

Cozze en Bianco o Rosso (Mussels In White or Red Sauce)

By CeCe Dove, La Lama Mountain Ovens, 575-586-2286, ccdove@parshift.com

Mussels are another of those delicacies that really aren't a part of our early family history. They weren't readily available in western Pennsylvania and they were not part of either my mother or father's gustatory background. Actually, other than the occasional shrimp I cannot think of any shellfish that was on our early table. My first experience with mussels was on a trip to Italy in the early 1970's and I can still remember my delight in tasting them. Some people will say that mussels are an "acquired taste". If so, it took me all of one taste to acquire a love of this sweet, briny, succulent morsel. And so 30 years ago was born yet another family tradition.

During our 30 years in California they were readily available, both in the fish markets and on the shore. I can remember when our daughter was about 10 years old her Dad and a close friend she calls "Uncle" Jim took her out for an ocean shore adventure, and came home with 5 gallons of mussels that they had "picked". Of course cleaning gallons of mussels straight out of the ocean is a big chore but I tackled the job and many hours later steamed up the whole bunch of them. Jim and I feasted hugely but husband and daughter said that after hours of picking, they had no appetite for them. More for me!

The mussels you purchase in the market are far easier to deal with. A stiff brush and cold water will remove any sand clinging to the outside and a sharp paring knife will remove the "beard" that is attached to one side of the hinge. Farm raised mussels are also available that make the cleaning process even simpler because they have no beard. Ask your fish monger about them. Mussels are very perishable. I prefer to cook them the day I buy them, but you can hold them for a day or two in the refrigerator on a bed of cracked ice. They should be tightly closed before you cook them. Discard any that have opened.



Sunday market in Asti, Italy – April 2001
Mussels in traditional mesh bag below shop keeper's hand.

How to serve them? This is another of those primi piatti that so easily expands into a main course. Six to twelve steamed with either white sauce or red sauce makes a wonderful first course, or add another dozen to each place and make it a main dish. With an honest loaf of bread and a glass of wine you have a great light meal. If you want more substance you can cook up linguine or angel hair pasta and pour the mussels and sauce over all for a major feast.

Mussels in White Sauce

Ingredients to serve four as a first course:

- 2 to 4 dozen mussels
- 3 cloves of garlic, minced
- 1/4 cup chopped fresh parsley, leaves only
- 1 cup dry white wine
- 1/2 cup chicken stock

Step one: Clean the mussels thoroughly.

Step two: Choose a high sided pot that the mussels will easily fit in to. Make sure you have a tight fitting lid. Place all ingredients in the pot and place over high heat. When mussels open, they are done. Discard any that do not open.



Mussels in Red Sauce, with Pasta

Ingredients to serve four as a main course:

- 4 to 6 dozen mussels
- 3 cloves of garlic, minced
- 1/4 cup chopped fresh parsley, leaves only
- 1/2 cup dry white wine
- 1 cup red sauce

Step one: Clean the mussels thoroughly.

Step two: Cook the same as for mussels in white sauce.

To serve: Divide the mussels into 4 bowls into which you have placed a portion of linguine or angel hair pasta, and pour the sauce equally over the 4 portions. Serve with a crusty loaf of homemade bread. We would recommend serving white wine with the mussels in white sauce and a red with the mussels in red sauce. Either recipe can be made Fra Diavolo by adding 1/4 teaspoon ground Cayenne pepper to either recipe.



If you would like to prepare the recipes with a Southwest twist, simply substitute chopped cilantro for the parsley and add a minced Jalapeno pepper to the cooking pot.

Altitude Adjustment: None.

Cappelletti with Mushroom/Ricotta Stuffing in Brown Butter and Sage

By CeCe Dove, La Lama Mountain Ovens, 575-586-2286, ccdove@parshift.com

In September 2000 we put our daughter Jennifer on a flight to Italy. During the next nine months she would attend a professional chef's school in Italy for six months, and then strike out on her own to travel throughout Europe for the last three months. The Italian Culinary Institute for Foreigners is located in a partially restored castle in Costigliole, near Asti, in northern Italy. The program she participated in is designed for chefs who already have credentials, and it consisted of two months at the school and four months of work in a restaurant. She was placed at Da Vittorio Ristorante in Bergamo, even further north. Da Vittorio has earned two stars in the Michelin Guide and its primary focus is seafood, which was her request for placement. She did not speak Italian when she left, but since the two month program at the school was conducted in Italian and nobody at the restaurant spoke English, she now speaks Italian. It is probably not grammatically correct, but she is quite able to conduct a conversation, and more important to her, tell a joke and win an argument in Italian. Important in a professional kitchen. Fortunately the school provided an interpreter for the first two months of classes.

