

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.

SHOVEL IT!

There's nothing like a great big Brooklyn snowstorm. We used to be able to count on at least one big dump each season, but now these storms are far more infrequent here and less severe, no doubt due to global warming.

In the old days, I remember for a few wonderful hours, everything stopped as branches were laden with white powder and the streets emptied, creating a welcomed silence. I was mesmerized as the falling snowflakes stacked up on our windowsills, sealing us in our warm, cozy home.



As morning broke, cross-country skiers found their way to Prospect Park before the rush of kids descended with their sleds. Little kids made snow angels as snowballs flew across the fields. Well-dressed snowmen seemed to popup every few feet. Everything was beautiful—until it wasn't.



It wasn't long before the sanitation department plowed the streets, piling gray, dirty snow high against everyone's cars. I feared some of my older neighbors might give themselves heart attacks as they dug their cars out. As I shoveled our busy corner hoping to make a path for people, the sanitation guys seemed to take joy plowing me back in. When I was younger, I used to bat my eyes at them and occasionally they would lift up their shovel while passing, but I guess I've lost my charm with the years.



Maybe if I had bribed them with freshly baked cookies and hot chocolate they would take pity of me. What do you think were my odds of that every happening?

ONE POT CHICKEN AND MUSHROOMS

It's the middle of winter, it's freezing in my kitchen and I just want something to throw together quickly that's tasty and uses the least amount of dishes and bowls so that I can get downstairs as fast as possible where it's warmer. And bonus – it makes a lot, so there will be leftovers for lunch.

INGREDIENTS (Serves 4)

2-3 tablespoons olive oil

1 large onion sliced

3 cloves of garlic minced

6 ounces sliced shiitake mushrooms

6 boneless, skinless chicken thighs cut into 1" pieces

1 $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoons salt

1 $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoons fresh ground pepper

$\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon red pepper flakes

1 $\frac{1}{2}$ cups jasmine rice

1 $\frac{1}{2}$ cups chicken broth

1 $\frac{1}{2}$ cups white wine

2 tablespoons Dijon mustard

3 tablespoons maple syrup

1 scallion chopped for garnish

$\frac{1}{4}$ cup grated Parmesan (optional)

PREPARATION

In a large dutch oven, heat 2 tablespoons of olive oil over medium heat. Add the onions and sauté until beginning to brown, about 6 minutes. Add the garlic and mushrooms and continue to sauté for an additional 2 minutes. Add another tablespoon of olive oil if too dry.

Season the chicken with salt and pepper. Add the chicken to the pot and stir until chicken is browned, about three minutes. Stir in the red pepper flakes, and the remaining salt and ground pepper. Add the rice and stir for one minute.

Add the chicken broth, white wine, mustard and maple syrup and stir to combine. Bring the mixture up to a boil and then lower to a simmer until the rice is cooked, about 15 minutes. Turn

off the heat and let rest for five minutes. Stir the mixture to fluff the rice.

Serve in bowls and garnish with scallions and Parmesan.

GAME DAY CHILI

I love this dish because it's great to make the day before, it feeds a crowd, and it leaves me free to watch the game with everyone else. And if you have leftovers, you can make nachos the next day. Enjoy!

INGREDIENTS (Serves 8)

3 tablespoons olive oil

1 1/2 pounds ground turkey (or beef)

1 medium onion, diced

1 red bell pepper, diced

1-2 jalapeno peppers, diced

2 cloves garlic, minced

1/4 teaspoon cayenne

1 package McCormick Chili spices

1 chipotle pepper with adobo sauce, chopped

1 can red kidney beans (15 ounce), drained and rinsed

1 can whole tomatoes (17 ounces), chopped with liquid

1/2 cup BBQ Sauce

1 can sweet corn kernels, drained

Salt and pepper to taste

Sour cream for garnish

1 cup cheddar cheese, large grate for garnish

Tortilla chips (optional)

PREPARATION

Add 2 tablespoons of olive oil to a large skillet on medium-high heat. Add the ground turkey, breaking it up into crumbly pieces until browned, about 4-5 minutes. Set aside on a plate.

