

Recipes for
From Italy with Love – An Evening of Italian Delights

Hors d'oeuvres:

Sausage Bites with Green Grapes

¼ cup extra virgin olive oil
1 pound sweet or spicy Italian sausage, cut into ½ -inch pieces
½ cup green seedless grapes
½ cup red seedless grapes
Salt and freshly ground pepper

In a large skillet over medium-high heat, warm the olive oil. Add the sausage and sauté until well-browned on all sides. Lower the heat to medium; add 1/4 cup of water and cook until the sausage is cooked through, about 10 to 12 minutes. Add the grapes and sauté for 2 minutes, just to heat the grapes. Season with salt and pepper and serve. I used skewers for presentation. Serves 4

Grilled Zucchini Rolls with Lemon Ricotta

1 ½ pounds fresh ricotta cheese
Zest of 2 lemons, finely chopped
Pinch of red pepper flakes
2 ½ tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil, plus extra
Salt and freshly ground pepper
2 large zucchini
Baby Arugula for garnish

To make the lemon ricotta: In a large mixing bowl, mix the ricotta with zest, red pepper flakes and olive oil and add salt and pepper to taste. Mix until well blended.

Heat a grill or grill pan. Using a mandoline or Y-shaped vegetable peeler, make 12 thin, lengthwise slices of zucchini about 1/8th inch thick. Brush zucchini slices lightly with olive oil and grill approximately 30 seconds or until zucchini is soft and grill-marked. Remove to a rack and let cool.

Lay grilled zucchini strips on a flat surface. Add approximately 1 tablespoon of the ricotta mixture to one end of the strip and roll up. Garnish with baby Arugula. If need be, you can use long chives to tie the rolls so they stay together. Serves 4



Creamed Vegetables and Cheese in Puff Pastry Cups

1 large carrot, peeled and grated
1 tablespoon olive oil, plus extra
½ pound cremini mushrooms, quartered
Salt and freshly ground pepper
1 cup frozen peas
12 frozen pre-baked puff pastry shells
5 tablespoons butter
4 tablespoons flour
1½ cups milk
2 tablespoons freshly grated parmesan cheese
Freshly grated nutmeg
12 parsley leaves for garnish

Preheat the oven to 400-degrees. Place the grated carrots in a bowl, set aside. In a skillet over medium heat, warm 1 tablespoon of olive oil. Add the mushrooms and season with salt and pepper. Cover and cook for 10 minutes or until the liquids are absorbed. Place in a bowl, set aside. Meanwhile, bring a small pot of water to a boil; add salt and the peas and cook for 7 minutes, until tender, but firm. Drain and place in a bowl, drizzle with olive oil and set aside.

Turn off the oven. Arrange the shells on a baking sheet and place in the oven until warmed through. Meanwhile, melt the butter in a pot over low heat. Add the flour; and cook for 1 minute, stirring constantly, until a smooth paste forms. Pour in the milk in batches, whisking with each addition. Whisk in the cheese, season with salt and pepper and add a pinch of nutmeg. When all the milk has been added, cook for two minutes or just until thick. Distribute the sauce among the bowls containing the carrots, peas and mushrooms. Remove the pastry shells from the oven and fill with the creamed vegetables. Garnish with parsley. Serves 4



Amuse-Bouche:

Watermelon Squares with Aged Balsamic Vinegar

About ½ pound seedless red or yellow watermelon flesh
Aged balsamic vinegar, for garnishing

Cut the watermelon into six to eight 1 ½ inch cubes

Use a small melon baller to remove a scoop of flesh from one side of each of the watermelon cubes, creating a small cavity for the vinegar.

To serve, place a watermelon cube, cavity side up, on each of 6 or 8 small plates.

