

RUBY'S ITALIAN FEAST DINNER

Minestrone (Italian Vegetable Soup)

- 3 tablespoons olive oil
- 1 cup minced white onion
- 2 garlic cloves, minced
- 1 celery stalk chopped
- Italian cut green beans (a cup)
- 1 zucchini, cut in half and sliced
- 4 cups vegetable broth (low sodium)
- 4 tomatoes, skinned, seeded, and chopped (or, 1 can diced)
- 2 carrots diced or shredded
- 1-2 cans kidney beans, drained (if using raw beans, soak overnight and simmer for two hours)
- 1-2 cans garbanzo or navy beans, drained (see above)
- 3 cups hot water
- 1 ½ teaspoon oregano
- ½ teaspoon chopped fresh thyme
- ½ cup small pasta shells
- 1 tablespoon chopped parsley
- Salt and freshly ground pepper
- 3 tablespoons grated Parmesan cheese plus extra to serve

In large skillet or six-quart stockpot, sauté onions, garlic, celery, green beans, and zucchini in the olive oil for about five minutes until soft and onions start to turn translucent. Add vegetable broth, tomatoes, beans, carrots, hot water, and spices. Simmer for twenty minutes.

Add pasta, and cook for an additional twenty minutes or until desired consistency. Add parsley and seasoning to taste. Stir in Parmesan.

Serves: 6-8

Ravioli Di Spinaci E Ricotta **(Spinach and Ricotta Ravioli—Ruby Added Sausage)**

- ½ pound spinach leaves
- ½ cup ricotta cheese
- ¼ cup grated Parmesan cheese
- 1 egg, beaten
- Ground nutmeg
- Cooked mild ground Italian sausage, seasoned with oregano and basil
- Salt and pepper

Wash the spinach leaves, remove the stalks. Put into saucepan, add ½ teaspoon olive oil, cover, and cook over low heat for five minutes. Drain and press firmly to squeeze out excess moisture and chop.

Put the ricotta, Parmesan cheese, and sausage in a bowl, and mix in the chopped spinach. Add salt and pepper to taste, ground nutmeg, and beaten egg, mixing well until a paste forms.

Cut the pasta dough in half (pasta preparation below). Form dough into a rectangle, and roll through pasta machine two or three times at its widest setting. Reduce the setting and roll dough again two or three times. Continue until the machine is at its narrowest setting. Dough should be paper-thin, about ⅛-inch thick. Do same with the other half.

Put teaspoons of the ricotta, spinach, and sausage filling over one piece at intervals about two inches apart. Cover with other sheet of pasta dough and press gently around each mound of filling. Using a pastry cutting wheel, cut the pasta into squares (or, use ravioli trays to form shape).

Cook the ravioli in boiling water for 4-5 minutes until they rise to the surface. Drain and serve with melted butter, sprinkled with fresh, torn sage leaves, Parmesan cheese, and sauce if preferred.

Serves: 4-6

Parmigiana Di Melanzane (Eggplant Parmesan)

- 3 lbs. eggplant
- ½ cup olive oil
- 1 onion, finely chopped
- 4 pounds tomatoes, skinned and chopped
- 3 fresh basil leaves, torn (or, 2 tablespoons dried basil)
- Salt, freshly ground black pepper
- 2-3 eggs, beaten
- 2 cups seasoned dry bread crumbs
- 1 cup grated parmesan cheese
- ½ pound Mozzarella cheese, thinly sliced

Slice eggplant in rounds (not lengthwise) about $\frac{1}{3}$ inch. Place a layer into colander and sprinkle with a little salt. Continue layering and salting all slices. Cover with a plate. Let stand for 30 minutes.

Make the tomato sauce: heat 4 tablespoons of olive oil and fry onion until soft and golden. Add the chopped tomatoes and basil, mix well, and simmer gently, uncovered, until reduces to a thick sauce. Season to taste with salt and pepper.

Rinse the eggplant in cold water to remove the salt. Dip each slice in beaten egg and dredge with breadcrumbs. Fry with a little olive oil until cooked and golden brown on both sides—about 2 minutes. Drain on absorbent paper. Oil baking dish and place layer of eggplant. Sprinkle with Parmesan cheese and cover with Mozzarella cheese slices. Spread some tomato sauce on top. Continue layering, ending with a layer of tomato sauce and Parmesan cheese.