This was her first trip abroad on her own, but her second trip to Italy, the first being about ten years earlier when she was 14 years old and we decided it was time for her to see some of the great cities of Europe. She grew up eating my Italian cooking, and had worked in a very popular neighborhood Italian restaurant in Oakland, California for several years, where she helped them open a second restaurant and became their night chef for a year before deciding it was time to see where her roots lie.

I hadn't been to Italy in 10 years, and when she completed her work at Da Vittorio in March my husband and I decided to meet her and conduct a culinary tour of our own making. It was time for me to touch bases with the old country again. My husband was working in Malaysia at that time, so Jennifer and I put our heads together via e-mails and global cell phones and devised a loop that would start in Milan, hit Bergamo and Verona, and head down the Adriatic coast to Ravenna, cut across to Parma, Sienna, and Orvieto, then back north to Portofino and Milan.

During those fourteen days we managed to eat some form of pasta at least once each day, and often twice. From the smallest village to the largest most sophisticated city every pasta was made in-house and they were fabulous. In each region we explored the best of the local wines, visited every open air market we could connect with and, of course, did a fair share of visiting museums, churches, and local points of interest. But always my thoughts would go back to the wonderful pasta. My roots probably just needed a little reviving, but that small taste of Italy went a long way towards reminding me of who I am.



Husband Rick, myself, and daughter Jennifer
Piazza Vecchio, Bergamo Città Alta, Italy – April 2001

Jennifer joined us in New Mexico upon her return, and promised to share personal favorites from her Italian education. Here, compliments of her experience at Italian Colors in Oakland, is a recipe that will make you think you are dining in northern Italy. Although the amounts seem large, these freeze beautifully, and it is worth the time to make the whole batch. You can serve them as a primi piatti, serving about six per person, or as a main course, allowing up to twelve per person.

Cappelletti with Mushroom and Ricotta Stuffing in Brown Butter and Sage Sauce

Stuffing Ingredients to fill approximately 125 cappelletti:

- 3 cloves garlic, 2 shallots and 1/2 yellow onion, all finely diced
- 4 large Portobello mushrooms, gills removed, roughly chopped including stems
- 2 pkgs. dry porcini, rehydrated in hot water, squeezed dry and roughly chopped
- 1/4 cup white wine
- 4 Tblsp. clarified butter
- 1 Tblsp. each finely minced fresh sage and parsley
- Salt and pepper to taste
- 3/4 cup whole milk ricotta
- 1/3 cup grated Parmesan cheese
- Fine white bread crumbs as needed

Step One: Heat clarified butter in a 12" sauté pan, add onions and shallots and sweat over medium heat about five minutes. Add garlic and cook an additional two minutes. Add both fresh and rehydrated mushrooms, salt and pepper. Increase heat slightly and stir frequently. When mushrooms have cooked down, add white wine and cook until all liquid is evaporated and mushrooms are dry. Stir in sage.

Step Two: Scrape the mixture into a food processor and purée to a paste. Remove paste to a bowl and allow to cool about five minutes. Fold in ricotta, parmesan and parsley and adjust salt and pepper if needed. If mixture is at all runny, add fine white crumbs to make a paste, although you should not need much. Cool completely before filling pasta or refrigerate up to 24 hours and bring to room temperature before using.

Make pasta dough: Make one batch of pasta dough (see Family Secrets Number 8) adding a teaspoon of olive oil to the eggs as you incorporate the flour into the dough.

Assemble cappelletti:

Step One: Make a simple egg wash with one beaten egg and a tsp. of cold water.

Step Two: Fill a pastry bag with mushroom filling at room temperature.



Family Secrets

The best of the recipes, techniques, and methods practiced by our large extended Italian-American family, with emphasis on the legacy handed down to us by the original immigrants.