Add the remaining tablespoon of olive oil into skillet and heat. Add the onion and peppers and sauté for five minutes. Add the garlic and sauté an additional minute. Add the turkey meat back into the skillet. Sprinkle on the cayenne and McCormick Chili spices and combine.

Add in the chipotle pepper, kidney beans, whole tomatoes, BBQ sauce, and corn. Stir to combine. Bring to a boil, and then reduce to simmer for 30 minutes.

Adjust seasonings to taste with salt and pepper.

Serve with a dollop of sour cream, grated cheese and tortilla chips.

(NOTE – great to make a day ahead. Just reheat and serve)

SPINACH EGG DROP SOUP

I've been watching this documentary series on NETFLIX, *You Are What You Eat*, and quite frankly, it's scaring the bejeebers out of me. Basically, it has convinced me that I eat way too many fatty meats and not enough plant based foods. So, in an effort to balance my foods a bit better, I've been testing out some new options. So far, this recipe has been a big hit. Rather than adding smoky sausages—which is often a staple in my soups—I'm using lean turkey meat and forming them into tasty meatballs. And of course, I gotta have some greens, so this has a generous serving of spinach.

And a special shout out to my friends at [Gustus Vitae](#) for sending me their delicious spice blends! They were a great addition to the meatballs.

INGREDIENTS (Serves 6-8)

4 tablespoons olive oil

1 pound lean chopped turkey

2 teaspoons [Gustus Vitae "Everything But the Avocado Toast" spice mix](#)

1 onion, thinly sliced

2 medium sized potatoes, cubed

3 cloves garlic, minced

2 quarts turkey or chicken [bone broth](#) (or stock)

3 eggs, lightly beaten

3 cups baby spinach

salt and pepper to taste

Croutons (optional for garnish)

Parmesan cheese, grated (optional for garnish)

PREPARATION

Break up the chopped turkey in a large bowl. Add in the spice mixture and mix with your hands. Form 1" meatballs and set aside.

In a large skillet, heat 2 tablespoons of olive oil. Add in the meatballs and brown all sides. Don't overcrowd the meatballs. Cook them in batches if necessary. Set aside.

In a large dutch oven, heat 2 tablespoons of olive oil. Sauté onions until they begin to turn brown, about 6 minutes. Add in the potatoes and brown, about 3 minutes. Add in the garlic and continue to cook for one minute.

Add in the bone broth and meatballs. Bring to a boil, and then down to a simmer for 20 minutes.

Add in the spinach. Stir until wilted, about one minute. Season the beaten eggs with salt and pepper. Slowly drizzle the eggs into the soup, gently stirring the pot with a wooden spoon for about thirty seconds until the eggs form ribbons. Remove from heat.

Re-season to taste with salt and pepper. Ladle into bowls and garnish with croutons and grated Parmesan cheese.

PACCHERRI LASAGNA PIE

I'm not gonna lie – this recipe takes some time. But it's quite a fun showstopper for a special occasion. You'll need a

9" spring form pan and some large hollow pasta tubes like paccherri. And if you make the Bolognese sauce a day ahead, it will make the whole process much easier. The flavors in the sauce will also have some time to meld. I use a Bolognese recipe based on Marcella Hazan's classic, changing up the meats and doubling the proportions. If I'm going to the trouble of making a Bolognese, I might as well have leftovers for next time.

