

MARINATED MUSHROOMS

- 3 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil, plus 1 tablespoon for finishing
- 1/8 teaspoon red pepper flakes
- Table salt
- 1 pound cremini mushrooms or white button mushrooms (or a mixture of both), cleaned, left whole if small, halved if medium, quartered if large
- 2 tablespoons juice from 1 lemon, plus 1 tablespoon for finishing
- 1 medium clove garlic, sliced very thin
- 1 large shallot, chopped fine (about 1/4 cup)
- 1/4 small red bell pepper, chopped fine (about 1/4 cup)
- 1 teaspoon minced fresh thyme leaves
- Ground black pepper

Heat 3 tablespoons oil, red pepper flakes, and 1/2 teaspoon salt in 12-inch skillet over medium-high heat until shimmering but not smoking. Add mushrooms and 2 tablespoons lemon juice; cook, stirring frequently, until mushrooms release moisture, moisture evaporates, and mushrooms have browned around edges, about 10 minutes. Spread mushrooms in single layer on large plate or rimmed baking sheet; cool to room temperature, about 20 minutes. When cooled, transfer mushrooms to medium bowl, leaving behind any juices. Stir garlic, shallot, and bell pepper into mushrooms, cover with plastic wrap, and refrigerate at least 6 or up to 24 hours.

Before serving, allow mushrooms to stand at room temperature about 1 hour. Stir in remaining 1 tablespoon olive oil, 1 tablespoon lemon juice, and thyme and adjust seasonings with salt and pepper just before serving.

TUSCAN WHITE BEAN SOUP

- 2 tablespoons vegetable oil
- 6 ounces pancetta, minced (bacon can be substituted)
- 3 medium onions, minced
- 8 medium garlic cloves, minced or pressed through a garlic press (about 8 teaspoons)
- Salt
- 3 cups water
- 3 cups low-sodium chicken broth
- 1 pound dried cannellini beans (2 1/4 cups), picked over, rinsed, soaked overnight, and drained (canned beans can be substituted if desired).
- 1 Parmesan cheese rind (optional)
- 2 bay leaves
- 1/2 teaspoon red pepper flakes
- 1 sprig fresh rosemary
- ground black pepper
- grated Parmesan cheese ((for serving, optional)
- extra-virgin olive oil (for serving, optional)

Heat the oil in a 12-inch nonstick skillet over medium heat until shimmering but not smoking. Add the pancetta and cook until golden, about 10 minutes. Stir in the onions, garlic, and 1/4 teaspoon salt and cook until the onions are softened and lightly browned, 10 to 15 minutes.

Transfer the pancetta and onion mixture to the slow cooker insert and stir in the water, broth, beans, Parmesan rind (if using), bay leaves, and pepper flakes until evenly combined. Cover and cook on low until the beans are tender, 10 to 12 hours. (Alternatively, cover and cook on high for 8 to 9 hours.)

Add the rosemary sprig, cover, and continue to cook until lightly fragrant, about 15 minutes longer. Remove and discard the bay leaves, rosemary, and Parmesan rind (if using). Season the soup with salt and pepper to taste, and serve, sprinkling individual portions with the Parmesan and olive oil (if desired).

ITALIAN ROMAINE SALAD

Dressing

1 or 2 medium lemons (or 1/4 cup prepared lemon juice)
2 cloves garlic
2 Tbs olive oil
1/4 tsp salt
1/4 tsp pepper

Salad

1 large bunch or 2 small bunches romaine lettuce
1 small red onion
1 cup pitted Kalamata olives or pitted jumbo ripe olives
1 jar (6 oz) marinated artichoke hearts, undrained
1/2 cup seasoned croutons
1/3 cup shredded Parmesan cheese

Roll each lemon on the countertop with the palm of your hand, using gentle pressure (this will help release the juices). Cut 1 lemon in half; squeeze juice from each half. Use enough lemons until you have 1/4 cup lemon juice. Peel and finely chop the garlic. In a tightly covered jar or container, shake lemon juice, garlic, oil, salt, and pepper.

Remove any limp outer leaves from the romaine and discard. Break remaining leaves off the core; rinse with cool water; and remove water with a salad spinner.

Peel the onion, slice, and separate into rings.

In a large bowl, place the Romaine, onion, olives, and artichoke hearts (with liquid). Shake the vinaigrette again to mix ingredients. Pour vinaigrette over the salad ingredients, and toss until evenly coated.

Sprinkle the croutons and cheese over the salad. Serve immediately.

LASAGNA WITH PORK SAUSAGE BOLOGNESE

Prep 45 minutes
Total 1 hour 30 minutes
8 to 10 servings

Ingredients

2 Tbs olive oil
2 cups chopped onions
½ cups diced carrot
1 Tbs fennel seeds, crushed in spice mill or in mortar with pestle
1 lb spicy Italian pork (or turkey) sausage
3 large garlic cloves, pressed
½ cup dry white wine
5 cups crushed tomatoes with added puree (from two 28-oz cans)
1 cup chopped fresh basil, divided
2 Tbs chopped fresh oregano
1 15-oz container whole-milk ricotta cheese
3 cups (packed coarsely grated whole-milk mozzarella cheese (12 oz)
1-1/4 cups freshly grated Parmesan cheese, divided
16 whole-grain lasagna noodles

Procedure:

Heat oil in large nonstick skillet over medium-high heat. Add onions, carrot, and fennel seeds; sauté 5 minutes. Add sausage and garlic; sauté until sausage is cooked through, breaking into pieces, 8 to 10 minutes. Add wine; boil 1 minute. Add tomatoes, ½ cup basil, and oregano. Bring to boil. Reduce heat; simmer until sauce thickens, about 10 minutes. Season with about 1/2 tsp salt. Pepper is optional.

Combine ricotta, mozzarella, 1 cup Parmesan, and ½ cup basil in medium bowl; stir to blend. Add water to bring to spreadable consistency. Divide into 4 bowls.

Cook noodles at gentle boil for 8 to 10 minutes. Pour into colander; run cold water over them; and place noodles individually on a single ply of paper towels.

Spread 2 cups sauce over bottom of 13x9x2-in. glass baking dish (or 13-1/2 x 9-5/8 x 2-3/4 inch foil lasagna pan). Cover with 4 noodles, arranging crosswise. Drop 1 bowl of cheese mixture by tablespoonsful; spread out. Top with 2 cups sauce. Repeat (noodles, cheese, sauce) 3 more times. Spread any remaining sauce on top. Sprinkle with 1/4 cup Parmesan.

Preheat oven to 375F. Bake lasagna uncovered until heated through and puffed, about 50 minutes. Let stand 10 to 15 minutes and serve.

AMARETTI

3 cups blanched slivered almonds (or 2 cups almond flour)
1-1/2 cups white sugar
3 egg whites
1 tsp almond extract

Preheat oven to 300F. Line baking sheets with parchment paper. If using slivered almonds, grind the almonds into a fine meal using a food processor. Using a stand mixer, mix almond meal, sugar, egg whites, and almond extract. Mix until a smooth dough forms.

Using a teaspoon, place well-rounded spoonful of dough in to prepared baking sheets. Cookies should be at least 1-1/2 inches apart. Bake in preheated oven for 20 to 30 minutes. Cookies should be golden. Allow cookies to cool completely on the paper before removing. Store in a dry place.