer to a bowl, drizzle with 1/2 tsp. lemon juice and keep warm.
4. Wipe off the pan and add 2 tbs. olive oil+ 1 tbs. butter to the pan, add the onions and sweat for about 5 minutes until translucent. Add the bell pepper slices and let cook until they start to soften (another 3-5 minutes). Add the minced garlic and let cook for another min until it releases its flavors (do not let the garlic get any color).
5. Transfer the tomatoes to the pan, season with the sea salt and the black pepper. Let simmer on low heat until the tomatoes start to release their juices (3 minutes).
6. Add the cooked shrimp back to the sauce, stir to coat nicely then add the sliced basil, lemon juice and lemon zest. Give it a taste and adjust seasonings. Remove from heat and stir in 1/2 tbs. cold butter to finish up the sauce and make it silky.
7. Toss with the spaghetti and add the pasta water only if necessary. Decorate with a basil leaf and serve.

Spaghetti & Fontina Stuffed Meatballs

(Serves 4)

- 1 lb. organic Ground beef
- 3 garlic cloves – grated
- 3/4 c. bread crumbs -dried & plain
- 2 slices bread -1 inch thick
- 1 c. milk
- 1 organic egg -lightly beaten
- 1/4 tsp. baking soda
- ¼ c. fresh parsley -chopped
- 3/4 tsp. sea salt & black pepper to taste
- parmigiano reggiano for grating
- 1/4 lb. fontina cheese cut into 1/4 inch cubes
- 1/2 c. canola oil for frying the meatballs
- 1 lb. spaghetti
- 5 c. Home Made Marinara Sauce

1. Soak the sliced bread in the milk for a few minutes, squeeze the milk out and add the bread to a bowl. Combine it with the ground beef, garlic, parsley, baking soda, salt, pepper and the egg.

2. Mix everything with wet hands and add about 1/4 c. of bread crumbs. Shape the mixture into golf ball size meatballs and arrange them on a cookie sheet.

3. Press 1 cube of the fontina cheese into each meatball and reshape to encapsulate the cheese completely. Coat each meatball in the remaining bread crumbs and set aside.

4. Heat up 1/4 c of the canola oil in a large skillet and add the meatballs. Work in batches and do not overcrowd the pan. Cook until golden brown on each side and using a pair of tongues transfer them into the sauce making sure to coat evenly. Let them sit in the sauce for a few minutes then transfer them to a bowl and keep warm.

Cook the spaghetti according to the instructions on the package and toss them with the marinara sauce. Transfer to a serving platter and add the meatballs on top. Grate some parmigiano reggiano on top and sprinkle with the torn basil leaves.

Tortellini Pasta Salad

(Serves 6 +)

20 oz. cheese Tortellini -refrigerated
2 - 15 oz. can artichoke hearts
15 oz. can black olives -pitted and halved
3 c. heirloom grape & cherry tomatoes -halved
1 small red onion sliced
4 c. baby spinach leaves
15 basil leaves – thinly sliced
1/2 lb. asparagus -cut into 1 inch pieces
1/2 lb. brown Italian mushrooms -sliced
2 roasted red peppers sliced
The zest from 1 lemon
The juice from 1 lemon
1/2 c. extra virgin olive oil
1/4 tsp. sea salt + more to taste
Freshly cracked black pepper to taste

1. Bring the pasta water to a boil and salt it generously. Add the tortellini and cook according to the instructions on the package. Drain and rinse briefly under cold water then transfer to a large bowl. Add the tomatoes, olives and spinach leaves on top and the heat from the pasta will help the leaves wilt perfectly.
2. Drain the artichoke hearts and pat them dry with paper towels. Mix them together with the asparagus and toss with 1 tablespoon of the olive oil. Heat up a cast iron skillet or fire grill and grill them until nice marks appear. Transfer them to the bowl with the tortellini.
3. In a medium skillet heat up two tablespoons of the olive oil and sauté the onion with a pinch of sea salt until translucent and starts to brown. Transfer them to the pasta bowl and add one more tablespoon of the olive oil to the skillet. Add the sliced mushrooms with a pinch of sea salt and sauté until softened and all the moisture has evaporated. Work in batches if necessary. Transfer them to the pasta bowl.
4. Whisk the remaining olive oil with the lemon juice and lemon zest, season with the sea salt and black pepper then pour on top of the tortellini, tomatoes, olives, asparagus, artichoke hearts, onions, roasted peppers and mushrooms. Sprinkle with the basil and toss to coat gently.
5. Serve at room temperature with a nice bottle of wine.

Pappardelle with Ragu Alla Bolognese

(Serves 4)

- 1 yellow onion -diced
- 3 garlic cloves -grated
- 1 large carrot -diced
- 1 celery stalk -diced
- 3 tbs. extra virgin olive oil
- 1 tbs. butter
- 1 tsp. red pepper flakes
- 2 bay leaves
- 1 tbs. tomato paste
- 1 - 28 oz .can whole San Marzano tomatoes in tomato puree
- 1/3 lb. chicken livers- chopped (OPTIONAL but recommended)
- 1 lb. ground beef
- 1/2 lb. ground pork
- 1 c. red wine
- 1 c. whole milk
- 1 1/2 tsp. sea salt
- Freshly cracked black pepper to taste
- Freshly grated nutmeg
- Parmigiano Reggiano for grating
- 1 lb. pappardelle pasta

1. Heat up the olive oil and butter in a large enameled cast iron pot. Add the onion and a pinch of sea salt and sauté until translucent. Add the red pepper flakes and cook for an extra minute.

2. Stir in the chopped liver (if using, strongly recommended, you won't even know it's there, but the flavors are to die for) and let cook for 5 minutes then mix in the diced carrots and celery. Allow everything to cook together for another 5 minutes.

3. Add the garlic and the ground meat to the pot and break it up with the side of a wooden spoon. Cook until no longer pink, and then add the tomato paste and wine. Allow to simmer until the wine has evaporated, about 5 minutes. Add the milk and cook another 5 minutes until evaporated.

4. Crush the tomatoes with your hands and add them to the pot together with the bay leaves and the sea salt. Partially cover with a lid and bring to a slow simmer. Allow to cook for about 4 to 5 hours stirring often and adding about half a cup of water ever so often if to keep the sauce from drying out.

5. After 5 hours and once the sauce has the desired consistency (you want a nice thick sauce), adjust seasonings, remove from heat and grate in some of the nutmeg . Stir and serve on top of your perfectly cooked tagliatelle or pappardelle with a nice sprinkling of freshly grated parmigiano reggiano .

6. About 30 minutes before you are ready to remove the sauce from the heat, bring a large pot of water to a boil. Cook the pasta al dente, following the instructions on the package. Reserve 1 c. of the pasta water just in case you need to add some to the sauce. Remember, your pasta water should taste like sea water, so be generous with the sea salt. Serve the ragu on top of the pasta sprinkled with some torn basil leaves on top if desired.

Spinach and Sausage Fettuccine or Fettuccine alla Fiorentina

(Serves 4)

6 tbs. extra virgin olive oil
12 oz. egg noodle fettuccine
1/2 lb. organic baby spinach
1 lb. organic cherry tomatoes -halved
1/2 c. onion -diced
3 garlic cloves -minced
3 garlic cloves – whole
4 organic andouille sausages -cooked and sliced into 1/4 inch slices
1/4 c. heavy cream
Sea salt & black pepper to taste
1/3 c. of the pasta water
parmigiano reggiano for grating

1. Bring a large pot of water to a boil, salt it generously and cook the fettuccine according to the instructions on the package. Reserve 1/3 c. of the pasta water just in case you might need some later for the sauce.
2. Heat up 3 tbs. of the olive oil on medium flame in a large sauté pan. Add the sliced sausage and sear for a few minutes until it starts to brown. Add the onion and let it sweat together with the sausage until softened and translucent. Add the minced garlic and allow it to cook for another minute.
3. Add the tomatoes to the pan give everything a gentle stir and let simmer on low flame for about 3 minutes until they start to release their juices. Add the cream and let simmer 3 more minutes until it starts to thicken. Season with the sea salt and black pepper and remove from the flame.
4. Meanwhile heat up the other 3 tbs. of olive oil, add the 3 garlic cloves and let them infuse the oil until they turn golden then discard. Add the spinach; give it a gentle toss and sauté for a few minutes until wilted. Transfer to a small colander and allow it to drain for a few minutes then add it to the main dish and stir to mix.
5. Toss everything gently with the fettuccine. Add the reserved pasta water if necessary and serve with a nice sprinkling of freshly grated parmigiano reggiano.

Spaghetti Frutti Di Mare

(Serves 2)

1/2 lb. spaghetti
4 garlic cloves -minced
8 large shrimp -peeled, cleaned & deveined
10 clams -cleaned
10 mussels
1/2 c. dry white wine
1 1/2 c. marinara sauce
1 1/2 tbs. fresh chives – snipped
1/4 tsp. red pepper flakes
Sea salt and freshly cracked black pepper to taste

1. Heat up the olive oil in a large skillet over medium flame. Season the shrimp with the red pepper flakes, a pinch of sea salt and black pepper. Add the garlic and shrimp to the hot oil and sauté quickly until the shrimp curls up and turns pink. Transfer to a bowl and keep warm. Add the clams and mussels to the skillet together with the wine.
2. Cover with a lid and let them cook for about 5-10 minutes until all the clams and mussels have opened. Discard the ones that haven't. Stir in the marinara sauce and add the cooked shrimp back to the skillet and toss to coat in the sauce. Remove from flame and keep warm.
3. Meanwhile cooked your spaghetti according to the instructions on the package, drain and reserve 1 c of the pasta water. Toss to coat in the sauce with the shrimp, mussels and clams and add a little of the reserved pasta water if needed to thin out the sauce. Serve warm with a sprinkling of the chives on top.

Ricotta and Spinach Manicotti

(Serves 4)

- 1 c. fontina cheese -shredded
- 15 oz. ricotta cheese (whole milk)
- 1/4 c. parmigiano reggiano
- 8 Manicotti shells
- 1 egg –lightly beaten
- 3 handfuls baby spinach
- 4 garlic cloves -sliced
- 4 tbs. extra virgin olive oil
- 3 c. marinara sauce
- 1 c. Alfredo sauce
- Sea salt and black pepper to taste
- 1 dash of nutmeg -freshly grated

1. In a large sauté pan heat up 2 tbs. olive oil over medium flame. Add the garlic slices and cook for approx 2 min (just enough to release its flavors and get some color). Add the fresh spinach and sauté for about 5 min until wilted. Sprinkle with a pinch of sea salt and drain in a small colander. Once the spinach has cooled down transfer it to a cutting board and chop it up.
2. Meanwhile bring a large pot of water to a boil, add 3 tbs. sea salt and cook the manicotti for 6 min. Rinse with cold water to stop the cooking process.
3. In a mixing bowl, mix the ricotta, spinach, parmigiano reggiano and the egg. Season with a pinch of sea salt and freshly cracked black pepper and a dash of nutmeg then set aside.
4. Preheat the oven to 350 degrees and grease the lasagna pan (9 x 13 inch) with the remaining 1 tbs. olive oil, making sure to get the sides too.
5. Spread 1 1/2 c. of the marinara sauce on the bottom of the pan, just enough to coat the entire surface like a blanket. Fill the manicotti shells with the cheese mixture and arrange them 1 inch apart. Sprinkle with 1 c. of the fontina cheese and spoon 1 1/2 c of the marinara on top.
6. Bake covered with aluminum foil for 35 minutes. Meanwhile work on the Alfredo sauce and spoon it over the top of the manicotti before serving or set on the table for self serving.