INGREDIENTS (serves 8 – 10)

FOR THE BOLOGNESE

2 tablespoons vegetable oil

6 tablespoons butter

1 cup chopped onion

1 cup chopped celery

1 cup chopped carrot

3 cloves garlic minced

1 pound ground beef chuck

$\frac{1}{2}$ pound ground veal

$\frac{1}{2}$ pound ground pork

Salt

Fresh ground pepper

2 cups whole milk

Pinch nutmeg

2 cups dry white wine

3 cups canned imported Italian plum tomatoes, cut up, with

their juice

FOR THE BECHEMEL

2 tablespoons butter

2 tablespoons flour

1- $\frac{1}{2}$ cups of milk (warm)

Grated nutmeg

Salt & pepper

FOR THE CHEESE MIXTURE

2 cups ricotta

$\frac{1}{4}$ cup Parmesan cheese (grated, small holes)

1 tablespoon fresh oregano (chopped)

1 tablespoon fresh basil (chopped)

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup cooked spinach

1 teaspoon garlic powder

1 teaspoon red pepper flakes

Salt and pepper

FOR THE ASSEMBLY

1 lb cooked Paccherri (prepared al dente as per instructions on box)

1 cup grated mozzarella

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

Fresh basil for garnish

PREPARATION

FOR THE BOLOGNESE

In a large Dutch oven, combine the oil and butter on medium heat. Add the onions and cook until they are translucent. Add the chopped celery and carrot. Stir and coat the vegetables and cook for 4 minutes. Add the garlic and cook for 1 minute.

Add the meats, 1 teaspoon of salt and fresh ground pepper. Crumble the meat with a wooden spoon and brown.

Add milk and let mixture simmer gently until fully incorporated and you can no longer see the milk. Add a pinch or two of grated nutmeg and stir.

Add the wine, let it simmer until it has evaporated, then add the tomatoes and stir thoroughly to coat all ingredients well. When the mixture begins to boil, lower the heat to as low a simmer as possible. Cook uncovered for 3 hours or more, stirring from time to time. If the sauce starts to dry out, add $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of water when needed. At the end, however, no water at all must be left. The fat should have separated from the sauce. Mix all together and season to taste with salt and pepper.

FOR BECHAMEL

In a saucepan, melt butter until it starts to foam. Add flour and whisk for two minutes until sandy colored, but not brown. Slowly pour in milk and whisk until it starts to lightly boil. Lower flame to simmer for eight minutes to thicken, whisking often. Turn off heat, season with pinch of grated nutmeg, salt and pepper, and set aside. If film forms on top, remove before using.