Garnish by drizzling the aged balsamic vinegar into the cavity. Serves six to eight

Appetizer Course:

Grandma's Original Antipasto Platter

One pound of cooked shrimp (any size you want) whole or cut up

Two tins of anchovies

Roasted peppers (use fresh or store jarred, cut in slices)

Marinated artichokes hearts (store jarred) cut in slices

Olives (large/small green with pimento/pitted black olives/any size/in oil or brine)

Pepperoncini (use about a handful, remove stem and core, slice up)

Capers (sprinkle about two tbsp around platter)

Celery, sliced very thin, about ½ cup, sprinkle around platter

Radish's, about 4, sliced very thin, placed around platter

Red onion sliced very thin, use as topping in rings around platter

Salt and Pepper

Red wine vinegar (sprinkle lightly)

Good Olive Oil, sprinkle lightly

1. Buy enough peppers - fresh or jarred, red, yellow and green, all roasted, to cover your platter (14" dish). Slice the peppers lengthwise. Arrange the pepper slices around platter; next do the same with the anchovies. Now add shrimp, artichokes, pepperoncini, capers, celery, radishes, and olives. Now top with rings of red onion, season with a little salt and pepper, then drizzle some red wine vinegar over and top with good olive oil. Wrap tightly in plastic wrap and refrigerate for several hours. The longer it sits in the refrigerator the better it tastes. Serves 4 to 6

Soup Course:

Stracciatella Soup with Tiny Meatballs

5 cups beef broth, divided

4 eggs

1 tablespoon parsley, finely chopped

Salt

½ teaspoon freshly ground white pepper

½ cup freshly grated Pecorino or Romano cheese

Mini meatballs, part beef, pork and veal

In a stock pot over medium heat bring 4 cups of the broth to a boil. In a bowl combine the eggs and parsley, seasoning with a pinch of the salt and white pepper; and whisk. Add the Pecorino and/or Romano cheese and the remaining 1 cup of cold broth, and whisk. Add the egg mixture to the boiling broth and cook for 3 minutes, whisking constantly. Pour into heated bowls and serve immediately. (Note: we purchased mini meat balls (beef, pork and veal) from the Italian market, heated in some broth and just prior to serving we centered three in each soup bowl.) Serves 4

Salad Course:

Sweet Orange and Strawberry Pyramids with Mint

½ cup sugar, divided

4 oranges, peeled and sliced ¼ inch thick

24 strawberries, washed and hulled, sliced crosswise ¼ inch thick, reserve 4 whole strawberries or top garnish

Juice of 2 – 3 blood oranges

Fresh mint to garnish

In a saucepan bring ¼ cup sugar and ½ cup water to a boil for 2 minutes. Remove from the heat and let cool. Place a large orange slice on each plate and top with some strawberry slices. Repeat twice more using smaller orange slices each time and top the pyramid with a whole strawberry. Pour some of the syrup over each pyramid and refrigerate for 1 hour.

In a saucepan over medium heat, bring the blood orange juice and remaining ¼ cup of sugar to a boil for 2 minutes. Remove from heat and let cool. Remove the pyramids from the refrigerator. Pour some of the blood orange sauce on each plate and serve, garnished with mint. Serves 4



Intermezzo:

Green Apple Sorbet

This was a commercial purchased sorbet from a Gourmet Ice Cream Shop. You can use any good quality commercial sorbet or you can make your own.

Entrée:

Quail with Balsamic Roasted Figs in Prosciutto

24 Fresh Black Mission figs
2 tablespoons good balsamic vinegar, plus extra
8 thin slices good quality Prosciutto
8 boneless quail, about 4 to 5 ounces each
Salt and freshly ground pepper
¼ cup extra-virgin olive oil, plus extra

Serves 4

Prepare the roasted figs: Preheat the oven to 400-degrees. Remove the stems from the figs and place them in a large ovenproof skillet with the balsamic vinegar. Toss and warm them on the stove over medium heat. Place the skillet in the oven for 5 minutes. Remove the figs from the oven, and set them aside to cool. Raise the oven temperature to 450-degrees.

Wrap the figs. Cut each slice of Prosciutto in half to obtain 16 slices. Lay the slices on a flat work surface and place a roasted fig on each one. Wrap the figs tightly in the Prosciutto and set aside.