Shrimp and Shells

(Serves 2)

1 lb. wild caught shrimp -peeled & cleaned
4 tbsp. extra virgin olive oil
8 garlic cloves – grated
2 cups cherry tomatoes -halved
1 lemon- zested & juiced
10 basil leaves -torn or thinly sliced
Pinch of sea salt + more to taste
Pinch of red pepper flakes
Black pepper – freshly cracked
1/2 lb. pasta shells

1. Season the shrimp with the sea salt, black pepper, red pepper flakes and lemon zest. Set aside.
2. In a large skillet heat up 3 tbs. of the olive oil on medium- low flame. Add the garlic and sauté for 20 seconds just enough to release its flavors making sure it doesn't get any color on it.
3. Stir in the tomatoes with a pinch of sea salt and stir. Let them cook for a few minutes until they burst releasing all their juices. Squeeze the lemon into the pan and adjust seasoning to taste.
4. Add the shrimp to the pan and cook for a minute or two until it curls up and turns pink. Make sure not to overcook it. Stir in the fresh basil and adjust seasonings to your taste. Drizzle with 1 tbs. of the olive oil.
5. Meanwhile bring a large pot of water to a boil, add some salt until it tastes like sea water. Cook the pasta according to the instructions on the package, drain and reserve 1 cup of the pasta water.
6. Toss the pasta shells with the shrimp and add some of the reserved pasta water if necessary. Finish with a drizzle of extra virgin olive oil and some fresh basil leaves on top.

Walnut & Poppy Pasta

(Serves 2-4)

4 oz. Egg Noodle Fettucine
1 1/4 c. walnuts
4 tbsp. Poppy seeds
6 tbsp. Brown sugar
4 tbsp. Butter -cold
The zest from one lemon
Optional: Raisins- rehydrated in rum

1. In a large skillet toast the walnuts on medium flame until golden on all sides-making sure not to burn them. Allow them to cool.
2. Once the walnuts have cooled off transfer them to a food processor together with the brown sugar. Chop them finely but allow for some rustic little pieces in the mix.
3. In a large mixing bowl combine the walnuts, poppy seeds and citrus zest.
4. Meanwhile cook your pasta al dente in a large pot of water according to the instructions on the package. Drain well and reserve one cup of the pasta water. Using a pair of tongues toss the pasta with the butter until well coated adding a little of the reserved pasta water to create a smooth sauce.
5. Sprinkle the pasta with the walnut poppy mixture and toss to coat well.
6. Serve at room temperature sprinkled with a few of the rum raisins and finish with a touch of citrus zest and Indulge!

Florentina's Lemony Aglio Olio Pasta

(Serves 2)

1/3 c. extra virgin olive oil
1 tsp. red pepper flakes + more to taste
6 garlic cloves –peeled and gently smashed with the side of a knife
3 garlic cloves -minced
The juice from 1 large lemon –freshly squeezed
The zest from 1 lemon
½ lb. pasta like spaghetti, capellini or linguine
1/3 c. Italian Parsley –chopped
1 c. reserved pasta water
¼ c. salt

1. Bring a large pot of water to a boil and add the salt. Cook the pasta al dente according to the instructions on the package and reserve one cup of the pasta water.
2. In a large sauté pan heat up the olive oil over medium flame and add the red pepper flakes. Toast for a couple of minutes then add the garlic cloves and sear until golden on both sides. Transfer to a plate and add the minced garlic to the oil, stirring well and making sure not to let it burn, about a minute.
3. Squeeze in the lemon juice; add back the roasted garlic cloves and the cooked pasta to the skillet then toss to coat. Add some of the reserved pasta water until the sauce has your desired consistency. Stir in most of the parsley then transfer to a serving bowl.
4. Serve hot with the lemon zest on top, garnished with a pinch of the chopped parsley and extra red pepper flakes to taste.

Paella Style Risotto

(Serves 4)

1 1/2 c. Carnaroli rice or Arborio rice
4-5 c. organic chicken stock – low sodium
1 small onion – diced
1 c. dry white wine
4 tbs. butter
2 tbs. olive oil
1 tbs. extra virgin olive oil for finishing the dish
1/2 lb. fresh chorizo sausage – cut into 1 inch pieces
1 lb. jumbo shrimp- cleaned, peeled wt tails on
12 large black mussels – cleaned well
1 c. frozen green peas – heated through in the saffron infused stock
1/2 c. sun dried tomatoes -re-hydrated or marinated & chopped
1 tsp. saffron threads
Sea salt to taste
1 pinch red pepper flakes
3 tbs. flat leaf Italian Parsley – roughly chopped

1. In a sauce pan heat up the chicken stock on low flame, once it starts to simmer remove from heat and season to taste with sea salt. Add the saffron threads and cover with a lid.
2. In a large skillet heat up the butter and add the onion with a pinch of sea salt. Allow them to sweat on low flame until translucent, about 10 minutes. Add the red pepper flakes and stir in the rice and allow it to toast for a few minutes until no longer opaque.
3. Add the wine to the pan and stir until almost all is absorbed but do not let the rice dry out completely. Stir in the sun dried tomatoes and continue by adding the saffron infused stock, a ladle at a time waiting for the rice to absorb it before adding more.
4. Meanwhile in a cast iron skillet heat up the olive oil and pan sear the chorizo until golden brown on all sides. Add the shrimp to the skillet and toss to coat in all those chorizo drippings and absorb its flavors. Hit it with a splash of the wine or stock to deg-laze the pan scraping the bottom with a spatula. Cook only a few minutes until the shrimp curls up and is no longer opaque.
5. A few minutes before the risotto is done, with the last ladle of the stock add in the mussels. Cool until they open up and discard the ones that don't. Remove from heat and stir in 1 tbs. of cold butter for extra silkiness.
6. Add the chorizo, shrimp and green peas to the pot with the risotto and mussels, gently toss to coat and serve with a nice sprinkling of the fresh parsley a tiny drizzle of extra virgin olive oil.

Creamy Rice Pudding Risotto with Berries

(Serves 4)

1 1/2 c. Acquerello rice
6 1/2 c. milk
4 tbs. cold butter
8 tbs. granulated sugar
1/4 tsp. sea salt
1/2 vanilla bean -seeds reserved
1 large blood orange
2 strips of the orange peel
The zest from the blood orange
The juice from the blood orange
1 c. blueberries
1 c. raspberries
1 c. strawberries
2 tbs. lemon balm or mint -chopped
1 pinch nutmeg -freshly grated

1. Rinse the berries and quarter the strawberries. In a large bowl gently toss them together with the freshly squeezed orange juice, 2 tablespoons of the sugar and the lemon balm or mint. Cover with plastic wrap and chill in the refrigerator while working on the rice pudding.
2. In a sauce pan heat up the milk on medium flame with 6 tablespoons of the sugar, the sea salt, the vanilla bean pods and the 2 strips of the orange peel.
3. In a large heavy bottom skillet heat up 3 tablespoons of butter and toast the risotto rice for a few minutes until no longer opaque. Start adding the hot milk a ladle at the time waiting for the rice to absorb it before adding more. Make sure to never let the rice dry out completely but it maintains a constant ripple.
4. Half way through the cooking process stir in the vanilla seeds and orange zest. Continue cooking and stirring for about 40 minutes until the rice grains are very tender and past the al dente stage. We do not want this risotto to have a little bite to it; we want it soft, smooth, creamy and silky but not mushy either.
5. Add your last ladle of milk to your risotto after you remove it from the flame. This is also the time to add the nutmeg and stir in the last tablespoon of the cold butter for that extra silky finish. We want this risotto rice pudding to have the consistency of heavy cream when it's done.
6. Ladle into dessert bowls, top with the chilled berry salad and drizzle with some of the berry juices. Garnish with a leaf of the lemon balm or mint and enjoy while hot and creamy.

Shellfish Risotto

(Serves 4)

1 1/2 c. Acquerello Carnaroli rice
8 tbs. extra virgin olive oil
4 tbs. butter
1 small onion -diced
1 1/2 c. white wine
1 1/2 c. grape or cherry tomatoes -quartered
5 garlic cloves -grated
3/4 lb. medium size shrimp -cleaned & reserve the shells
1/2 lb. littleneck clams or baby clams -scrubbed clean
1/2 lb. mussels -cleaned & bears removed
Meat from one crab leg – (cooked) - reserve the shell
5 tbs. flat leaf Italian parsley -minced
1 tsp. saffron threads
1 lemon
Sea salt to taste
Seafood Stock (makes 2 qt.)
2 qt. purified water
Shells from 3/4 lb of shrimp
The shell from the crab leg
1 carrot -cut into chunks
1 celery stalks – cut into chunks
5 parsley sprigs
2 bay leaves
1/4 of a small onion
5 peppercorns
1/2 tsp. sea salt + more to taste
Pinch of red pepper flakes

1. Start making the seafood stock by combining all the stock ingredients in a large pot and simmering on low flame for 1 hour. Remove from the flame and strain through a fine mesh strainer. Stir in the saffron and keep warm.
2. In a heavy bottom sauce pan heat up 3 tbs. of butter and tbs. of extra virgin olive oil. Add the minced onion with a pinch of sea salt and sweat it on low heat for about 10 minutes until translucent. Stir in your Acquerello carnaroli rice and allow it to toast for a few minutes until no longer opaque.
3. Add the wine to the pan and stir until almost all is absorbed but do not let the rice dry out completely. Continue by adding the saffron infused stock a ladle at the time waiting for the rice to absorb it before adding more. Make sure to maintain a constant ripple and never let the rice dry out.
4. Continue cooking for about 20 minutes or until the rice grains are tender but have a little bite, al dente. Remove from the heat while it has the consistency of cream and stir in one tbs. of butter for a silky finish.
5. About 10 minutes before your risotto is done start cooking the seafood. Heat up a stainless steel skillet with 3 tbs. extra virgin olive oil over medium flame. Pat dry the shrimp with paper towels and drizzle it with 1 tbs. of extra virgin olive oil. Season it with a pinch of sea salt, red pepper flakes and black pepper. Mix together with the grated garlic and add it to the hot skillet. Toss it around a couple of times and only cook it for a minute or two until it curls up and turns pink. Transfer to a bowl and drizzle with a little freshly squeezed lemon juice.