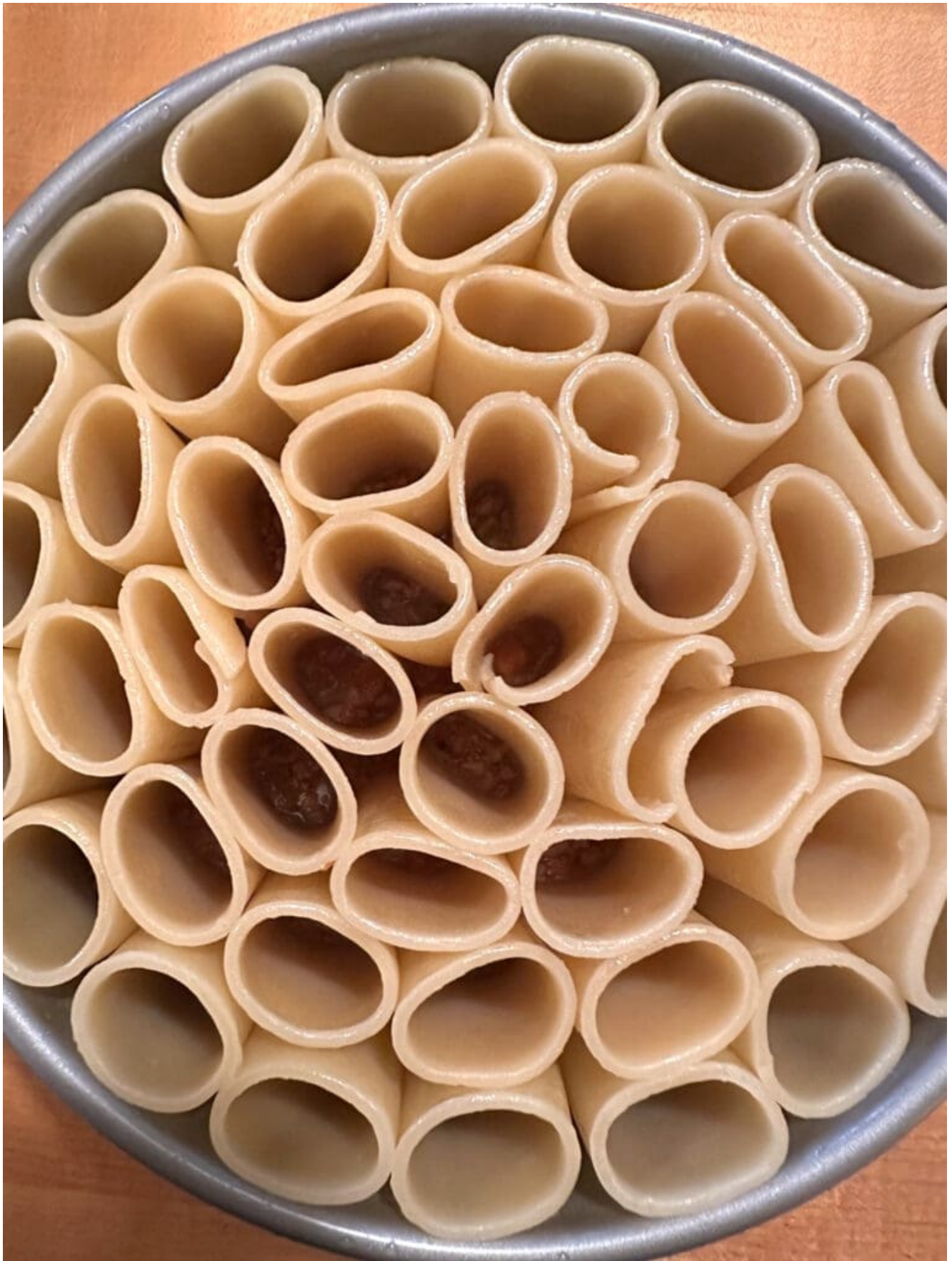
FOR RICOTTA MIXTURE

In a medium sized bowl, mix the ricotta, $\frac{1}{4}$ cup Parmesan, oregano, basil, spinach, garlic powder, and red pepper flakes. Season with salt and pepper to taste. Set aside.

FOR ASSEMBLY

To make sure there is minimal leakage, use a large piece of aluminum foil to cover the bottom and outside sides of the spring form pan. Grease the inside of pan with olive oil.

Coat the bottom of the spring form pan with a layer of the Bolognese.



Next, stand the cooked pasta upright in the pan starting with an outside circle and continuing with smaller circles, filling the entire pan until packed in. (*You might want to test this the day before. Stand up the dried pasta in the spring form to*

see if you have enough to pack it in. The first time I made this, I had to use every last one. Pasta tubes can vary in size, so you don't want to be in the middle of the assembly and find out you don't have enough. Also, one or two might break, so you may need a few extra.)

Put the ricotta mixture in a Ziploc bag and cut a small hole in one corner. Squeeze the cheese mixture down towards the hole as if this is a pastry bag.

Fill each pasta tube halfway up with the ricotta filling. Tamp down the ingredients by lifting the springform pan about an inch above the counter and gently dropping it so that the ricotta makes its way to the bottom.

Using a ladle, cover the noodles with a thin layer of béchamel.

Spoon more Bolognese into the tubes filling them to the top. Spread a light layer over all the noodles so that the sauce seeps into the spaces between the tubes. Ladle another layer of béchamel. Tamp the springform pan again so all the ingredients settle.

If you have room, do another layer of ricotta, meat sauce and béchamel. Tamp the springform pan again.

Spread the mozzarella and Parmesan on top.

Place the pan on a baking sheet. Grease a piece of aluminum foil and cover the pie with the greased side down.

Bake for 35 minutes. Uncover; bake 20 minutes longer or until the top is bubbly and golden brown.

Let stand for 30 minutes. Run a knife along the outside edge and carefully open the spring form pan. It's important for the dish to cool enough so that the cheese sets a bit otherwise you'll have a sloppy mess.