Step Three: Roll dough as wide as your roller will permit and ending quite thin (no. 6 setting on the Atlas machine). Each sheet may be as long as you can handle but only work with one sheet at a time. Trim ends to square. Cut each sheet in half lengthwise and separate, so you have two long pieces about 2" to 2 1/2 inches wide. Brush the upper edge of each long sheet with a light brush of egg wash.



Step Four: Working with one sheet at a time, cut into squares of approximately two to two and one-half inches. Squeeze a scant 1/2 tsp. filling onto the center of each square (using a pastry bag will make quick work of this although you could just use a measuring spoon).



Step Five: Working with one at a time fold the square in half and firmly seal the edges with your fingers. Roll the square over once away from you, grasp the edges and pinch them together and you will have a cappelletti. Place on floured sheet pan. You may freeze these on the pan, then quickly gather them up and bag them for the freezer.

Saucing and Serving:

Bring a large pot of water to a boil and salt. If frozen they will take approximately 5 to 6 minutes to cook. If fresh they'll take a minute or two less.

Brown Butter/Sage Sauce for about 60 cappelletti (enough for four entrees):

- 1/4 lb. salted butter
- 6 fresh sage leaves
- 2 whole garlic cloves (skin removed, clove smashed but not chopped)
- salt and pepper to taste

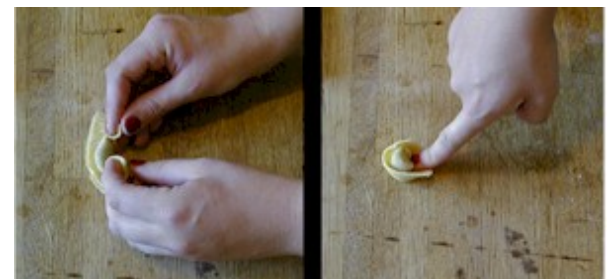
In a medium/large sauté pan (Teflon is not recommended) heat the butter over medium/high heat until melted. Add the garlic cloves and sage leaves. Watch the pan as the butter continues to cook because it will burn if you're not careful. Let it go until a deep brown color is achieved. Using a higher heat will accelerate the process, but less flavor will be infused from the sage and garlic, so I recommend using a medium heat. Remove the smashed garlic and discard.

To serve: When the pasta is cooked strain them and add them to the sauce, flip to coat and season with salt and pepper. Top with grated Parmesan cheese.



(1) Fold and seal

(2) Roll once



(3) Grasp edges

(4) Pinch together

Altitude Adjustment: None.

Tagliatelle con Ragù d'Anatra (Fresh Pasta with Duck Ragù)

By Jennifer Dove, La Lama Mountain Ovens, 575-586-2286, jkdove@parshift.com

In September of 2000 I began a six month culinary course based in Northern Italy. The first two months were spent in Costigliole D'Asti, in Piemonté. The following four months were spent in Bergamo, a city about one hour north of Milan. It was a wonderful experience overall, and an especially lovely time of year to be there. During my first two months, which were spent in school, the truffle harvest was going on. I couldn't have been luckier. There are only a few areas in Italy and France where truffles are harvested. They are quite rare and the best come from a place called Alba. Alba was a short drive from where I was studying, so my classmates and I had the good fortune to visit the truffle festival several times.

Besides the aromatic white truffles, which became a mainstay of my diet for the few months that they were prolific, I discovered many other local flavors that I fell in love with. The wines of Piemonté have become my favorite Italian wines. Barolo, Barbera, and Barbaresco are the three big ones there, and are all wonderful. However, Asti and Alba and neighboring regions produce a sweet sparkling wine call Muscato, and it is hands down my favorite of all. It is taken either before a meal as an aperitivé, or afterwards with dessert. The grape is highly aromatic and produces a wine with a light floral and fruity perfume. This more than almost anything else reminds me of Italy.



Truffle festival in Alba, Italy, October 2001

To describe all the different delicacies I experienced would be impossible. Putting all else aside, the Italians do pasta like no other culture. The handmade pastas (which they almost all are) are to die for. The different variations are too numerous to list. The most unusual thing about their pasta dishes is that each different kind of pasta (tagliatelle, garganelli, pizzoccheri, etc.) is served in a specific sauce, depending on the region where eaten.