6. Add the tomatoes to the pan with a pinch of sea salt and hit it with the 1/4 c. of the white wine. Using a silicone spatula make sure to scrape up all the bits from the bottom of the pan. Cook for a couple of minutes until the tomatoes start releasing their juices and they form a nice sauce with the wine. Add the cooked shrimp with the juices back to the pan together with the crab meat and 3 tbs. of the minced parsley. Gently toss to coat and drizzle with a little more lemon juice and olive oil. Adjust seasoning and set aside.

7. In a different skillet heat up the remaining 2 tbs. of extra virgin olive oil over medium flame and add your clams and mussels. Hit it with a splash of stock or wine and cover with a lid. Cook until they open, about 3-5 minutes and discard all the unopened ones.

8. Divide your risotto between 4 plates and top each with 5 shrimps, 4 clams, 3 mussels and 2 pieces of the crab meat. Drizzle the entire plate with a spoon full of the tomato and wine sauce from the shrimp and crab. Drizzle a little extra virgin olive oil over the top and sprinkle with some parsley. (You may also drizzle the risotto with little bit of the juices from the clams and mussels if you prefer)

9. Serve hot with a cold glass of Pinot Grigio.

Smoked Pork Risotto

(Serves 4)

1 1/2 c. arborio rice
5 tbs. extra virgin olive oil + 4 tbs. butter
1 small onion -diced
7 garlic cloves -grated
1/2 c. white wine
5-6 c. organic hot chicken stock -low sodium
3/4 tsp. sea salt
3/4 lb. organic ground pork
2 red bell peppers -roasted and diced
1 tsp. smoked paprika (if you don't like smoky flavors feel free to substitute with sweet paprika)
1/2 tsp. red pepper flakes + more to taste
Black pepper to taste -freshly ground
1/4 c. Parmigiano-Reggiano -freshly grated
10 sprigs of fresh thyme -leaves only
1/2 c. Italian parsley -minced
1 c. cherry tomatoes – halved

1. Heat up the 3 tablespoons of olive oil and 3 tablespoons of the butter on medium flame in an enameled cast iron pan and sweat the onions with a pinch of sea salt for 10 minutes until softened and translucent. Add the red pepper flakes and ground meat and break it up with the side of a flat wooden spoon. Allow to cook for a few minutes then add the sea salt and paprika. Give it a good stir and mix in the rice.
2. Let everything cook together for about 3 minutes, until the rice is no longer opaque. Add 5 of the grated garlic cloves, the roasted peppers and the thyme leaves and stir to combine.
3. Add the wine and stir until almost absorbed but never let the rice dry out completely. Stirring often will also prevent sticking and ensure that your risotto will turn out super creamy.
4. Start adding the stock a ladle at a time stirring constantly with a wooden spoon until absorbed. Once the stock has been absorbed add another ladle full making sure to maintain a constant ripple and never let the rice dry out. Continue until the rice grains are tender, about 20 minutes. Remove from heat and stir in the parmigiano reggiano and one tablespoon of butter for an extra creamy finish.
5. A few minutes before your risotto is ready, heat up 2 tablespoons of extra virgin olive oil and sauté the 2 cloves of grated garlic for 30 seconds. Stir in the tomatoes and a pinch of sea salt. Let cook together for a few minutes until the tomatoes just start releasing their juices. Fold them into the risotto and serve sprinkled with the fresh parsley.

Wild Mushroom Risotto

(Serves 4)

1 1/2 c. carnaroli or arborio rice
1 Maitake mushroom -dehydrated
3 tbs. EV olive oil +3 Tbs butter
1 1/2 tbs. cold butter
1/2 c. minced onion
1/2 c. white wine
5 c. hot water
3/4 tsp. sea salt
1/4 c. Parmigiano Reggiano -freshly grated

1. Rehydrate your mushroom by pouring the 5 cups of hot water over it and let it sit for 30 minutes. Reserve the stock and slice the mushroom.
2. Heat up the olive oil and butter on med flame in a wide sauté pan and sweat the onions with a pinch of sea salt for 10 min until softened and translucent. Stir in the arborio rice and let it cook until it becomes opaque (3 minutes).
3. Add the wine and stir with a wooden spoon until absorbed but do not let the rice dry out completely. Add the sliced mushrooms then start adding the mushroom stock a ladle at a time stirring constantly with a wooden spoon until absorbed. Once the stock has been absorbed add another ladle full. You want to maintain a constant ripple during this process and never let the rice dry out completely. Continue until the grains are tender, season with sea salt and remove from heat. Stir in 1 tbs. cold butter and the parmigiano reggiano and serve.

Sun Dried Tomato Risotto

(Serves 4)

- 1 1/2 c. arborio rice
- 2 1/2 oz. Sun Dried Tomatoes
- 2 tbs. Extra Virgin Olive Oil +3 tbs. butter
- 1 tbs. cold butter
- 1/2 c. minced onion
- 1/2 c. white wine
- 5 c. hot vegetable stock or chicken stock
- 3/4 tsp. sea salt
- 1/4 c. Parmigiano Reggiano -freshly grated
- 8 basil leaves -thinly sliced

1. Rehydrate your tomatoes by pouring the 5 cups of hot stock over them and let it sit for 20 min. Reserve the stock and chop the tomatoes.

2. Heat up the olive oil and butter on med flame in a wide sauté pan and sweat the onions with a pinch of sea salt for 10 minutes until softened and translucent. Stir in the arborio rice and let cook until it becomes opaque(3 minutes).

3. Add the wine and stir with a wooden spoon until absorbed but do not let the rice dry out completely. Add the tomatoes then start adding the stock a ladle at a time stirring constantly with a wooden spoon until absorbed. Once the stock has been absorbed add another ladle full. You want to maintain a constant ripple during this process and never let the rice dry out completely.

Continue until the grains are tender, season with sea salt and remove from heat. Stir in one tbs. cold butter, the basil and the parmigiano reggiano and serve.

Risotto Puttanesca

(Serves 4)

1 1/2 c. Arborio or Carnaroli Rice
2 tbs. Extra Virgin Olive Oil + 3 tbs. butter
1 tbs. cold butter
2 tbs. extra virgin olive oil
1/2 c. minced onion
4 garlic cloves -grated
1/2 - 1/3 c. white wine
5 cups hot chicken stock
3 small anchovies
1/2 tsp. red pepper flakes + more to taste
2 tbs. capers -rinsed
1 c. black olives -sliced
1/2 lb. cremini mushroom
1 1/2 c. cherry tomatoes -halved
1/4 c. Italian parsley -minced
Sea salt to taste

1. Heat up the olive oil and butter on med flame in a wide sauté pan and sweat the onions with a pinch of sea salt for 10 minutes until softened and translucent. Add the red pepper flakes and anchovies and break them with a wooden spoon until melted & incorporated in the oil & onions. Add the capers and 2 of the grated garlic cloves then cook another 30 seconds.
2. Stir in the arborio rice and let cook until it becomes opaque (3 min).
3. Add the sliced mushroom and a pinch of sea salt and stir.
4. Add the wine and stir with a wooden spoon until absorbed but do not let the rice dry out completely.
5. Start adding the stock a ladle at a time stirring constantly with a wooden spoon until absorbed. Once the stock has been absorbed add another ladle full. You want to maintain a constant ripple during this process and never let the rice dry out completely.
6. Add the sliced olives and continue with the stock until the rice grains are tender (about 20 minutes). Stir in the parsley, adjust seasonings and remove from heat. Stir in 1 tbs. cold butter.
7. A few minutes before your risotto is ready, heat up 2 tbs. extra virgin olive oil and sauté the 2 cloves of grated garlic for 30 seconds. Stir in the tomatoes and a pinch of sea salt. Let cook together for a few minutes until the tomatoes start releasing their juices but aren't mushy. Fold them in the risotto and serve hot with a glass of cold Pinot.



Poultry and Pork Recipes

Truffle Roasted Chicken

(Serves 4-6)

Spice Mix:

2 tsp. Truffle sea salt
1/4 tsp. black pepper -freshly cracked
1/2 tsp. garlic powder
1 tsp. dehydrated minced onion
1/2 tsp. sweet paprika
1/4 tsp. nutmeg -freshly grated
1 - 4 lb roasting chicken –butter-flied & back bone removed
1 lemons -sliced
1 orange -sliced
8 garlic cloves
1 tbs. extra virgin olive oil
1/2 tsp truffle oil
4 parsley sprigs
10 thyme sprigs
4 bay leaves

1. Rinse the chicken and dry it very well with paper towels. Gently loosen the breast skin with your fingers and rub with some of your spice rub then insert 2 of the garlic cloves under the skin.
2. Rub the chicken with 1 tbs. of the extra virgin olive oil and sprinkle with the rest of the spice mix all around. Set on a platter skin side up and refrigerate uncovered for 2 hours. (This will help dry out the moisture, resulting in extra crispy skin).
3. Preheat your oven to 425 F degrees. Cover the bottom of a large enameled roasting pan with the orange and lemon slices. Top with the parsley sprigs, thyme, garlic cloves and bay leaves. Set the butter-flied chicken on top, skin side up and drizzle with the truffle oil.
4. Allow to sit at room temperature for 20 minutes.
5. Roast the chicken for 20 minutes at 425 F degrees, turn down to 375 F degrees and continue roasting for one hour, or until juices run clear and the internal temperature reaches 165F degrees (cook 20 minutes/ pound of chicken). Remove from the oven and allow it to rest for 10 minutes before carving.

Chicken Schnitzel

(Serves 4)

1 lb. chicken tenderloin – gently pounded
Sea salt and black pepper to taste
1 c. all purpose flour
2 eggs + 2 tbs. milk -beaten together
1 1/2 c. bread crumbs -plain
1/4 c. canola oil

1. Season the pounded tenderloins with a pinch of sea salt and black pepper on each side.
2. Dredge the fillets first in flour making sure to shake off all the excess. Dip them in the egg then dredge them in the bread crumbs.
3. Heat the canola oil in a large cast iron pan. Once the oil is hot add a couple of the fillets (do not overcrowd the pan) and sear for a couple of minutes on each side until nice and golden.
4. Transfer to a plate lined with paper towels to soak up any excess oil and serve promptly with lemon wedges. Serve next to french fries, a nice potato salad or make a sandwich with lettuce and tomatoes.

