

The Food and Wine of Italy

Roasted Vegetable Paninis with Balsamic Onions

Mixed Greens, Prosciutto and Goat Cheese with Pear Dressing

Lasagne di San Gimignano

Cheesecake with Mixed Berry Topping

Roasted Vegetable and Fontina Paninis with Balsamic Onions

4 tablespoons oil
8 slices Italian Bread
8 sliced sharp provolone
1 large roasted pepper, thinly sliced
8 slices grilled zucchini
½ cup balsamic onions
Salt and pepper

1. Preheat panini maker to medium-high heat.
2. Brush one side of bread with remaining olive oil. Lay ½ of bread, oil side down, on a cutting board. Place one piece of provolone on each piece of bread. Top each with the zucchini, peppers and onions. Finish with second piece of cheese. Place second piece of bread on each, oil side up.
3. Place sandwiches in panini maker and grill until bread is golden brown and cheese has melted. Serve.

Mixed Green Salad with Pear Dressing

1 Anjou pear
White wine, as needed
1 teaspoon Dijon
¾ cup vegetable oil
Honey, as needed
Salt and pepper

1 bag spring mix
½ bag croutons
¼ pound prosciutto, thinly sliced

1. Peel, half and core the pear. Place in a small saucepan and cover with wine. Bring to a simmer and cook until the pear is completely tender and the wine has reduced slightly. Remove the pear and continue to reduce the wine until ¼ cup remains. Reserve. Place the pear in a food processor and puree until smooth. Strain and set aside.
2. Add the pear, reserved wine and Dijon to the bowl of a food processor; pulse to combine. With the machine running, slowly add the oil. Season with honey, salt and pepper. Set aside.
3. Add greens and croutons to large mixing bowl. Toss in enough dressing to coat the leaves. Season with salt and pepper. Divide salad among serving plates, top with prosciutto and drizzle with additional dressing. Serve.

To roast the pear: Cut in half and place in shallow pan with ½ cup white wine and ½ cup of water. Roast at 350 until tender.

Lasagne di San Gimignano

Bolognese Sauce

¼ cup olive oil
3 ounces sliced pancetta, finely chopped
1 medium onion, finely chopped
1 large carrot, finely chopped
1 celery rib, finely chopped
2 garlic cloves, chopped
2 pounds ground beef chuck (not lean)
1-½ cups dry white wine
1-½ cups whole milk
¼ cup tomato paste
1-½ teaspoon thyme leaves

Fresh Pasta

2-¼ cups unbleached all-purpose flour
4 large eggs
1 teaspoon salt

Bechamel

2 tablespoons butter
2 tablespoons flour
2 cups whole milk
Freshly grated nutmeg
Salt and pepper

1. Make the Bolognese: Heat oil in a Dutch oven over medium heat until it shimmers. Cook pancetta, onion, carrot, celery, and garlic, stirring occasionally, until vegetables are golden and softened, 12 to 15 minutes. Add beef and cook, stirring occasionally and breaking up any lumps, until meat is no longer pink, 6 to 10 minutes. Stir in wine, milk, tomato paste and thyme. Season with salt and pepper. Simmer, uncovered, stirring occasionally, until most of liquid has evaporated but sauce is still moist, about 1 hour.
2. Make the Pasta: Add ingredients to the bowl of a stand mixer and mix until dough begins to form a ball. Continue kneading dough until smooth and elastic, about 6 to 8 minutes. Wrap dough in plastic wrap and let stand, refrigerated, 30 minutes. Divide the dough into eight pieces. Using a pasta machine, roll the dough into thin sheets. Cover and set aside.
3. Make the Bechamel: Bring a saucepan to medium heat and add the butter. When melted, add the flour and cook, stirring constantly, for two minutes. Add the milk in a steady stream, whisking constantly, until completely incorporated. Bring to a boil, reduce to a simmer and cook just long enough to thicken. Season with nutmeg, salt and pepper.
4. Assemble and Bake: Preheat oven to 375 degrees. Spread a thin layer of Bolognese on the bottom of a 10-inch by 14-inch casserole. Put a layer of fresh pasta over top. Layer a third of the remaining bolognese sauce, then a third of the bechamel sauce. Sprinkle with grated Parmesan. Repeat two more times. Bake lasagna on the middle rack of the oven until bubbly and golden on top. Let stand at least 10 minutes before serving.