For example, we made this lovely dish called Orecchiette con le Cime di Rapa, which is orecchiette pasta with Italian broccoli, hot peppers, anchovies and garlic. It is divine. And you will never see that particular sauce served with any other kind of pasta. Why this is, I can only speculate. Probably it is because modern day Italian cooking is so closely related to the cuisine of their ancestors that they just don't change a thing. This is how the dish was made hundreds of years ago, and this is how it will continue to be made. Perhaps it is because they understand that each sauce has its own intensity and texture and is suited to only one shape of pasta that best supports it.

I mentioned earlier that almost nothing reminded me of my time in Italy more than a glass of Muscato D'Asti. Well, there is one other thing. A dish called tagliatelle con ragù d'anatra. Tagliatelle is a noodle resembling a

thin and short piece of fettuccini. It is a fresh egg pasta with a delicate flavor, yet strong enough to stand up to a ragù sauce.

A ragù is basically a rich meat sauce simmered slowly with a little liquid and seasonings, the most well known being Bolognese sauce. Bolognese is a beef ragù, while the sauce we are dealing with is a duck ragù. The rich flavors are simply amazing, and nothing epitomizes Northern Italian cuisine to me more than this dish. I ate this at least once a week while over there, and now, with the crisp days of autumn upon us, I suddenly miss Italy.

Duck Ragù

Total ingredients to serve four:

- 1 whole duck or two whole boneless duck breasts
- 4 cups tomato sauce
- 1 cup dry red wine, Chianti or otherwise
- 1/4 lb. prosciutto, finely diced
- 1 yellow onion, finely diced
- 1 carrot, finely diced
- 1 celery stalk, finely diced
- 2 Tbsp. butter
- 2 Tbsp. olive oil
- handful chopped parsley
- handful chopped sage
- salt and pepper



The castle is the Italian Culinary Institute for Foreigners, Costigliole D'Asti, in Piemonté, November, 2001

Step one:

Remove the skin and fat from duck. Remove meat from bone. Chop meat into small dice. This is the most time consuming part of the recipe. It requires some patience but may be done a day ahead. Refrigerate until ready to use. You may substitute two whole boneless duck breasts (two ducks worth), skin and fat removed.

Step two:

In a large pan, heat the butter and oil. Add diced onions, carrots and celery (the mirepoix). Over low heat, sweat the mixture until onions become translucent. Add the diced prosciutto and cook for a few minutes.

Step three:

Increase heat to medium and add duck and chopped sage. Season to taste with salt and pepper. Cook until duck is browned.

Step four:

Deglaze with red wine and reduce by half. Add tomato sauce and simmer for 30-40 minutes. Adjust seasoning and add parsley.

To serve:

Cook one pound of home made tagliatelle or fettuccini al dente. Drain well, toss with the just finished (or reheated) ragù and serve immediately.

Altitude Adjustment: None

Eggplant Parmesan – Two Styles

By CeCe Dove, La Lama Mountain Ovens, 575-586-2286, ccdove@parshift.com

It's at the top many least favorite food lists and at the bottom of the most loved foods. It's a puzzle to me since it is rich in nutrients, low in fat, available year round, can be fried, roasted or grilled, is inexpensive, and most importantly has a wonderful flavor that either stands alone or complements many other foods. Maybe it's the weird purple color. But purple is the color of royalty, and when my eye catches that beautiful glossy purple in the vegetable bin I can't resist adding it to my cart. The real problem is that most people have had improperly cooked eggplant. The texture of this vegetable is like a sponge. If you don't prepare it correctly and cook it at the right temperature, it will soak up tons of oil and will have a greasy heavy and most unpleasant texture when you eat it. Properly cooked it should have an earthy, nutty taste of its own, and a rich soft texture. It will also absorb flavors wonderfully, thus the addition of herbs and garlic in most eggplant recipes.

The eggplant was always welcome in our family kitchen when we were growing up. Back then we did not have the luxury of the many different varieties we find in the market today. We were limited to the basic egg-shaped dark purple variety still available everywhere and at almost any time of year. In my gardening catalog I count seven varieties available, from the pure white Italian to the long Thai green. But for our purposes the basic supermarket purple duck-pin-shaped eggplant will do nicely.

Our mother was not inventive when it came to using this vegetable, but she made a superior eggplant parmesan in the most traditional way. We enjoy her version greatly. For those of you looking to try a new and delicious way of presenting eggplant, we give you an updated recipe developed by Jennifer (our chef daughter). Although this recipe is a bit more lengthy, the extra steps of caramelizing onions and roasting garlic add a wonderful depth of flavor to the rich filling.