Stuffed Bell Peppers

(Serves 8)

8 medium size bell peppers (red, green and yellow)
3/4 c. rice
1 3/4 lb. -2 lb. ground pork
1 medium onion -diced
3 tbs. EV olive oil
The leaves from 5 thyme sprigs -chopped
1/2 c. Italian flat leaf parsley-chopped
1 tsp. sea salt and black pepper to taste
1/2 tsp. paprika
1 - 28 oz. can San Marzano tomatoes whole in tomato puree
1 1/2 qt. chicken stock -seasoned to taste
3 bay leaves

1. Rinse the peppers and cut the tops and empty the seeds and membrane. Reserve the clean tops also. Trim them on the sides a little if necessary to fit inside the pepper and create a snug seal.
2. Crush the tomatoes with your hands and add a layer with juices to the bottom of a large enameled cast iron pan. In a large sauté pan heat up the olive oil and sauté the onion with a pinch of sea salt until softened and translucent. Add the rice, stir and let cook together for about 5 min. Mix in the ground beef and break it up with a wooden spoon, add the thyme, parsley, 1 tsp sea salt, pepper and paprika and mix well together. Remove from heat.
3. Stuff each pepper with the meat and rice mixture 3/4 of the way (very important not to over stuff them). Put the tops back on just to make sure the stuffing will stay inside.
4. Arrange the peppers in the heavy bottom sauce pan on top of the tomato layer and pour in the chicken stock and the remaining crushed tomatoes making sure it covers the peppers. Add the bay leaves and bring to a boil. Turn the heat down cover the pan with a tight lid and transfer to a preheated 375 degrees oven for 45 minutes. Remove from the oven and allow it to sit covered for 10 minutes.
5. Serve warm surrounded by the broth they were cooked in and drizzled with sour cream. Sprinkle some chopped parsley on top for decoration.

Arroz Con Pollo

(Serves 6)

3 lb. organic chicken -cut into 10 pieces, rinse and dry
2 c. long grain white rice
1 yellow onion -sliced
1/2 yellow onion -diced
5 garlic cloves
1 red bell pepper -sliced
1 green bell pepper -sliced
1 c. white wine
1/2 c. cilantro -roughly chopped
1 c. green peas -frozen & heated through
3 1/2 c. chicken broth -low sodium
1 pinch saffron
1 1/2 c. cherry or grape tomatoes
1 c. green olives
1 large carrot -diced
2 tbs. butter
3 tbs. olive oil
3 tbs. extra virgin olive oil
2 bay leaves
1 1/2 tsp. oregano
1/2 tsp. cumin
1 tsp. sea salt + more to taste
1 tsp. onion powder
1 tsp. garlic powder
1/2 tsp. black pepper
1 tsp. paprika
1/2 tsp. chili powder

1. Heat up the chicken broth then add the saffron to it and allow it to dissolve.

2. In a large cast iron Dutch oven heat up 3 tbs. of olive oil. Sear the chicken skin side down first until golden brown. Add the garlic cloves and season with the sea salt, oregano, cumin, onion powder, garlic powder, paprika and chili powder. Add the wine and move the chicken to the side so you can scrape all the brown bits from the bottom of the pan. Add the bay leaves, bring to a simmer and partially cover with a lid. Allow to cook for 40 minutes or until chicken is cooked through and falling off the bone. Discard the bay leaf, garlic cloves, the skin and bones then shred the chicken and keep it warm. Reduce the liquid that the chicken has cooked in to about 1/2 cup or less then pour it over the shredded chicken.

3. In another cast iron pot heat up the butter and sauté the diced onion with a good pinch of sea salt for a couple of minutes. Add the carrot and cook an additional 5 minutes then stir in the rice. Toast for a couple of minutes then pour in the saffron infused chicken broth. Bring to a boil, turn the heat to low and cover with a tight lid. Allow to simmer for 12 minutes then remove from flame. Let it sit for 20 minutes untouched then fluff it up with a fork.

4. Meanwhile heat up the grill and prepare your vegetable grill pan. Toss the sliced peppers and sliced onion together with 2 tbs. of extra virgin olive oil and a good pinch of sea salt. Grill them on medium flame until the peppers begin to soften and get a nice color from the grill. Transfer to a clean bowl and keep warm. In a separate bowl toss the tomatoes with a drizzle of extra virgin olive oil and add them to the grill. Cook only until they begin to burst and get some color then transfer to a bowl.

5. In a large bowl gently mix together the saffron rice, the shredded chicken with all the juices, grilled peppers, onions and tomatoes. Add the green peas, olives and cilantro, adjust seasoning and serve.

Garlic Chicken in White Wine

(Serves 4)

10 large garlic cloves -smashed with the side of a knife
1/4 c. extra virgin olive oil
2 1/2 lb. organic chicken -skin on
3/4 c. grape tomatoes -sliced or quartered
1 c. white wine
10 thyme sprigs -leaves only
1 bay leaf -dry
2 tbs. fresh Italian parsley -minced
1/2 tsp. sea salt + more to taste
1/2 tsp. sweet paprika
Freshly cracked black pepper to taste -optional

1. Dry the chicken well and sprinkle with the sea salt and paprika on both sides. If using the breast cut it in 2 or 3 pieces.
2. In a wide enameled cast iron pot heat up 2 -3 tbs. of the olive oil on medium low flame, just enough to coat the bottom nicely. Add the garlic cloves and sear them on low heat until golden brown all over making sure not to burn them. Remove from the pan set aside and reserve.
3. Add the chicken pieces to the hot oil skin side down first and sear until golden brown on both sides. (Work in batches if necessary, do not overcrowd the pan and add a little bit of oil in between batches if necessary).
4. Remove the chicken and set it aside while you add the wine and scrape all the brown bits from the bottom of the pan. Add the chicken back to the pan together with the garlic, thyme and bay leaf. Allow to simmer for 5 minutes then add in the tomatoes all around the chicken. Transfer the pot to the preheated 375F degree oven and allow to cook for 25 minutes or until the chicken is cooked through, golden crispy on top and the sauce has reduced and concentrated. Serve with a nice drizzle of extra virgin olive oil on top, crusty garlic bread/ bruschetta and sprinkled with the fresh parsley.

Rustic Chicken Stew

(Serves 4)

2 lb. organic free range chicken -bone in, skin on(wings & breast, or your favorite parts)
1/4 c. extra virgin olive oil
1 c. onion -chopped
1/2 green bell pepper -diced
1 tbs. sweet paprika
1/4 tsp. sea salt + more to taste
1/2 tsp. red pepper flakes
3 bay leaves
1/2 c. fresh flat leaf Italian parsley -minced
1 1/2 c. water or chicken stock-low sodium
2 carrots -diced
1 1/2 c. heirloom cherry tomatoes -halved
1 tbs. chives (optional)

1. Heat up the olive oil in a heavy bottom cast iron pot. Add the onion and sauté for 5 minutes or until translucent. Add the pepper flakes and bell pepper and sauté for 5 more minutes, making sure not to burn the onion.

2. Add the chicken to the pan, stir everything together with a wooden spoon and allow it to cook for 5 minutes. Add the paprika and stir until the chicken is nicely coated. Pour in the chicken stock and bring to a simmer. Cover with a lid and allow it to simmer for 15 minutes.

3. Add the bay leaves and carrots and continue simmering on low heat for 45 min, uncovered. Add the cherry tomatoes and most of the minced parsley and let it cook for 3-5 minutes until the tomatoes start to release their juices.

Adjust seasonings and serve over creamy polenta with a sprinkling of minced parsley and chives and surrounded with the gravy.

Grilled Pork Chops and Basil Citrus Apple Sauce

(Serves 2)

2 organic boneless pork chops – 1 1/2 " thick

For The Brine

2 c. water

3 tbs. brown sugar

3 tbs. sea salt

10 whole peppercorns

5 whole cloves

4 thyme sprigs

2 bay leaves

1 garlic clove

Let the pork chops marinade in the brine for at least 3 hours or overnight

1. Dry the pork chops on paper towels, set on a plate and drizzle with a little olive oil. Sprinkle with a pinch of sea salt, black pepper and garlic powder on each side, and let them sit at room temperature for 20 min while you fire up the grill.
2. Transfer the pork chops to the hot grill and cook over direct flame for 1 minute. Rotate at 45 degrees (to get a nice diamond pattern) and grill an additional 8 minutes. Flip them on the other side and repeat the above until the chops r cooked through or they reached an internal temp of 150F. Because pork fat is flammable you should stay by the grill and move the pork chops around if necessary. Also sear the sides of the chops for about 1-2 min, then transfer to a plate, cover with aluminum foil and allow them to rest for 8-10 minutes. Serve with the Basil Citrus Sauce on the top and a side of mashed potatoes or A La Rousse Potato Salad.

Basil Citrus Apple Sauce Recipe

2 tbs. Extra virgin olive oil + 1 tbs. butter
1 garlic clove -minced
1/3 c. onion -diced
2 gala apples- diced
1 roasted red pepper -chopped
3 lemon thyme sprigs
2 tbs. raw honey
Juice from 1/2 lemon
The zest from one lemon
2 whole cloves
1/2 tsp red pepper flakes
1/4 tsp. sea salt + freshly cracked black pepper to taste
1/4 c. apple cider or apple juice
Pinch of freshly grated nutmeg
5 basil leaves -thinly sliced
1 tbs. butter -salted

1. Heat up the olive oil and the butter in a medium sauce pan on low flame and sauté the onions with a pinch of sea salt until translucent. Add the red pepper flakes and cook for 1 more minute. Stir in the garlic and let it infuse the oil for 45 sec.
2. Add the roasted peppers and allow everything to cook together for a few min on low flame.
3. Add the apples, thyme leaves, cloves, honey, and apple cider then give them a good stir. Bring to a simmer and allow to cook together for 10-15 min or until the apples have softened but aren't mushy. Stir in the lemon juice, lemon zest and the fresh basil and season to taste with the sea salt and black pepper.
4. Remove from heat and stir in the cold butter and freshly grated nutmeg.
5. Spoon over the pork chops and serve.

Florentina Salad

(Serves 4)

1 head organic romaine lettuce (cut into bite size pieces)
1 c. blueberries or blackberries -organic
1 1/2 c. organic heirloom cherry tomatoes -halved
1/2 English cucumber -cut into 1 inch pieces
1/2 red bell pepper- thinly sliced
1/3 c. pine nuts -toasted & cooled
8 oz. cheese tortellini -cooked, rinsed under cold water & drained
8 organic chicken tenderloins -grilled & cut into strips
Garlic croutons (recipe follows)
Parmigiano reggiano for grating
Salad Dressing
1/3 c. extra virgin olive oil
2 tbs. lemon juice -freshly squeezed
The zest from 1 lemon
2 garlic cloves -grated
1/2 tsp. sea salt + more to taste
Freshly cracked black pepper to taste
Chicken Marinade:
2 tbs. extra virgin olive oil
1 tsp. lemon juice
1/4 tsp. sea salt
1/4 tsp. paprika
1/4 tsp. garlic powder

1. Whisk together the marinade ingredients and marinate the chicken for 30 min, drain on paper towels and grill on medium flame for about 3 minutes on each side or until cooked through. Transfer to a plate, cover with aluminum foil and allow them to rest for 5-10 minutes then cut into strips.
2. In a large salad bowl, whisk the extra virgin olive oil, garlic, and lemon zest and lemon juice together. Season with the sea salt and black pepper then add all the salad ingredients to the bowl reserving the pine nuts and cheese. Toss gently until everything is coated with the dressing and sprinkle with the pine nuts.
3. Serve with grated parmigiano reggiano on top.

