

BUCATINI WITH SHRIMP AND SPINACH SAUCE

I always have my go to pasta sauces, but every now and then I like to experiment. I had an extra bunch of spinach on hand, and I thought I'd play around with it to see if I could turn it into a tasty sauce. This worked on the first try. It's a great way to get everyone to eat their greens without any complaints.

INGREDIENTS (Serves 4)

1 lb medium sized shrimp, peeled and deveined

5 cloves garlic, minced

1 teaspoon red pepper flakes

$\frac{1}{4}$ cup + 5 tablespoons olive oil

1 lb bucatini

1 large onion, diced

1 bunch or bag of baby spinach, rinsed and dried – about 6 ounces

$\frac{1}{4}$ cup ricotta cheese

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup Parmesan, grated

3 anchovies

salt and pepper to taste

PREPARATION

In a small bowl, mix two cloves of minced garlic with a $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of olive oil. Season the shrimp with salt and pepper. Place the shrimp in a Ziploc with the garlic oil, $\frac{1}{2}$ of the red

pepper flakes, and marinate for 2-4 hours.

Bring four quarts of water and 1 tablespoon of salt up to a boil. Add in the buccatini and cook as per box instructions until al dente.

While the pasta is cooking, heat 2 tablespoons of the olive oil in a large skillet. Pour the shrimp and marinade onto the skillet. Cook the shrimp in the pan, turning them until they turn pink and firm, about two to three minutes each side. Set the shrimp aside.

Heat 1 more tablespoon of olive oil and add the onion, sautéing until it begins to brown, about 8 minutes. Add the remaining garlic and cook for one minute. Add the spinach and red pepper flakes and cook until the spinach is just slightly wilted, about two minutes.

Add the spinach mixture to a blender. Add in the remaining olive oil, ricotta, half of the Parmesan and all of the anchovies. Season to taste with salt and pepper. Blend until smooth.

Drain the pasta, reserving one cup of the liquid. Pour the spinach sauce back into the large saucepan and reheat on low. Add in $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of pasta water and stir. Add the pasta to the sauce and lightly toss. If too dry, slowly add some of the reserved pasta water until the sauce is at the consistency you like. (I usually end up using about $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of the pasta water in total.)

Serve in bowls. Place the shrimp on top. Garnish with the remaining Parmesan.

LAMB STEW GREEK STYLE

Looking for a new idea for your Easter lamb? Here's a hearty dish that got a thumbs up from my neighbors. I often use this cut of lamb for a cassoulet, but I wanted to try a different flavor profile. By simply changing some of the spices to a more Mediterranean leaning and subbing out orzo instead of beans, this transformed into a completely different dish. It's also a great meal if the family is coming over. You can make most of it the day before and just add the orzo 20 minutes before you're ready to serve. Now you'll have more time to spend with everyone at cocktail hour. (And no, those aren't mini-marshmallows on top in the picture. It's feta cheese!)

INGREDIENTS (Serves 6)

2 pounds lamb shoulder, fat trimmed, cut into 1" cubes

3 tablespoons olive oil

salt and pepper

$\frac{1}{4}$ cup flour

2 onions, sliced

1 large carrot, diced

2 ribs celery, diced

4 cloves garlic, minced

$\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon cinnamon

$\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon nutmeg

1 teaspoon oregano

1 teaspoon paprika

$\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon cayenne pepper

2 bay leaves

1 ½ cups white wine

1 28-ounce can fire roasted crushed tomatoes

1 cup orzo pasta

fresh parley, chopped for garnish

1 lemon, zested for garnish

Feta cheese, for garnish

PREPARATION

Generously season the lamb with salt and pepper. Dredge in flour, making sure to shake off any excess.

Add olive oil to a large Dutch oven over medium-high heat. Brown the lamb pieces, making sure not to crowd them. You may need to do them in batches. Each batch should take about 8 minutes to brown. Transfer the meat to a plate and set aside.

Add the onions, carrots and celery and sauté for six to eight minutes. Add the garlic, cinnamon, nutmeg, oregano, paprika, cayenne pepper and bay leaves and stir to combine for one minute. Season with salt and pepper.

Add the lamb back in along with the white wine and crushed tomatoes. Cover and bring to a boil and then reduce to a simmer for one-hour. (If you're making the day ahead, stop here. Let cool and refrigerate overnight. The next day, reheat by bringing back up to a boil and then reduce to a simmer.)

Add orzo to the pot, cover, and stir to combine. Allow to cook for twenty minutes. Remove the bay leaves.

When done, stir to combine.

Serve in bowls and garnish with parsley, lemon zest and feta

cheese.

GRILLED SALMON OVER FRIED RICE

I hate wasting food, so when I found some leftover rice, a half package of spinach and some other bits and pieces in the fridge, I knew I had the makings of a quick fried rice. I topped it with some grilled salmon and I had dinner on the table in less than thirty minutes. Quick, easy and yummy—enjoy!

INGREDIENTS (Serves 2)

MARINADE:

2 tablespoons soy sauce

1 tablespoon of mirin

1 teaspoon of fish sauce

1 tablespoon of maple syrup

2 pieces of salmon filet (6 oz each)

salt and pepper

RICE:

2 tablespoons olive oil, (plus 2 to cook salmon)

1 onion, diced

3 cloves garlic, minced

6 cremini mushrooms, sliced

1 cup cooked rice

1 tablespoons soy sauce

1 teaspoon of mirin

1/2 teaspoon of fish sauce

2 cups spinach

1 egg, beaten

salt and pepper to taste

Scallions for garnish

PREPARATION

Season the salmon filets with salt and pepper and place in a Ziploc bag. Combine the other marinade ingredients in a bowl. Pour into Ziploc bag and seal, making sure to let out the air. Massage the marinade around the fish. Place in refrigerator for two hours.