Either of these recipes would serve nicely as an entree for a non-meat dinner, paired with a crispy green salad and some good hearth bread. They would also work well as a first course in a more elaborate meal. Take your choice – old or new – or try them both.

First, a few words about preparation. Choose an eggplant that is firm and glossy with no bruises or soft spots. Store unwrapped in the crisper for up to three days. Rinse well in cold water and dry when ready to use. Do not peel for the following recipes. Most cookbooks tell you that salting and draining is optional, but I always do it for two reasons: it will remove any bitterness, and it causes the eggplant slices to "sweat", which reduces the water content and results in less oil absorption. Before slicing trim off both ends.

For the first recipe the eggplant is to be sliced across (in rounds) about 3/8" thick. This should result in about twelve slices. In the second recipe it is to be sliced along the length, also 3/8" thick, and should result in about nine slices. When slicing lengthwise the first and last slices have skin over one entire side. Place these two pieces flesh-side down on the table and slice off the rounded top to expose some flesh. After slicing in whatever manner is called for, lightly salt the pieces, place them in a colander, and let rest for half an hour. Remove them to paper towels, patting both sides carefully to dry them, then proceed immediately to the recipe.

Both recipes call for dry breadcrumbs. We always use homemade crumbs because they have a better texture and lack the chemical aftertaste of many store bought varieties. It's your choice.

Finally, to drain any food after frying, try using a simple brown grocery bag ripped open. It absorbs the oil beautifully and leaves the food crisp, while paper towels seem to make food soggy.

Although these recipes appear to be labor intensive, both lend themselves well to advance preparation.

Eggplant Parmesan – Old Style

Serves six as a first course or side dish, or three as an entree. May be doubled.

- 1 large eggplant, sliced crosswise 3/8" thick, salted, drained, and dried thoroughly (12 slices)
- 1 cup flour
- 2 eggs beaten lightly with a tsp of cold water in a shallow bowl
- 1-1/2 cups dry breadcrumbs
- 1-1/2 cups Italian Fontina, coarsely grated (about 6 oz.)
- 1/2 cup Parmesan, finely grated (about 2 oz.)
- 2 cups, approximately, of tomato sauce
- olive oil for frying



Step One: Initial cooking of eggplant. Arrange the cup of flour on a flat plate. Next to it place the bowl of eggs, and then a flat plate with the dry crumbs. Work with only as many slices of eggplant as will fit into your sauté pan without crowding. Slices must not touch each other. Heat a large sauté pan over medium high heat with about 1/8" of olive oil. The oil must be very hot but not smoking. Dip each eggplant slice first in the flour, shake off excess, then into the egg, and finally dredge well in the crumbs. Shake off excess and slide into the hot oil. Cook 2-3 minutes on each side or until cooked through. Test with the tip of a sharp knife. The flesh must be tender. Adjust heat as needed to keep it hot for each batch but not so hot it burns the outside before the flesh is cooked. Remove to drain on a brown paper bag. Repeat until all eggplant has been cooked adding more oil as needed. If you accumulate burned bits between batches wipe the pan with a paper towel carefully and add fresh oil.

Step Two: Assembly and final cooking. Use a casserole dish that is approximately 8 inch x 12 inch. Place a very thin layer of sauce on the bottom, then lay in six of the fried eggplant slices. Top with half of the Fontina and half of the Parmesan. Spoon some sauce on each slice. Top with the next 6 slices, add the remaining Fontina, then as much tomato sauce as you wish, and finally the remainder of the Parmesan. Some people prefer a very "saucy" dish and others a slightly drier one (which is my preference). May be prepared up to four hours in advance. Place in 375 degree oven for approximately 40 minutes until hot and bubbly throughout. Let rest five minutes before serving.

Eggplant Parmesan – New Style

Serves three as a main course. May be doubled.