Homemade Garlic Croutons

3 slices of bread -1 inch thick & cut into 1 inch cubes
1 tbs. melted butter
1/4 tsp. sea salt
1/4 tsp. garlic powder

Spread the bread cubes on a baking sheet, drizzle with the butter and sprinkle with the sea salt and garlic powder. Toast in a 400 F oven for 10 minutes or until golden. Allow to cool on a cooling rack before adding them to the salad.

Barbeque Pulled Pork Sandwiches

(Serves 4-6)

2 lb. organic pork shoulder/ butt roast
3 tbs. extra virgin olive oil
1 gala apple-quartered
The peel and juice from 1 orange
3 whole cloves
3 bay leaves
2 parsley sprigs
3 thyme sprigs
1 carrot -halved
1 parsley root -halved
1 celery stalk with leaves -halved
1/2 onion
1 tbs. sea salt
1 pinch red pepper flakes
A pinch of nutmeg -freshly grated
2 c. apple juice
2 c. water
1 - 12 oz. bottle barbeque sauce
4 Sesame buns -lightly toasted

1. Heat up the olive oil in a large cast iron Dutch oven. Season the pork with a pinch of sea salt and black pepper on each side then sear in the hot pot until golden brown on each side.
2. Deglaze the pot with the apple juice then add water and bring to a simmer. Add the aromatics: onion, garlic, celery, carrots, parsley, orange peel, apples and orange juice. Stir in the sea salt, black pepper, pepper flakes and nutmeg then cover with a tight lid.
3. Cover with a lid and allow it to simmer for 2 1/2 to 3 hours on very low flame or until the meat is fork tender. Transfer to a plate, discard any excess fat and shred the meat with a fork.
4. Warm up the barbeque sauce then add the shredded pork. Serve on the toasted sesame buns with a side of coleslaw and waffle fries.

Pork & Beans

(Serves 4+)

2 c. Cranberry Beans (Borlotti beans) or Pinto Beans (soaked overnight if preparing the dish for lunch, or soaked from the morning till evening if preparing for dinner)
2 1/2 – lbs. Pork Roast cut into 4 pieces
1 Celery stalk with the leaves attached
1 Parsley root
2 large Carrots sliced into 1/2" rounds
1 onion-cut in half & mince the other half
3 whole cloves
5 peppercorns
3/4 c. Apple juice or apple cider
2 qt. spring water
3 Bay leaves-dry
5 Thyme sprigs
3 Parsley Sprigs
2 tbs. Smoked paprika
2 tbs. Sea salt & black pepper to taste
15 oz. can crushed fire roasted tomatoes
3/4 c. flour-all purpose
3 tbs. Extra Virgin Olive Oil
5 slices bacon -chopped
1/4 c. chopped flat leaf Italian parsley

1. Heat up 3 tbs. of the olive oil in a large cast iron Dutch oven. Season the pork with sea salt and black pepper then sear in the hot oil until golden (a few min on each side). Transfer the pork to a platter and deglaze the pot with the apple juice making sure to get all the brown bits from the bottom.
2. Return the meat to the pot and pour in the water. Add the sea salt, celery, cloves, and peppercorns, half of the onion, thyme, bay leaves, parsley sprigs and parsley root. Cover with a tight lid and bring to a simmer. Turn the flame to low and allow it to simmer for 1 1/2 hours.
3. Remove the meat from the pot and strain the stock through a fine strainer. Discard all the aromatics.
4. Rinse your Dutch oven and return the meat & stock into it, together with the beans and carrots. Partially cover and bring to a simmer and allow it to cook on low flame for 1 hour.
5. Transfer the meat to a plate and shred with 2 forks into 1" pieces, discarding all the extra fat.
6. Approx. 15 minutes before the last hour is up, heat up the 2 tbs. extra virgin olive oil in a large cast iron pot or stock pot. Add the chopped bacon and cook until crispy then transfer to drain on paper towels. Sauté the minced onion in the bacon fat until translucent and then whisk in the flour and smoked paprika together. Allow to cook on low flame for a minute, then whisk in the pork stock. Add the crushed tomatoes and allow it to simmer for about 10 minutes until the gravy has thickened.
7. Add the shredded pork and carrots back into the pot, stir in the minced parsley and let simmer a few more minutes until heated through. Allow the stew to sit for 10 minutes before serving sprinkled with the crispy bacon bits and crusty bread. (Have red wine vinegar available at the table).

Chicken Cordon Bleu

(Serves 2)

- 1 large chicken breast sliced in two fillets
- 2 honey baked ham sliced
- 2 provolone cheese slices
- 1 c. toasted bread crumbs-plain
- 3 tbs. olive oil
- 1/2 c. flour
- 1 egg-lightly beaten
- Sea salt and black pepper to taste

1. Pound the chicken fillets to 1/4 inch thickness and season with a pinch of sea salt and black pepper on each side.
2. Cover each with a slice of cheese topped with a slice of ham. Fold in the sides of the fillets by 1/2 inch and start rolling it up tight. Roll each fillet in a clear plastic wrap and twist the ends of the foil tightly. Chill for 1/2 hour or more.
3. Heat up 3 tbs. of olive oil in a cast iron skillet.
4. Unwrap the chicken from the plastic wrap and coat them with flour shaking off the excess. Coat in the egg next followed by the bread crumbs.
5. Sear each chicken roll in the olive oil for a couple of minutes on each side then transfer to a 350 degrees oven for 15 min to finish cooking. (Sear sim side down first to create a seal)
6. Slice and serve with a side of creamed peas.

Creamy Chicken & Dumplings

(Serves 4+)

2 chicken breasts (bone in and skin on) + 1 back
3 carrots-sliced into 1/2" rounds
1 large parsley root cut into sticks
1/2 c. green peas-frozen
2 qt. spring water
1 onion halved
1/4 c. heavy cream
3/4 c. all purpose flour
1 tbs. sea salt
Black pepper to taste
1/4 tsp. freshly grated nutmeg
1/4 c. extra virgin olive oil
2 bay leaves+2 parsley sprigs
1/4 c. chopped Italian parsley

Dumplings:

1 1/2 c. all purpose flour
3/4 tbs. baking powder
1/2 tsp. sea salt
3 parsley sprigs -minced
3/4 c. whole milk (warm)
2 1/2 tbs. butter -melted
1 pinch freshly grated nutmeg

1. Mix all dry ingredients in a bowl.
2. Warm up the milk and butter together in the microwave for 20 seconds (you want this warm not hot) then start adding it to the dry ingredients, folding with a spatula until all blended (do not overwork the dumplings).
3. Rinse the chicken breast and put in the stockpot together with the carrots, parsley root, parsley sprigs, bay leaves and half of the onion. Cover with the 2 quarts of water and bring to a simmer. Add 1 tbs. sea salt and let it simmer for one hour skimming the foam from the top as it forms.
4. Strain the stock into a clean bowl and reserve the chicken breast and the carrots. Discard the back and the skin and the bones from the chicken breast and shred the meat, cover with foil and keep warm together with the carrots.
5. Meanwhile heat up the olive oil on medium flame in a cast iron Dutch oven. Add the minced onion & a pinch of sea salt and sauté until translucent, about 10 minutes. Whisk in the flour in and allow it to cook for one minute then whisk in the 2 quarts of stock that you cooked the chicken in. Turn the heat to low and stir in the cream.
4. Meanwhile work on forming the dumplings and drop into the gravy with a fork together with the green peas. Cook 12-15 minutes covered turning them once. Add the shredded chicken and carrots, adjust seasonings stir in the chopped parsley and nutmeg and serve with freshly cracked black pepper on top alongside crackers or pastry triangles.



Organic Grass Fed Beef Recipes

I fell in love with organic grass fed beef a couple of years ago when I sampled some fresh cuts from Rocky Mountain Organic Meats (www.rockymtncuts.com), like no beef I ever tasted before. It became the standard in my kitchen ever since.

Why Organic Grass Fed Beef you ask.

Besides the fact that Grass fed beef enhance their omega-3 content by 60%,

USDA Certified Organic meats come from animals allowed to roam the great outdoors, as Nature intended, and feast on healthy omega-3 rich grasses and forage, as Nature intended. They pass healthy, vital nutrients on to you to help you build a vital, healthy body. USDA Certified Organic meats come from animals that never experience even one day, let alone a lifetime, inside an unhealthy, crowded feedlot where animals are fed synthetic hormones and GMO-grains grown with synthetic fertilizers, pesticides and herbicides, their meats then irradiated before reaching your dinner table—all to produce nutrient-dead food that eventually leads to poor health for humans and the Earth. When you choose USDA Certified Organic meats, “With every bite you and your loved ones take, you’re eating for two—you... and Mother Earth.”

10 Tips for the Perfect Burger

1. Start with the best quality Organic Grass Fed Beef (Rocky Mountain Organic Meats: www.rockymtncuts.com) and Do not overwork the meat. This is probably the most important rule as most people tend to overwork the meat and end up with a tough burger.
2. Thick Patties. Use both hands to shape 3/4 inch to 1 inch thick patties, anything thinner than that will end up being dry.
3. Create a well. Gently press in the center of the patty to create a little well, this way your burger will be perfectly flat once cooked.
4. Seasoning Season the patties very well with sea salt and black pepper on both sides just before grilling it.
5. Heat up the grill. Use a very hot grill, this way you get a nice sear on the outside and the inside stays moist.
6. Don't touch. Keep your hands off of the burger for 3 minutes. Just leave it alone then flip it once for a medium rare result. Leave it an extra minute for a medium well done burger.
7. Cheese use different kind of cheeses like fontina, Swiss or creamy Brie, add it to your burger one minute before it leaves the grill.
8. Toppings Get creative with your toppings: caramelized onions, sun dried tomatoes, pan seared apple slices, sautéed mushrooms, and crispy bacon, grilled zucchinis, and they will all take your burger to gourmet heaven.
9. Buns Grill the buns and use a spread like roasted pepper, bruschetta topping or tapenade to make it Exquisite.
10. Let them rest. Let the burgers rest for a few minutes after you remove them from the grill. This will give the juices enough time to redistribute and have flavor in every bite.