Bake in preheated oven at 400 degrees for 25 to 30 minutes.

Serves: 4

Bruschetta **(Garlic Bread Topped with Tomato & Basil)**

- Slices of baguette French bread or Italian ciabatta bread
- 6 or 7 ripe plum tomatoes
- 2 garlic cloves, minced
- 1 tablespoon extra-virgin olive oil
- 1 teaspoon balsamic vinegar
- 6-8 fresh basil leaves, thinly sliced (stack, roll up, slice) or chopped
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper
- ¼ cup olive oil

Bring 2 quarts water to boil. Make shallow cuts in a cross pattern at the tip ends of the tomatoes. Once water comes to a boil, remove from heat, add tomatoes, blanch for 1 minute. Remove with a slotted spoon, and let sit until able to handle. Gently peel off the tomato skins. Cut out the stem base with paring knife. Cut tomatoes into halves or quarters and squeeze out most of juice and seeds. Preheat oven to 450 degrees.

Finely chop tomatoes, and place them in a medium bowl. Mix in the minced garlic, 1 tablespoon extra-virgin olive oil, and the balsamic vinegar. Stir in the thinly sliced basil, and add salt and pepper to taste.

Use a bread knife to slice the baguette on the diagonal, making half-inch thick slices. Brush one side with olive oil, and place that side down on a baking sheet. Place in oven, on the top rack. Toast for 5 to 6 minutes or until lightly browned around the edges.

Arrange toasted bread on platter, olive oil side up (helps create a temporary barrier so bread doesn't get soggy).

Place the tomato bruschetta mixture on the bread right before serving.

Add fresh mozzarella on top to taste.

Osso Buco Alla Milanese (Braised Shin of Veal)

- 4 slices of veal, about 2 ½ inches thick
- 1 onion, finely chopped
- ½ cup butter
- Flour for dusting
- 1 carrot, thinly sliced
- 3 tomatoes, skinned and chopped
- Salt and freshly ground pepper
- 2-3 sage leaves
- 2/3 cup dry white wine

For the Gremolata:

- 4 tablespoons finely chopped parsley
- 1 garlic clove, minced
- Finely grated peel of ½ lemon

Fry the onion in half the butter in a skillet until soft and golden. Dust the slices of veal with flour, and then fry them in same skillet, turning several times until they are golden brown on all sides.

Add the carrot, celery, and tomatoes. Season with salt and pepper and add sage leaves. Stir in wine, cover, and simmer gently for about an hour, or until veal is cooked and tender. Add a few tablespoons of water or a little more wine if the sauce evaporates too quickly.

While veal is cooking, prepare the gremolata. Mix together the parsley, garlic, and lemon peel in small bowl. Spread gremolata onto each piece of veal and cook for a few minutes. Transfer the veal to serving dish. Add a few tablespoons of water to skillet juices, bring to a boil, and mix together. Simmer until slightly reduced and thickened. Stir in the remaining butter and when melted, pour sauce over the veal.

Salsa Di Pomodoro (Tomato Sauce)

- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 1 onion, finely chopped
- 1 garlic clove, minced
- 2 pounds tomatoes, skinned and chopped
- Salt and freshly ground black pepper
- Pinch of sugar
- Few basil leaves, chopped

Heat olive oil in saucepan and add onion and garlic. Fry gently until soft and golden. Add tomatoes and cook gently for 10-15 minutes, until sauce thickens and reduces. Season with salt and pepper and pinch of sugar. To taste: add fresh cooked mushroom slices, finely chopped green pepper. Just before serving, stir in chopped basil.

Pasta Asciutta (Homemade Pasta)

- 2 ½ cups all-purpose flour
- ½ teaspoon of sea salt
- 3 eggs
- 1 tablespoon olive oil

Put flour and salt on a work surface. Make a well in the center and add the eggs. Using your fingertips or a fork, draw the flour in from the sides and mix well. Drizzle the olive oil and continue mixing until a soft dough forms. Turn the dough out on a lightly floured surface and knead well—until smooth.

Roll out the dough until elastic, smooth, and thin. Leave for about ten minutes to dry.