Prepare the quail. Wash each quail and pat dry with paper towels. Using a sharp, heavy knife, remove the wing joint from each quail. Pull the wing away from the quail and carefully chop it off, leaving the first joint attached to the body. Place two Prosciutto-wrapped figs in the cavity of each quail. Make two small incisions in the loose flap of skin over the cavity. Cross the legs, and then tuck them into the incisions to secure them.

Season each quail with salt and pepper. In a large skillet over medium-high heat, warm the olive oil. Add the quail, breast side down, and sear until well browned. Turn and continue until the quail is brown on all sides. (You will have to do this in batches.) As they finish browning, transfer to a roasting pan. Place the roasting pan in the oven and bake the quail for 5 minutes. Remove the quail from the oven, and let rest.

To serve – slice 4 of the quail in half and arrange on a plate. Place a whole quail on each plate and spoon some of the extra roasted figs around. Drizzle with olive oil and

balsamic vinegar, and serve. (Note: we served ours on a bed of soft polenta with some sautéed broccolini on each side of the quail.)



Dessert:

Sicilian Cannoli and Almond Apricot Biscotti

Sicilian Cannoli:

- 1 pound fresh ricotta, drained
- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup confectioners' sugar, plus extra for garnish
- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup assorted candied fruit (lemon, oranges, and cherries, chopped/divided)
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup semisweet chocolate, finely chopped, plus extra for garnish
- 1 tablespoon orange-flower water
- 12 pre-packaged cannoli shells (We got ours from Whole Foods Bakery)

In a bowl, combine the ricotta with the confectioners' sugar, $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of the candied fruit, the chocolate and orange-flower water and mix until the mixture is smooth. Spoon the mixture into a pastry bag and pipe into the cannoli shells. Sprinkle the remaining $\frac{1}{4}$ cup candied fruit and some chopped chocolate over the filling at the edges of the cannoli. Arrange the cannoli on a platter and set aside in the refrigerator for 1 hour. To serve, dust with confectioners' sugar. Serves 4



Almond Apricot Biscotti:

- 2- $\frac{3}{4}$ cups sifted all purpose flour
- 1- $\frac{1}{2}$ cups sugar
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup (1 stick) chilled unsalted butter, cut into pieces
- 2- $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp baking powder
- 1 tsp salt
- 1 tsp ground ginger

1-2/3 cups whole almonds, toasted
3-1/2 ounces imported white chocolate (I use Ghirardelli white chocolate)
2 large eggs
1/4 cup plus 1 Tbsp. apricot- flavored brandy
2 tsp almond extract
6 ounces dried apricots diced

Line an 18x12x1-inch cookie sheet with foil. Butter and flour foil. Combine first 6 ingredients in processor; process until fine meal forms. Add white chocolate and process until finely chopped. Add toasted almonds and chop coarsely, using 6 to 8 on/off turns.

Beat eggs, brandy and extract to blend in large bowl. Add flour mixture and apricots and stir until moist dough forms. Drop dough by spoonfuls in three 12-inch long strips on prepared sheet, spacing evenly. Moisten fingertips and shape each dough strip into 2-inch wide log. Refrigerate until dough is firm, about 30 minutes.

Bake on the center rack in a preheated 350-degree oven until logs are golden, about 30 minutes. Transfer sheet to rack and cool to handle. Reduce oven temperature to 300-degrees. Carefully remove logs from pan and transfer to work surface. Using a heavy sharp knife, cut each log crosswise into 3/4- inch-wide slices; arrange about half of the cookies cut side down on cookie sheet; return to oven and bake for approximately 10 minutes. Gently turn cookies over and bake 10 minutes longer. Transfer cookies to racks. Repeat baking with remaining cookies. Cool cookies completely.

NOTE: can be prepared two weeks ahead, store in airtight container at room temperature, or they can be frozen for up to 2 months in zip lock bags.