Slice into pieces and top with remaining meat sauce. Garnish with Parmesan and a sprig of fresh basil.

CHICKEN POBLANO SOUP

Every week during the cold months I make a huge pot of bone broth. I'm always looking for new soups to make using the broth, and this idea came to me at the end of the summer when our garden had an abundance of poblano peppers. I love these peppers because they give a little kick of heat without being too painful. You should be able to find poblanos year round at your local grocery. If you like it hotter, add a jalapeno or two. If you dare, add a habanero, but don't say I didn't warn you.

INGREDIENTS

3 poblanos

1 sweet Italian pepper

1 onion, sliced

2 Tablespoons olive oil

2 corncobs, kernels removed, save the cobs

3 garlic cloves, minced

1 $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoons salt

1 $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoons fresh ground pepper

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

2 quarts chicken broth or bone broth

2 cup shredded cooked chicken

blue corn chips, crumbled

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup cotija cheese or queso fresco (grated – large holes)

Sour cream and sliced avocados for garnish

PREPARATION

Heat oven to 400 degrees.

Place a sheet of aluminum foil on a baking sheet. Rinse and dry the peppers. Place the whole peppers on the baking sheet and place in the oven for 40 minutes, turning once. The peppers should blacken. Remove the peppers from the oven and allow to cool. Remove the skins and seeds, rough chop the remaining peppers, and set aside.

In a medium sized pot, heat olive oil. Add onion and sauté for 6-7 minutes until they start to brown. Add the corncobs and peppers, sauté for 2 more minutes. Add in garlic cloves, sauté for 1 more minute.

Add the salt, pepper, and cumin and stir ingredients. Add chicken broth. Bring to boil, then simmer for ten minutes.

Remove and discard the corncobs. Using an immersion blender, purée the soup. Re-season to taste.

Add in the cooked chicken and the corn kernels and continue to simmer for 15 minutes.

To serve, ladle soup into bowls. Garnish with crumbled blue corn chips, cheese, a dollop of sour cream, and 3-4 slices of avocado in each bowl.

SOMETIMES THE BEST MEALS ARE A SURPRISE

When I travel, my husband and I love to go off the beaten path to discover things many tourists might miss. We love the back roads and small towns where every day life just moves along in its normal flow. While in Hanoi, we wanted to get a sense of life outside of the city, so we made arrangements for an unusual culinary side-tour which included hand-made vermicelli production and a lunch at the mayor's house. (It was a very small village and the mayor was able to charge a hefty fee for the honor).

We weren't quite sure what to expect, but within an hour of leaving our hotel, we were somewhere out in the country in a small village called Cu Da. Compared to the chaos of Hanoi where you take your life in your hands just to cross the street, this small village was almost silent and everyone seemed to walk at half-speed.



Our first stop was a small hut by the side of the road that was making hand-made vermicelli sheets. It's an amazing process to watch. Arrowroot is ground and mixed with water to make a paste. Then super-thin long sheets—almost the consistency of those fruit strips you ate as a kid—are spread out onto large bamboo trays to dry. They are then cut into thin strips, dried again before packaging, and then shipped around the world. The people of this village have been doing this for generations and it has become the main income for the villagers.



We were then taken to the mayor's house for lunch. We were told the mayor would not be joining us, but the host insisted we first take a nap. This was not optional. Not wanting to seem rude, we tried to relax on the hard bed and pretended to sleep. Watching us from a crack in the doorway was the mayor's granddaughter, an adorable and curious seven-year old. Catching my eye, she giggled and ran away.



When nap time was over, we were presented with a multi-course feast. Fried tofu, beef with scallions and bok choy, sautéed greens, vegetable spring rolls, some tasty stew concoction and, of course, vermicelli noodles served in a light soy sauce topped with fried shallots. The home cooked dishes were flavored so delicately and the ingredients were so fresh that it was better than any meal we've eaten in any Vietnamese restaurant.