Grass Fed Beef Nacos and Tacos

(Serves 4+)

- 1 1/2 lbs. Organic Grass Fed ground beef (Rocky Mountain Organic Meats: www.rockymtncuts.com)
- 2 tbs. extra virgin olive oil
- 1 medium onion-diced
- 4 garlic cloves-minced
- 1 red bell pepper-diced (optional)
- 2 tbs. dried oregano
- 1 tsp. garlic powder
- 1 tbs. smoked paprika
- 2 tbs. chili powder
- 1 tsp. red pepper flakes
- 2 tbs. ground cumin
- 3 tbs. tomato paste
- 15 oz. can fire roasted tomatoes -crushed
- 1/2 tsp. black pepper + more to taste
- 1 1/2 tsp. sea salt + more to taste
- 1 1/2 tsp. cocoa powder -unsweetened
- 1/2 c. water
- 1/4 c. chopped flat leaf Italian parsley
- 1 c. Mexican blend cheese- grated
- 1 large bag of Tortilla Scoops
- 1 c. cherry tomatoes -sliced
- 1 c. jalapeno slices
- 2 c. homemade guacamole
- 1 c. sour cream
- 2 c. lettuce -shredded

1. In a large cast iron pot heat up the olive oil and sauté the onions for 5 minutes. Add the peppers and sauté for another 5 minutes until they start to soften and the onions are translucent.
2. Add the ground beef to the pan and break it up with a flat end wooden spoon. Sear together until no longer pink.
3. Add all of the above seasonings to the pan then mix in the tomato paste, crushed tomatoes and the water. Cover with a lid and bring to a simmer.
4. Allow everything to simmer together on very low heat for 35 minutes tightly covered, stirring every 15 minutes. For the last 10 minutes let it simmer partially covered. We want to concentrate the flavor but also we want some reduction.
5. Adjust seasoning and remove from heat. Stir in the parsley and let cool down and refrigerate overnight for best flavor. Heat up before serving in tiny Nacos or Tacos shells.

Assemble the Nacos

1. Heat up the oven to 400 degrees F.
2. Arrange the tortilla scoops on a large baking dish and fill each one with one tablespoon of the meat. Sprinkle with some of the cheese and transfer to the oven until the cheese is melted, about 2 minutes.
3. Remove from the oven and top each Naco with a dab of guacamole, sour cream, a slice of tomato and a jalapeno. Sprinkle with some of the shredded lettuce and serve.

Fontina Stuffed Meatballs

(Serves 4)

- 1 lb. Organic Grass Fed ground beef
- 3 garlic cloves – grated
- 3/4 c. bread crumbs -dried & plain
- 2 slices bread -1 inch thick
- 1 c. milk
- 1 organic egg -lightly beaten
- 1/4 tsp. baking soda
- ¼ c. fresh parsley -chopped
- 3/4 tsp. sea salt & black pepper to taste
- Parmigiano reggiano for grating
- 1/4 lb. fontina cheese cut into 1/4 inch cubes
- 1/2 c. canola oil for frying the meatballs
- 1 lb. spaghetti

1. Soak the sliced bread in the milk for a few minutes, squeeze the milk out and add the bread to a bowl. Combine it with the ground beef, garlic, parsley, baking soda, salt, pepper and the egg.

2. Mix everything with wet hands and add about 1/4 c of bread crumbs. Shape the mixture into golf ball size meatballs and arrange them on a cookie sheet.

3. Press 1 cube of the fontina cheese into each meatball and reshape to encapsulate the cheese completely. Coat each meatball in the remaining bread crumbs and set aside.

4. Heat up 1/4 cup of the canola oil in a large skillet and add the meatballs. Work in batches and do not overcrowd the pan. Cook until golden brown on each side and using a pair of tongs transfer them into the sauce making sure to coat evenly. Let them sit in the sauce for a few minutes then transfer them to a bowl and keep warm.

Cook the spaghetti according to the instructions on the package and toss them with the marinara sauce. (Reserve the rest of the sauce for later) Transfer to a serving platter and add the meatballs on top. Grate some parmigiano reggiano on top and sprinkle with the torn basil leaves.

Blood Orange Beef Stew with Butternut Squash

(Serves 4)

1/4 c. olive oil
1 small onion -diced
5 large garlic cloves -whole
2 lb. Organic Grass Fed Chuck Roast -cut into 1 1/2 inch cubes
2 lb. Organic Butternut Squash cut into 1 1/2 inch cubes
4 blood oranges
1 large carrot or 2 smaller ones -sliced into 1/2 inch rounds
6 thyme sprigs
1/4 tsp. red pepper flakes + more to taste
3 whole cloves
1 tsp. sea salt
1/4 tsp. black pepper -freshly grated
1 1/2 tbs. balsamic vinegar
2 bay leaves
Nutmeg -freshly grated
1/4 c. Italian parsley -chopped
3 tbs. all purpose flour
3/4 tsp. sweet paprika
3 cups water -filtered

1. Mix the flour and paprika together in a plastic bag. Season the beef with the sea salt and black pepper and transfer them to the plastic bag. Toss everything together to coat.
2. Heat up 2 tablespoons of the olive oil in a cast iron Dutch oven over medium flame. Add the garlic cloves and sear until golden on both sides. Transfer to a bowl. Shake any excess flour from the beef and sear each cube for a couple of minutes until golden brown at the edges. Work in batches so you don't overcrowd the pot and add 1 tablespoon of olive oil in between batches if necessary. Transfer them all to the bowl with the garlic and cover with plastic wrap to keep warm.
3. Add one more tablespoon of olive oil to the pot and sauté the onion with a pinch of sea salt until translucent. Add the red pepper flakes and cook one additional minute.
4. Meanwhile save two strips of orange peel from the blood oranges and zest the rest and reserve. Squeeze 1 cup of juice from the oranges and add it to the pot together with the balsamic vinegar. Using a silicone spatula make sure to scrape all the brown bits from the bottom. Add the bay leaf, cloves, thyme sprigs and orange peels and allow it to simmer for 3 minutes.
5. Add the beef cubes with all the juices and the garlic back to the pot and stir to combine. Add the water and bring to a simmer. Cover with a tight lid and transfer to a 350 F degrees oven. Let it cook for 2 hours.
6. Add the butternut squash and carrots to the pot, give it a good stir, cover tightly with the lid and let cook in the oven for an additional 45 minutes or until the meat and vegetables are tender. Discard the bay leaf and thyme sprigs and gently stir in 1/2 teaspoon of the reserved orange zest. Serve hot sprinkled with the parsley and a pinch of freshly grated nutmeg and bruschetta.

Pappardelle with Ragu Alla Bolognese

(Serves 4)

- 1 yellow onion -diced
- 3 garlic cloves -grated
- 1 large carrot -diced
- 1 celery stalk -diced
- 3 tbs. extra virgin olive oil
- 1 tbs. butter
- 1 tsp. red pepper flakes
- 2 bay leaves
- 1 tbs. tomato paste
- 1 – 28 oz. can whole San Marzano tomatoes in tomato puree
- 1/3 lb. chicken livers- chopped (OPTIONAL but recommended)
- 1 lb. Organic Grass Fed ground beef
- 1/2 lb. Organic ground pork
- 1 c. red wine
- 1 c. whole milk
- 1 1/2 tsp. sea salt
- Freshly cracked black pepper to taste
- Freshly grated nutmeg
- Parmigiano Reggiano for grating
- 1 lb. pappardelle pasta

1. Heat up the olive oil and butter in a large enameled cast iron pot. Add the onion and a pinch of sea salt and sauté until translucent. Add the red pepper flakes and cook for an extra minute.
2. Stir in the chopped liver (if using, strongly recommended, you won't even know it's there, but the flavors are to die for) and let cook for 5 minutes then mix in the diced carrots and celery. Allow everything to cook together for another 5 minutes.
3. Add the garlic and the ground meat to the pot and break it up with the side of a wooden spoon. Cook until no longer pink, and then add the tomato paste and the wine. Allow to simmer until the wine has evaporated, about 5 minutes. Add the milk and cook another 5 minutes until evaporated.
4. Crush the tomatoes with your hands and add them to the pot together with the bay leaves and the sea salt. Partially cover with a lid and bring to a slow simmer. Allow to cook for about 4 to 5 hours stirring often and adding about half a cup of water ever so often if to keep the sauce from drying out.
5. After 5 hours and once the sauce has the desired consistency (you want a nice thick sauce), adjust seasonings, remove from heat and grate in some of the nutmeg. Stir and serve on top of your perfectly cooked tagliatelle or pappardelle with a nice sprinkling of freshly grated parmigiano reggiano .
6. About 30 minutes before you are ready to remove the sauce from the heat, bring a large pot of water to a boil. Cook the pasta al dente, following the instructions on the package. Reserve one cup of the pasta water just in case you need to add some to the sauce. Remember, your pasta water should taste like sea water, so be generous with the sea salt. Serve the ragu on top of the pasta sprinkled with some torn basil leaves on top if desired.

Florentina's Perfectly Grilled Steak

(Makes 2)

2 x 2 inch steaks (Organic Grass Fed Tenderloin, Sirloin etc)

Sprinkle your steaks with a pinch of the following spices on each side then rub it well all over.

Sea salt

Black pepper -freshly cracked

Cayenne pepper

Smoked paprika

2. In a plastic Ziploc bag combine the following marinade ingredients:

1/4 c. soy sauce

1/4 c. extra virgin olive oil

4 garlic cloves -smashed

4 anchovies -diced

1/4 tsp. red pepper flakes

1/4 tsp. garlic powder

1/4 tsp. freshly cracked Tricolor peppercorns

1/2 tsp. smoke paprika

1. Add your steaks to the marinade and let them sit in the refrigerator for a few hours. Bring to room temperature for 30 minutes before grilling.
2. Remove the steaks from the marinade and pat them dry with paper towels to remove all excess moisture then lightly brush them with a little olive oil to prevent sticking to the grill.
3. Heat up your gas grill to very high, turn the flame to medium and place each steak on the grill for about one minute. Rotate it at 45 degrees so you can get a nice diamond pattern cook it for half the cooking time then turn and repeat.
4. For a medium rare steak cook it for about 16-20 minutes total cooking time. For a rare steak cook it no more than 15 minutes total cooking time. I do not recommend a well done steak but if you prefer that cook the steak until firm about 25 minutes total cooking time.
5. Remove the steaks from the grill and allow them to rest for 5 minutes before serving for the juices to redistribute.

MeatLoaf

(Serves 4)

1/2 lb. Organic ground pork
1 lb. Organic Grass Fed ground beef
1 tsp. sea salt
1/2 tsp. black pepper
1/2 tsp. garlic powder
1/2 tsp. paprika
1 large egg
3/4 c. flat leaf Italian parsley -chopped
3 thyme sprigs -chopped
1/2 c. fontina cheese -diced in small cubes
1 slice of bread soaked in 1/2c milk then drained
1/3 c. Marinara sauce + 1/4c to brush the top of the loaf
2 tbs. Extra Virgin Olive Oil
1/2 c. onion -diced or 5 scallions thinly sliced
1 carrot -small and diced finely
1 red bell pepper -diced
3 garlic cloves -minced

1. In a medium sauté pan, sweat the onions in 2 tbs. of olive oil for 3 minutes then add the carrots and bell pepper. Sauté for 8 more min then add the garlic and cook one more minute. Set to the side and let it cool down.
2. Mix the first 12 ingredients together reserving 1/4 c. of the marinara sauce. Add the cooked vegetables and make sure everything is combined together then form it into a loaf on a cast iron baking sheet. Brush the loaf with the 1/4 c of the marinara sauce.
3. Warm up the oven to 350 degrees and roast the meat loaf for 1 hour. Remove from the oven and let rest for 10 min.
4. Slice the meatloaf into 1/2 inch slices and serve with garlic mashed potatoes and a garden salad.