Cheesecake with Mixed Berry Topping

Crust

1-½ cups graham cracker crumbs
½ cup sugar
6 tablespoons (¾ stick) unsalted butter, melted

Filling

1 cup strawberries, strained
3 8-ounce packages cream cheese, room temperature
1-¼ cups sugar
1 teaspoon vanilla extract
4 large eggs

¼ cup fresh lemon juice

¼ cup sugar

2 cups mixed berries

1. Preheat oven to 325 degrees. Lightly butter 9-inch springform pan. Stir cracker crumbs and sugar in medium bowl to blend. Add melted butter and stir until evenly moistened. Press crumb mixture firmly onto bottom of prepared pan. Bake until crust is set, about 12 minutes. Cool completely.
2. Beat cream cheese, sugar, and vanilla in large bowl until smooth. Add eggs 1 at a time, beating well after each addition. Add mango puree and beat until well blended. Pour filling over crust in pan.
3. Bake cake until set and puffed and golden around edges, about 1 hour 25 minutes. Cool cake 1 hour. Refrigerate until chilled.
4. Add lemon juice and sugar to a small saucepan. Bring to a simmer and cook until sugar is melted. Pour over berries and let stand until berries are softened. Serve with cheesecake.

Beef Brisket

2 tablespoons olive oil
1 3-pound beef brisket
2 large onions, thinly sliced
4 clove garlic, peeled and sliced
1 cup dry red wine
½ can tomato paste
2 bay leaves
2 cups rich beef stock
Fresh thyme
Salt and pepper

1. Bring a pressure cooker to medium high heat and add the oil. Season the beef with salt and pepper and cook, turning, until nicely browned. Remove from pan.
2. Add the onions and garlic and cook until nicely softened and beginning to brown. Add the wine and cook until reduced by half. Stir in the tomato paste.
3. Add back the beef; add bay leaves and enough stock to come half-way up the side of the brisket. Bring to a simmer; lock down lid and bring to high pressure over high heat. Reduce heat to stabilize and cook 1 hour.
4. Remove pressure cooker from heat and pressure reduce. Remove lid; slice and serve.

Sausage Rolls with Red Pepper Coulis

1 tablespoon oil
1 pepper chopped
2 plum tomatoes chopped
2 cloves garlic smashed
2 shallots chopped
1 tablespoon butter
1 cup cream
Salt and pepper

2 tablespoons olive oil
1 pound sweet or hot Italian sausage
1 large onion, diced
1 package puff pastry
1 egg yolk, mixed with 1 tablespoon of water

1. Bring a sauté pan to medium-low heat and add the oil. Cook vegetables until completely tender but not browned. Add to a food processor and puree until smooth. Add cream; season with salt and pepper.
2. Add the olive oil to the sauté pan and bring up to medium-high heat. Add the sausage and onion and cook, breaking up sausage, until nicely browned. Add the wine and cook until liquid is evaporated. Transfer to a food processor and pulse until finely chopped. Let cool.
3. Preheat oven to 400 degrees. On a lightly floured board, roll out each sheet of puff pastry to a 12-inch by 15-inch sheet. Cut in half crosswise. Divide sausage among the pieces and roll up into a log (brush top edge with egg wash to seal). Pinch the ends closed and transfer to a parchment lined baking sheet. Brush rolls with additional egg wash. Bake until golden, about 15 minutes. Let cool, cut and serve with coulis.