We kept noticing our little spy standing in the shadows and eventually coaxed her out to come sit with us. She was as curious about us as we were about her. She kept staring at my iPhone, so I picked it up to show her how to take a selfie.



That seemed to wipe away any language challenges as we posed for our glam shot. Once she was satisfied we got a good one, she gave us a little hug, waved goodbye and ran out to play with her friends. As good as this lunch was, the company was even better.

GRILLED EGGPLANT WITH TZATZIKI

During my college semester abroad, I made my way from Belgium all the way to Greece to meet up with my college roommate, Sarah. We spent a month on the southern side of Crete in the little beach town of Matala. We lived on grapes, chocolate

cookies, and beer, but once a week we would treat ourselves to a real meal and always order pastitsio, moussaka and grilled eggplant with tzatziki. I still don't have a great recipe for the pastitsio and moussaka, but this grilled eggplant dish has become a summer staple.

FOR TZATZIKI

1 cup finely grated cucumber
1 cup whole milk Greek yogurt
1 tablespoon lemon juice
1 tablespoon olive oil
2 garlic cloves, finely minced
 $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon sea salt
2 tablespoons chopped chives

FOR GRILLED EGGPLANT

2 tablespoons salt
1 cup warm water
5 cups cold water
2 large eggplants
Olive oil, for grill grates
 $\frac{1}{2}$ cup olive oil
sea salt
chopped dill for garnish

PREPARATION

FOR TZATZIKI

Grate the cucumber using the large holes on a box grater. Squeeze as much water out as possible.

Place cucumber in bowl. Add in yogurt, lemon juice, olive oil, garlic, salt and chives. Stir to combine. Cover and refrigerate at least one-hour before serving.

FOR GRILLED EGGPLANT

In a large bowl, dissolve 2 tablespoons of salt into the warm water until the salt is dissolved. Add 5 cups of cold water and set aside.

Cut the eggplant into 3/4-inch thick rings and place them into the brine. Use a plate to hold down the eggplant so it is fully immersed in the water. Allow to soak for 45 minutes.

Remove eggplant and pat dry.

Oil grill grates and heat grill on medium-high. Brush both sides of each ring with olive oil. Season lightly with sea salt.

Place on grill until eggplant starts to brown, but not burn. Flip each and brown on other side, about 4-5 minutes each side.

Plate eggplant, drizzle tzatziki on top and garnish with dill.

BLACK BEAN BURGERS

If you're trying to cut back on meat, but miss the experience of burgers on the grill, here's a vegetarian version that will make you wonder why you ever ate meat in the first place. Okay, that may be an overpromise, but these bean burgers are

still pretty tasty.

INGREDIENTS (Makes 4 burgers)

1 (15.0-ounce) can black beans, drained and rinsed

1 egg

1/2 sweet onion, chopped

1 cup panko

1 tablespoon KK's Magic Rub*

1/2 teaspoon hot sauce

1/2 cup crumbled feta cheese

1 tablespoon extra-virgin olive or canola oil

6 brioche buns

Ketchup, avocado, lettuce, tomato, red onion slices for garnish

PREPARATION

In a large bowl, mash the beans.

Add egg, onion, panko, magic rub, hot sauce and cheese. Mix well to combine, then shape into 4 patties.

Oil grates on grill. Bring grill to medium heat. Place patties on grill and cook for five minutes. Flip and cook for five minutes more until cooked through.

Transfer to buns.

Garnish with ketchup, avocado, lettuce, tomatoes and red onions. Or you can dress it up with an aioli, melted cheese or whatever else you like on your burgers.

***KK's MAGIC RUB**

INGREDIENTS

2 Tbsp Paprika

2 Tbsp Kosher Salt

1 Tbsp Ground Pepper

2 Tbsp Garlic Powder

1 Tbsp Onion Powder

1 Tbsp Brown Sugar

2 tsp Chipotle powder

1 tsp Cayenne

1 tsp Dried oregano

1 tsp Cumin

PREPARATION

Mix all ingredients together.

Adjust to taste.

Store in airtight container. Best used within three months.