Rustic Beef Stew

(Serves 4)

1/4 c. Extra Virgin olive oil
2 tbs. butter
2 1/2 lb. Organic Grass Fed chuck roast cut into 1" cubes – Organic grass fed
1 medium onion -diced
3 large garlic cloves -minced
1/3 c. all purpose flour
1/3 c. fresh Italian parsley chopped
3 thyme sprigs
3 bay leaves
3 whole cloves
Sea salt and black pepper to taste
1 tbs. sweet paprika
1 pinch red pepper flakes
1/2 tsp. garlic powder
3 c. chicken stock or beef stock-low sodium
1/2 c. frozen green peas
8 oz. can diced tomatoes
1 large russet potato cut into small cubes
2 large carrots sliced

1. Heat up the olive oil to the smoking point over medium heat in a large cast iron Dutch oven.
2. Season the beef cubes with sea salt and black pepper and brown them in the hot olive oil (work in batches so u don't overcrowd the pan). Add more olive oil to the pot between batches if necessary and repeat with the rest of the meat. Transfer to a bowl and keep warm.
3. Add the 2 tbs. butter to the pot and sauté the chopped onions until translucent (about 5 minutes). Add the garlic and cook one more min. Stir in the flour and cook for 2 min making sure not to burn it.
4. Stir in the paprika and add the beef cubes back to the pot, toss with the paprika, cloves and red pepper flakes then deglaze the pot with the stock. Add the bay leaf and thyme cover with a tight lid and bring to a simmer. Allow to simmer together for 2 hours stirring occasionally.
5. After 2:20 hours, add the potatoes and carrots, turn the flame up to med-low and simmer partially covered for another 45 min. Add the tomatoes, peas and parsley and simmer for another 10 min until the peas are heated through, the vegetables are soft and the meat is fork tender (adjust seasoning if necessary).
6. Serve warm with crusty bruschetta. (Toast the bread slices under the broiler, rub one side with a clove of garlic, brush it with extra virgin olive oil and season with a pinch of sea salt).

Orange Balsamic Fillet Mignon

(Serves 2)

2 X 2 inch Organic Grass Fed steaks –tenderloin
Sea salt to taste
Freshly cracked black pepper to taste
1 tsp. orange zest –freshly grated

1. In a large measuring cup combine the following ingredients to make a marinade:

2 orange peels
1 c. orange juice –freshly squeezed
¼ c. balsamic vinegar
1 tbsp. brown sugar
½ tsp. red pepper flakes
2 tbsp. olive oil
2 garlic cloves –thinly sliced
2 cloves
6 thyme sprigs

1. Pour half of the marinade in a Ziploc bag and add the fillets. Reserve the rest of the marinade. Add the steaks to the bag and make sure they all coat nicely. Let them rest in the fridge for two hours.

2. Remove the steaks from the marinade and dry well on paper towels. (Discard marinade) Lightly coat them with some of the olive oil and season each side with a pinch of sea salt and black pepper. Let them rest at room temperature for 20 minutes.

3. Heat up one tbsp. of the olive oil in an oven proof heavy bottom skillet and sear the fillets for 2-3 minutes on each side. Transfer the pan to a 425 degree oven and roast for 10-15 minutes for medium rare.

4. Transfer the fillets to a plate, cover with aluminum foil and allow them to rest while you work on the sauce.

5. Add the skillet the fillets cooked in back to the stove on low flame and deglaze it with the reserved orange marinade scraping up all the brown bits from the bottom with a spatula. Simmer until reduced by half. Discard the thyme, orange peels and cloves and serve the fillets with the orange balsamic reduction over a bed of arugula. Finish with the orange zest and garnish with some fresh thyme.

Blood Orange Ragu Alla Bolognese

(Serves 4)

1 yellow onion -diced
1 large carrot -diced
1 celery stalk –diced
2 orange peels
3 tbs. extra virgin olive oil
1 tbs .butter
1 bay leaf
2 whole cloves
2 tbs. tomato paste
½ lb. Organic Grass Fed ground beef
1 c. whole milk
1 c. blood orange juice
1 1/2 tsp. sea salt + more to taste
Freshly cracked black pepper to taste
Freshly grated nutmeg
Parmigiano Reggiano for grating
4 c. beef stock
10 fresh basil leaves –torn

1. Heat up the olive oil and butter in a large enameled cast iron pot. Add the onion and a pinch of sea salt and sauté until translucent.
2. Add the diced carrots and celery. Allow everything to cook together for another 5 minutes.
3. Add the ground meat to the pot and break it up with the side of a wooden spoon. Cook until no longer pink, and then add the tomato paste and blood orange juice. Allow to simmer until the orange juice has evaporated, about 5 minutes. Add the milk and cook another 5 minutes until evaporated.
4. Add the bay leaves, orange peels and cloves to the pot and the sea salt. Partially cover with a lid and bring to a very slow simmer. Allow to cook for about 4 to 5 hours stirring often and adding about half a cup of the beef stock ever so often to keep the sauce from drying out.
5. After 5 hours and once the sauce has the desired consistency (you want a nice thick sauce), adjust seasonings, remove from heat and grate in some of the nutmeg. Discard the bay leaf and cloves and serve on top of your perfectly cooked tagliatelle or pappardelle pasta with a nice sprinkling of freshly grated parmigiano reggiano and some of the fresh basil.



Desserts

Blueberry and Ricotta Muffins

(Makes 12)

Dry Ingredients:

1 1/2 c. flour
3/4 c. sugar
1/2 tsp. sea salt
2 tsp. baking powder

Wet Ingredients:

1/3 c. canola oil
5 tbs. whole milk
2 tsp. vanilla extract
1 egg
3/4 c. ricotta cheese
1 c. fresh blueberries

Streusel Topping:

1/4 c. sugar
2 tbs. flour
1 tbs. butter

1. Mix the dry ingredients and the wet ingredients separately then using a spatula stir in the two together until incorporated. Do not over mix.
2. Fold in the blueberries - then fill 12 muffin silicone cups 3/4 of the way full. Top with 1 tbs. of streusel topping if desired or just sprinkle some sugar on top then bake at 375 F for 20 minutes or until a toothpick inserted in the middle comes out clean.
3. Cool in the muffin cups on a wire rack for 10 minutes. Turn upside down and the muffins will slide out.

Chocolate Covered Orange Slices Treats

(Makes 15-20 slices)

2 large oranges or 6 tangerines (pick oranges that are heavy for their size).
3 1/2 oz. dark chocolate or milk chocolate
1/2 tbs. butter -salted

1. Melt the chocolate and butter together in a heat proof bowl over a pot of simmering water. Mix to combine and once melted turn off the flame.
2. Wash and peel the oranges removing as much of the pith as possible. Separate them into perfect slices and pat them dry with a paper towel.
3. Take each orange slice and dip it in the chocolate. Pick it up with a pair of tongues and allow the excess chocolate to drain. Transfer each orange slice, one by one to a parchment lined baking sheet. Place in the refrigerator to set for a few hours. Arrange on a serving platter and serve.

Chocolate Tiramisu

(Makes 5)

3/4 c. heavy cream+1 tbs. cane sugar
4 egg yolks+ 4 tbs. cane sugar
3/4 lb. mascarpone cheese
Approximately 5 oz. ladyfingers
4 espresso shots + 1 1/2 tsp. vanilla extract
1 ½ oz. dark chocolate squares – grated
2 tbs. cocoa powder
The seeds from 1 vanilla bean

1. Whip the cream + 1 tbs. sugar in your kitchen aid mixer until it forms stiff peaks and set to side.
2. In a different bowl mix the egg yolks and sugar together until creamy. Drop in the mascarpone cheese by spoonfuls and continue mixing on low speed until everything is incorporated and creamy.
3. Fold in the whipped cream and the vanilla seeds and start assembling your Tiramisu.
4. Use 5 small glasses and start by gently dipping each ladyfinger in the espresso and vanilla mixture (don't soak the ladyfingers, just a gentle brush), and layer them on the bottom of each glass. Top with some of the creamy cheese mixture, cover with grated chocolate and repeat with one more layer of ladyfingers. Spread the rest of the cream filling on top and sift the cocoa on the top like a thin blanket.
5. Finish with a layer of grated dark chocolate on the top and chill in the refrigerator for 2-4 hours before serving.

Chocolate Rum Tea

(Serves 2)

2 tsp. black tea or 2 tea bags
2 c. boiling water
2 c. whole milk
1 oz. – 2 oz. dark chocolate
2 shots Rum
2 tsp. vanilla extract
4 tbs. dark brown sugar

1. Pour the hot water over the tea bags/loose tea, cover tightly and allow it to steep for 7 minutes (or follow the instructions on the tea box).
2. Warm up the milk over medium flame and add the brown sugar and chocolate whisking occasionally until melted and incorporated. Remove from heat and add the tea to the chocolate milk mixture, whisk in the vanilla extract and the rum. Serve hot with chocolate shavings on top if desired.

Banana Crepes

(Serves 2)

Crepe mixture:

2 large eggs
1/2 c. whole milk
1/2 c. soda water
1 c. all-purpose flour
3 tbs. salted butter -melted
1 tsp. vanilla extract
2 tbs. brown sugar
1 pinch freshly grated nutmeg

Filling:

1 banana- sliced
1 tbs. butter
1 tsp. brown sugar
6 tbs. butterscotch caramel
2 scoops vanilla ice cream

1. Mix all the crepe ingredients in a blender for about 15 seconds and strain the batter. Refrigerate it for one hour or more.
2. Heat up a non stick crepe pan and butter it all around. Pour 1/2 cup of the crepe mixture into the pan moving the pan to coat the entire surface. When the edges of the crepes start turning towards the inside, it's time to flip. Cook for another minute and transfer to a plate.
3. Meanwhile melt 1 tbs. of butter in a skillet and add 1 tbs. of brown sugar and the sliced bananas to caramelize (approximately 3 minutes).
4. Melt the caramel and start filling your crepes (on half the surface) in the following order:
 - Caramelized bananas
 - 2 tbs. of the butterscotch caramel
5. Fold the crepe in half, top with one scoop of vanilla ice cream and drizzle with 1 tbs. butterscotch caramel and enjoy.

Variation: Spread each crepe with Nutella and top one half with sliced bananas and toasted hazelnut slivers. Fold over and serve.

