

Broccoli Rabe Crostini with Asiago and Black Pepper – Oregano Oil

8 oz broccoli rabe, trimmed
4 cloves garlic, sliced thin
1/4 cup extra virgin olive oil
1/4 cup white wine
1/2 tsp dried oregano
salt and pepper to taste
12 slices Italian peasant bread
2 tb Black Pepper – Oregano Oil
8 oz asiago cheese, grated

Blanch the broccoli rabe (submerge in boiling water for a few minutes, then immediately transfer to ice bath) and drain well. Place the florets and thinly-sliced stalks in large mixing bowl and stir in garlic, olive oil, wine, oregano, salt and pepper. Let it rest while toasting bread. Spoon about 2 tb on each piece of bread, drizzle with black pepper – oregano oil, and sprinkle with cheese.

Black Pepper – Oregano Oil

In a blender, combine 1/4 cup fresh oregano, 2 tb fresh ground black pepper and 1/2 cup extra virgin olive oil until smooth. Make a larger batch, this is really good stuff.

Tuscan Bean Soup

1/2 cup kidney beans soaked overnight
1/2 cup cannellini beans soaked overnight
1/2 cup chick peas soaked overnight
(or use 1 can of each kind, drained and rinsed)
3 tablespoons olive oil
1/2 pound diced pancetta (Italian bacon)
2 cups diced yellow onions
1 cup diced celery
1 cup diced carrots
4 cloves garlic, sliced
Salt and freshly ground black pepper
1 can diced tomatoes
2 quarts chicken stock, plus extra water if needed
2 cups dry red wine
2 sprigs rosemary
3 sprigs thyme
1 sprig oregano
1 bay leaf
1 teaspoon red chili flakes
2 heads kale or other greens, stems removed and cut into bite size pieces

Place the beans in a medium pot, add water to cover by 2-inches and bring to a boil. Turn the heat down, let simmer for 45 minutes to 1 hour, or until just-tender. (If using canned beans, skip this step.) In a large soup pot, heat the olive oil over medium heat. Add the pancetta, rendering the fat and cooking until slightly crispy about 3 minutes. Saute the onion, celery, carrot and garlic for 3 to 4 minutes. Season with salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste. Add the diced tomatoes, the cooked and drained beans (or canned beans) and the chicken stock. Using kitchen twine, tie the herbs and the bay leaf into a bundle and add to the pot (note: or you can just pick them out later). Season with the red chili flakes, salt and pepper. Cook for 15 to 20 minutes, then add the kale. Continue cooking until the beans are completely tender, another 10 minutes or so. Serve with crusty bread and Parmesan cheese sprinkled on top.

Spinach and Goat Cheese Gnocchi with Sun-Dried Tomatoes, Pine Nuts and Lemon

1 lb fresh spinach, washed (frozen is ok)
1 lb goat cheese (can substitute or combine with ricotta)
2 1/4 cups all-purpose flour
2 large or jumbo eggs
1 tsp salt
1/2 tsp nutmeg
1/4 cup Pecorino or Romano cheese (plus extra for garnish)
1 stick of unsalted butter
1/2 cup sliced sun-dried tomatoes
3 tb pine nuts
1/2 white wine
1 lemon

Steam the spinach until just wilted (thaw if using frozen). Chop very fine and use a dishtowel to press out excess moisture. In a large bowl, stir ricotta/goat cheese until softened, then stir in flour, eggs, salt, nutmeg and grated cheese to form a large ball. Divide in 4, then knead on cutting board until dry and firm. Roll each into a 1" thick rope and cut rope into 1" long pieces (roll on a fork to create impressive gnocchi shape). Place gnocchi into 6 quarts boiling water for 6-7 minutes, they're done when they float to the top. Meanwhile, combine butter, tomatoes and pine nuts in saucepan over medium heat. When butter is lightly browned, add wine, juice and zest the lemon. Drain gnocchi, toss with the sauce, and sprinkle more cheese on top.

Chicken Piccata

2-4 boneless, skinless chicken breast halves (1 1/2 pound total)
1 lb mushrooms, sliced
2 Tbsp grated Parmesan cheese
1/3 cup flour
Salt and pepper
4 Tbsp olive oil
4 Tbsp butter
1/2 cup dry white wine
3 Tbsp lemon juice
1/4 cup brined capers

1/4 cup fresh chopped parsley

Mix together the flour, salt, pepper, and grated Parmesan. Rinse the chicken pieces in water. Dredge them thoroughly in the flour mixture until well coated. Heat olive oil and 2 tablespoons of the butter in a large skillet on medium high heat. Add half of the chicken pieces and brown well, about 3 minutes per side, and move to the side. Cook the other pieces in the same manner. Cover with aluminum foil to keep warm while you prepare the sauce. Sauté mushrooms in the same pan (add more olive oil if needed), then add the white wine, lemon juice, and capers to the pan. Use a spatula to scrape up the tasty brown bits. Reduce the sauce by half. Whisk in the remaining 2 tablespoons of butter. Serve with the sauce spooned over the chicken (really good with pasta). Sprinkle with parsley.

Ciambella with Summer Berry Compote

1 pint blueberries

1 pint blackberries

1 pint raspberries

(frozen berries are ok)

1/2 lemon, juiced and zested

1 cup red wine

1/2 cup plus 3 tb (less if using sweet wine) sugar

2 cups all-purpose flour

1/2 tsp baking powder

1 stick unsalted butter, cut into cubes

1 large egg

1 tsp almond extract

1/4 cup milk

Sauce - Combine berries, lemon, wine and 3 tb sugar over medium heat until just at boiling for 5-6 minutes. This can be done ahead of time. Combine flour, 1/2 cup sugar, and baking powder in food processor or large mixing bowl. Stir in cubes of butter. In a separate bowl, whisk together egg, almond extract and milk. Combine with flour mixture and stir until dough forms a ball. Shape dough into a log about 14" and 1 1/2" thick, then form into a ring on a buttered cookie sheet, or if you have one use a bundt pan. Bake at 375 for 30 to 35 minutes. Slice, and serve with berry mixture over top.