

Italy in Spring

May 2011

Menu:

Grilled Herb Flatbreads with
Eggplant Caponata

Spaghetti with Shrimp, Fresh Peas
and Garlicky Breadcrumbs

Grilled Artichokes with
Lemon-Almond Pesto

Muscato Poached Fruit with
Cannoli Cream



Grilled Herb Flatbreads with Eggplant Caponata

makes 3 flatbreads

1 clove garlic, grated
1 tbl chopped rosemary
1 tbl chopped fresh thyme
1/2 cup olive oil
1 lb fresh pizza dough, divided into three equal pieces
1 cup finely diced onion
1/2 tsp red chili flakes
1/4 cup pinenuts
5 cups medium diced eggplant
1 tbl sugar
2 tbl balsamic vinegar
1 cup chopped fresh tomatoes
1/4 cup chopped fresh basil
salt and pepper
grated parmesan, as needed

***** Preparation ******

Combine the garlic, rosemary, thyme and olive oil in a small pot over medium heat. Cook for 5 minutes and remove from heat -- oil should be fragrant. Set aside.

Gently press the three dough balls into a flat oval. Use a rolling pin to roll evenly. Let sit for 5 minutes.

Heat a large skillet over high heat. Add a drizzle of olive oil. Add the onions, chili flakes and pinenuts. Cook for about 10 minutes until golden. Add the eggplant and a drizzle more olive oil and a few pinches of salt. Cook over high heat for 10 minutes until browned and softened. Add the sugar, balsamic and tomatoes and cook for 5 minutes. Remove from heat and stir in basil. Season with salt and pepper as needed.

Heat a grill pan over high heat. Brush the dough with the herb-infused oil and place onto the grill. Grill on both sides until marked. Remove and immediately sprinkle with grated parmesan.

Top the grilled breads with eggplant mixture and slice into large wedges to serve.



Spaghetti with Shrimp, Fresh Peas & Garlicky Breadcrumbs

serves 4

1 cup fresh shelled peas
1 lb spaghetti
2 tbl butter
2 garlic cloves, grated
1 tsp lemon zest
1 cup fresh breadcrumbs
1/4 cup chopped fresh parsley
salt and pepper
olive oil
1 lb medium shrimp, peeled, cleaned, tails removed
1/4 cup chopped mint

***** Preparation ******

Bring a large pot of water to a rolling boil. Add a small handful of salt. Add the peas and cook for 1 minute. Remove with a slotted spoon or strainer and set aside. Add the pasta and stir. Cook according to package instructions. Meanwhile, in a large skillet, add the butter, garlic and lemon zest. Once fragrant, add the breadcrumbs and parsley. Add salt and pepper. Cook for a few minutes, stirring constantly, until golden. Remove from pan and set aside. In the same pan, add a drizzle of olive oil. Add the shrimp and cook for 3-5 minutes until cooked. Add the cooked pasta and the peas and 1/4 cup of pasta water. Cook together for about 1 minute. Add the breadcrumbs and mint, toss and taste -- season with salt and pepper as needed. Serve immediately.

Grilled Artichokes with Lemon-Almond Pesto

serves 6 as an appetizer

3 large artichokes

1/4 cup parsley leaves

1 cup basil leaves

1 clove garlic

1/4 cup grated parmesan

1 tbl lemon zest

1/2 cup sliced almonds

olive oil

salt and pepper

***** Preparation ******

Bring a large pot of water to a rolling boil. Add a small handful of salt.

Meanwhile, prepare the artichokes: Rip off the out 6-8 leaves and discard. If the stem is long, peel the outer skin. Use a serrated knife to cut the top 1/2-inch off the the artichoke (removing many of the thorns from the tips of the leaves) and use a scissor to cut the thorns off the rest of the leaves. Place the artichokes in the boiling water and simmer for 20 minutes or until tender (test by pulling a leaf from the center -- it should remove easily). Allow the artichokes to cool slightly.

Meanwhile, heat a grill pan over high heat.

Combine the parsley, basil, garlic, parmesan, lemon zest and almonds in a food processor and puree until smooth, adding olive oil as needed to create a pesto consistency. Season with salt and pepper.

Slice the artichokes in half length-wise and remove the prickly choke and any small purple leaves. Drizzle with olive oil. Place cut-side down on the grill and cook until well-marked.

Serve immediately with the pesto for dipping.



Muscato Poached Fruit with Cannoli Cream

serves 4-6

For the fruit:

3 firm plums, halved & pitted
2 cups muscato wine
1 cinnamon stick
2 large strips orange zest
1/3 cup honey
pinch salt

For the cream:

1 1/2 cups whole milk ricotta cheese
1/2 cup powdered sugar
1/2 tsp cinnamon
1/2 tsp orange zest
1/2 tsp vanilla paste
1/4 cup grated dark chocolate, (or mini chocolate chips)

***** Preparation ******

Combine the fruit, wine, cinnamon stick, zest, honey and salt in a pot. Bring to a boil over high heat, reduce heat and simmer for 15 minutes until mixture is slightly thickened and fruit is soft but not mushy.

Remove from heat and let cool slightly.

Whisk together the ricotta, sugar, cinnamon, orange zest, vanilla and chocolate. Taste and sweeten with more sugar as desired.

Serve the fruit warm with a dollop of the cold cream.