Did you know?

Bananas are the world's second most popular fruit with tomatoes being the most popular.

Banana -Strawberry Smoothie

(Serves 1)

- 1 large banana- sliced
- 8 large strawberries- halved
- 1 c. vanilla yogurt with cream on top
- 2 tbs. raw honey + more to taste
- 3 ice cubes
- A splash of milk. (Only if necessary to get the blender going).

1. Mix all of the above ingredients in a blender and serve immediately with whipped cream on top.

Lover's Hot Chocolate

(Serves 2)

2 oz. dark chocolate bar (at least 50% cocoa) + more to taste
3 tsp. brown sugar
2 c. raw milk
½ c. heavy cream
6 roasted marshmallows
1 1/2 tsp. vanilla extract
1 tsp. ground cinnamon
1 cinnamon stick

1. Combine the milk and cream together with the cinnamon stick and bring to a simmer over medium fire in a saucier. Add the chocolate bar to the milk reserving one square of it for later. Whisk in the sugar.
2. Once the sugar and chocolate have melted and everything is incorporated, add the vanilla extract and stir to combine. Simmer together for 3 minutes, whisking frequently.
3. Discard the cinnamon stick and pour the hot chocolate in your favorite mugs and set aside.
4. Roast the marshmallows and add them on top of the hot chocolate. Sprinkle with a pinch of cinnamon and grate the chocolate square you reserved on top of the marshmallows.
5. Serve hot by the fire place or in BED!!



101 Kitchen Secrets

1. To prevent cut apples or avocados from browning just drizzle them with some lemon or lime juice.
2. Apples produce natural ethylene gas and if stored with other fruit like bananas pears or avocados will speed up their ripening process.
3. To get more juice from citrus fruit like lemons, limes and oranges, roll them on the counter pressing with the heel on your palm for a few seconds.
4. Make a healthy refreshing summer snack by freezing grapes.
5. To make ginger easier to grate make sure to freeze it first.
6. When zesting citrus fruit run the fruit diagonally across the grater not up and down.
7. A fast way to slice cherry tomatoes is to place them between two plastic container lids with very low sides and cut between them.
8. Refrigerate strawberries as soon as you get them home and eat them within 24 hours. For every hour left at room temperature they lose flavor.
9. When buying strawberries make sure that they are fully ripe, they will not ripen after they are picked. The small one is the most flavorful.
10. To get fluffy and flaky biscuits make sure the butter is very cold and do not overwork the dough.
11. Use your favorite biscuit dough to make dumplings.
12. When cutting biscuit dough with a cutter: *Do Not* twist the cutter, it will seal the edges and your biscuits will not grow and puff up as they should.
13. To test the freshness of an egg, place it in a bowl of cold salted water. If the egg sinks it is fresh, if it floats - better not use it!
14. To give a flavor boost to poached eggs, poach them in broth.
15. When poaching eggs add a teaspoon of white vinegar to the simmering water to prevent it from becoming a mess.
16. To reach full volume when beaten, egg whites need to be at room temperature.
17. You can tell fresh shellfish by its smell. It should smell like the ocean.
18. When buying oysters make sure they are all tightly closed.
19. Don't discard shrimp shells and heads. Save them and use them to make the best seafood stock in the world.
20. An easy way to make sure there are no shells in your crab meat is to spread the meat on a pan and put it under the broiler for about 10 seconds. Any shells remaining will turn red and you can easily pick them out.
21. Beluga is the most prized caviar in the world and it comes from the beluga sturgeon in the Caspian Sea.
22. Put a damp kitchen towel under the cutting board to keep it from sliding around.
23. Do not pour used oil down the drain or you will need to soon call your plumber.

24. Always hand-wash your chef's knives. Dishwasher high heat may ruin them.
25. To keep ants away from your sugar container add a few garlic cloves to it.
26. To get squeaky clean dishes add a little white vinegar to your dishwasher's rinse compartment.
27. Remove onion and garlic smells from your cutting board by sprinkling it with coarse salt and rubbing it with the cut side of a lemon.
28. Always use plastic cutting boards for meat, chicken and fish. Wash it with hot water and soap after each use.
29. Use silicone muffin cups for baking muffins, cupcakes and brownies to avoid having to grease and clean your pan.
30. To get a crispy golden crust around your quesadillas and grilled cheese sandwiches cook them in a cast iron skillet or griddle.
31. A Coulis is a strained puree of berries. A Concasse is peeled, seeded and chopped tomatoes.
32. Whenever working with phyllo dough make sure to keep the sheets moist by covering with a damp towel.
33. A good alternative to cheesecloth is a clean nylon stocking.
34. Store flour, shelled nuts and butter in the freezer for longer shelf life.
35. Store an open box of baking soda in your refrigerator to neutralize odors.
36. Honey is the only food that does not spoil allowing you to keep it as long as you like.
37. To make your own flavored oil and vinegars simply push some of your favorite herbs or citrus peel into each bottle and let them sit a few weeks.
38. Extra Virgin Olive Oil is the finest olive oil you can get and it comes from the first pressing of the olives.
39. Store delicate fresh herbs (dill and parsley) in the refrigerator in a glass of water covered with a plastic bag. Change the water every 2 days.
40. Keep fresh basil in a glass of water at room temperature, out of direct sunlight.
41. Always add fresh basil and dill at the end of cooking, just before removing from the flame, or they will lose their aroma.
42. Never use dried parsley, basil or chives - they have no flavor.
43. Chop your herbs just before using them to get the best flavor.
44. Store all your dried herbs and spices in a tight container in a cool dark place for up to six months.
45. A long, long time ago peppercorns were more valuable than gold.
46. Wrap celery in aluminum foil and store in the refrigerator to make it keep longer.
47. Best way to store vegetables is in the refrigerator wrapped in wax paper.
48. When buying mushrooms look for the lighter, dry ones otherwise you end up paying for water.

49. To rehydrate sun dried tomatoes or dried mushrooms, cover them with hot stock, water or wine and let them soak for 20 minutes.
50. Most of the heat in chili peppers is in the membranes and the seeds. In addition, the smaller the chili the hotter it is.
51. Snacking on celery burns up more calories than it contains.
52. Bend the asparagus spears until they snap to get rid of the tough part.
53. Leeks are grown partly underground (this is how they stay white) so make sure to wash them very well.
54. You can wash your mushrooms, preferably just before using. It has been proven that they absorb virtually no liquid even when left in a bowl of water for a couple of hours.
55. For crispy french fries, let the cut potatoes sit in ice cold water for at least one hour.
56. Corn on the cob has a sweeter, herbaceous flavor when cooked in the husks.
57. Garlic is a great antibiotic and in WWII was used as Russian penicillin.
58. Rub your hands with lemon and salt to remove garlic flavor.
59. Freshen up your breath after eating garlic or onions by chewing on a parsley sprig.
60. Store your garlic at room temperature and make sure to never burn it or it will turn bitter. If there are green sprigs attached to it, it means it is too old.
61. Remove the root of an onion before slicing or dicing to avoid Tears.
62. Store onions in a paper bag in a cool dry area for up to 6 months. Another cool way to store them is in clean pantyhose tying a knot after each onion. Whenever you need to use one just cut above the knot.
63. To get super fluffy mashed potatoes, use a potato ricer.
64. To season your pasta, the pasta water should taste like sea water. Always add the salt after the water comes to a boil.
65. To get a silky and creamy risotto make sure to stir often, never let the rice dry out completely, and use hot stock so you do not shock the rice grains with a cold liquid.
66. Do not rinse pasta, the starches help the sauce stick to the noodles.
67. The spinach pasta you bought the other day gets its color from chlorophyll.
68. When baking pizza at home - use a pizza stone. It will give you the closest result to a wood burning pizza oven.
69. Bruschetta is a thick slice of grilled crusty bread, rubbed with a garlic clove and drizzled with some olive oil and maybe some toppings. Crostini are a tiny more delicate version of bruschetta.
70. Panini is the Italian word for sandwich.
71. When grilling meats or vegetables make sure to drizzle them with a little olive oil on each side so they won't stick to the grill.
72. To get perfectly crispy skin on your chicken or turkey, make sure to dry off the bird very well before roasting.

73. Always allow a roast, steak to rest for 10 minutes after cooking for the juices to redistribute.
74. Make sure to soak wooden skewers in cold water for about 20 minutes before using them on a grill to prevent burning.
75. Never cut into meat to check for doneness or the juices will escape and the meat will dry out.
76. Brine does not tenderize meat or poultry, however it does give it flavor and helps it stay moist while cooking.
77. When shaping meatballs make sure to dampen your hands with cold water whenever you notice they start to stick.
78. When making burgers keep in mind that the leaner the ground beef the more dry the burger.
79. When grilling, cook your meat over a medium flame so it does not dry out.
80. If you like crispy bacon, purchase the thinnest cut you can find and bake it in the oven at 400F. The thinner the bacon the crispier it gets.
81. To make bacon and pancetta easy to slice/dice, put it in the freezer for 20 minutes.
82. Always simmer your soups and stews. Never boil them or they will become cloudy.
83. To flavor long cooking stews add a simple bouquet garnish made out of: Parsley sprigs, thyme, and bay leaves.
84. If you over salt a soup or stew add a whole potato and it will absorb the salt. If it is still salty dilute it with a little water.
85. To puree silky smooth soups and sauce use a hand held blender, much easier than transferring liquids to a food processor or blender.
86. To make clear ice cubes, heat up the water before pouring it in the ice cube trays. That will drive out the air which is what makes the ice cubes cloudy.
87. To make perfectly whipped cream, make sure to start with chilled heavy whipping cream and to chill your whisk and bowl in the freezer for 15 minutes.
88. Use lemonade, punch or coffee to make flavored ice cubes. This way your drink will not be diluted with water on a hot summer day.
89. To make grating soft cheese easier (mozzarella, fontina and cheddar) - pop the cheese blocks in the freezer for 10-15 minutes before grating.
90. Make cute gelato and frozen yogurt serving bowls out of citrus halves by scooping out the flesh.
91. *DO NOT* reheat coffee, it will become bitterer.
92. To get really white rice, add some freshly squeezed lemon juice to the water.
93. For deeper flavors and aromas you should always decant red wine.
94. To make cool chocolate shavings just use a vegetable peeler.
95. White chocolate is not really white chocolate unless it contains cocoa butter.

96. Good quality chocolate should have a smooth shiny surface.
97. Make your own cinnamon sugar by combining 1/2 cup of sugar with 1 1/2 to 2 tablespoons ground cinnamon.
98. Make your own vanilla sugar by adding a couple of used vanilla pods to the container.
99. Make your own peanut butter by chopping peanuts with a little peanut oil and a pinch of sea salt in your food processor.
100. To soften brown sugar, simply place some orange peels or a dry piece of bread in the bag/box overnight.
101. When you shake a coconut next to your ear you should be able to hear the water moving inside.