Heat a wok or a large skillet. Add two tablespoons of olive oil. Add onion and sauté until it begins to brown, about 6-8 minutes. Add in the mushrooms and garlic and cook for one minute. Add in the cooked rice, soy sauce, mirin and fish sauce and stir. Simmer for five minutes. Add the spinach and allow it to wilt down. Stir into rice mixture. Turn off heat.

Heat a grill pan on medium high. Add 2 tablespoons of olive oil and spread on grates with a paper towel. Place the salmon filets skin side up on the grill pan. Cover pan with a pot lid. Cook for 4 minutes. Flip salmon filets over, cover and cook for another 4 minutes. (There still should be a little pink on the salmon. If you like it well done, cook for six minutes each side).

While the salmon is cooking, reheat the rice. Add the beaten egg and combine with rice mixture. Season to taste with salt and pepper.

To serve, place rice in center of plate and top with salmon filet. Garnish with scallions.

CHEESY MASHED POTATOES

This recipe had me at “cheesy.” I’ve never been a big mashed potatoes fan until I had them with cheese. Although decadent, it’s worth the splurge once in awhile. I love to serve these as a side for steak or roast dishes. It’s also great to use the leftovers—if there are any—on top of a chicken and vegetable casserole. Enjoy!

INGREDIENTS (serves 8 – 10)

8 large Yukon gold potatoes (4 or 5 lbs)

2 teaspoons kosher salt

6 tablespoons butter

$\frac{1}{4}$ cup whole milk

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup Half and Half

$\frac{3}{4}$ cup grated parmesan

$\frac{3}{4}$ cup grated gruyere

chopped fresh parsley (for garnish)

red pepper flakes (for garnish)

PREPARATION

Peel potatoes (or leave skin on if you prefer). Cut into 1" squares and place in a large pot. Add enough cold water that the water line is 1-inch above the potatoes. Stir in one teaspoon of sea salt.

Turn the heat to high and bring to a boil. Reduce heat to medium and continue to cook for about 10 minutes or so until a fork can be inserted into the potatoes easily.

Drain out the water and then put the potatoes back in the pot and turn the heat to low for about one minute. This helps the remaining water evaporate. Shake the pot a few times so the potatoes don't stick.

In a small pot, add the milk and half and half. Melt the butter. As soon as the butter is completely melted, set aside until ready to use. Don't allow the milk to boil.

Mash the potatoes in the pot with a potato masher. Add in the melted butter and milk mixture, the two cheeses and one teaspoon of salt. Fold all the ingredients together until the liquid has been soaked up by the potatoes.

Taste the potatoes and re-season adding more salt if necessary.

Garnish with chopped parsley and red pepper flakes. Serve immediately.

MUSHROOM BARLEY SOUP

We're deep into soup season now, so I'm always looking for variations on a theme. Every week I make a big batch of bone broth and I'm always trying different ways to use it. My husband is a big barley and mushroom fan, so this one is for

him. Enjoy!

INGREDIENTS (serves 6-8)

1 cup of hulled barley

3 cups of water

2 tablespoons of olive oil

1 onion, sliced

1 cup of cooked chicken, turkey, or beef cubed

8 cremini mushrooms, sliced

3 cloves of garlic, minced

2 quarts of bone broth, turkey or chicken stock

1 teaspoon red pepper flakes

salt and freshly ground pepper

fresh dill for garnish

PREPARATION

Rinse the barley through a strainer. Place in a large pot and add the water. Add 1 teaspoon of salt. Bring up to boil, then down to a simmer. Simmer for 45 minutes, stirring occasionally. Strain out any remaining water and set aside.

Wipe out and dry the large pot. Heat 2 tablespoons of olive oil. Add the onion and sauté until translucent, about 7 minutes. Add the chicken, mushrooms and garlic and cook for another two minutes.

Add in the cooked barley, bone broth or stock, and red pepper flakes. Season to taste with salt and pepper. Bring to a boil and then simmer for 20 minutes.

Ladle the soup into bowls, garnish with a fresh dill.

GARLIC BREAD

Whenever I need a quick side dish that everyone loves, I default to garlic bread. It's great with steak or pasta dishes. I've also used it as the base for a really decadent sandwich.

Rather than melting butter, I like to infuse olive oil with minced garlic. I strain the oil before using to avoid eating raw garlic, yet the flavor remains.

INGREDIENTS (serves 6-8)

3 cloves of garlic, minced

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup olive oil

1 large baguette

salt

fresh thyme or chives for garnish (optional)

PREPARATION

Mix the minced garlic and olive oil in a bowl and let rest on counter for at least one hour. Then strain out flavored olive oil and discard the garlic.

Cut the baguette lengthwise in half. Generously brush the flavored oil on the soft side of the bread, allowing the oil to drip down into the holes. Lightly season with salt.

Place on a baking sheet and broil on high. Keep an eye on it

and remove once the edges start to brown. Depending upon your oven and how far away the bread is from the heating element, this can take between 30 seconds to two minutes. Don't walk away because it can easily burn.

Cut loaf into 2-inch sized pieces. Garnish with fresh thyme or chives.