- 1 large eggplant, sliced lengthwise 3/8" thick, salted, drained, and dried thoroughly (9 slices)
- 1/3 cup olive oil, approximately
- 3/4 cup whole milk ricotta (6 oz.)
- 1/2 cup Italian Fontina, coarsely grated (2 oz.)
- 1/2 cup Parmesan, finely grated and divided in half (2 oz.)
- 1 onion, caramelized (instructions and ingredients follow)
- 1 head garlic, roasted (instructions and ingredients follow)
- 2 Tblsp. chopped parsley
- 1 tsp. fresh thyme, finely chopped (if available) or use 1/2 tsp. dried
- salt and freshly ground pepper to taste
- 1 to 1-1/2 cups tomato sauce
- 1/4 cup dry breadcrumbs
- 1/3 cup additional Fontina



Family Secrets

The best of the recipes, techniques, and methods practiced by our large extended Italian-American family, with emphasis on the legacy handed down to us by the original immigrants.

Step One: Caramelizing onion. Peel, quarter, and very finely slice onion. Place a medium sauté pan over medium high heat and add 1 Tbsp. butter and 2 tsp. olive oil. Add onions, 1/2 tsp. salt, 1/4 tsp. sugar, and toss well to coat onions. Reduce heat and cover for five minutes. Remove cover, raise heat, and cook until all liquid has evaporated and onions turn meltingly soft and deep ivory. This will take about 20 minutes more, adjusting heat so the onions do not fry or burn. You may have a few tips that have browned but the onions should not. Set aside to come to room temperature.



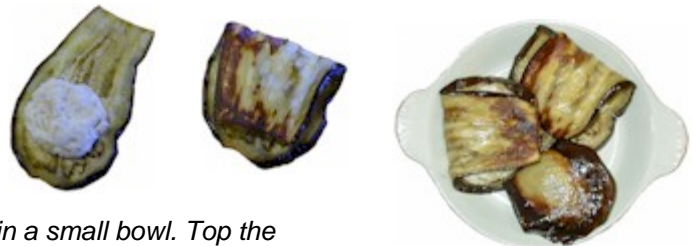
Step Two: Roasting garlic. Preheat oven to 375 degrees. Choose a large head of garlic with plump cloves. Cut off about 1/2 inch from the stem end (not the root end). Cut a square of aluminum foil big enough to wrap the garlic head. Place garlic head in center, dribble with 1/2 tsp. of olive oil, salt and pepper lightly and sprinkle on a pinch of dried thyme. Wrap loosely in foil and bake until the cloves are tender, approximately one to one and a half hours. Test with tip of sharp knife, which should slide into a clove easily. When cool enough to handle, separate cloves and squeeze. The garlic will pop right out of its shell. Mash in small bowl and set aside. Do this while working on the onions to save time.

Step Three: Making the filling. Mix the ricotta, Fontina, half the Parmesan, the caramelized onions, the roasted garlic, parsley, and thyme together. Add a good grind of pepper and taste for salt, being careful because of the cheeses. Mix well, then divide into 9 equal portions.



Step Four: Precooking the eggplant. Preheat oven to 400 degrees. Lightly oil a large cookie sheet (or two). Do not crowd the slices. Arrange the prepared slices so they are not touching. Brush both sides with the olive oil, using a basting brush. They will absorb the oil. Roast until tender and brown, approximately 20 minutes, turning once at the 10 minute mark. Check to be sure they are cooked through. Set aside.

Step Five: Assembly and final cooking. Place one portion of the filling on the lower (fat) half of each eggplant slice. Fold over and pat gently to hold in place. If using individual heat proof casseroles, place three filled and folded slices in each one, or alternatively, use an 8" x 12" single casserole. Mix the breadcrumbs, the rest of the Parmesan, and the final 1/3 cup Fontina together in a small bowl. Top the eggplant with as much tomato sauce as you wish, then divide the crumb topping over all. May be completed up to four hours in advance. Refrigerate until ready to bake. Preheat oven to 400 degrees. If refrigerated, the dish will take about 20 minutes to melt the top cheese and heat through. If not refrigerated, check in 10-12 minutes. Sauce should be bubbly. Let rest five minutes before serving.



Altitude Adjustment: None needed.

Baked Ziti with Four Cheeses

By CeCe Dove, La Lama Mountain Ovens, 575-586-2286, ccdove@parshift.com

The winter doldrums are well and truly here. The lovely first snowfall and wonder and excitement of Christmas are gone. The first seed catalogs are yet to arrive. What is a body to do? I am cold from my nose to my toes and deep in my soul. I cannot bear to count another gram of fat or carb. It is really easy to solve this dilemma. Into the kitchen we go to whip up a dish that will warm you from the inside out. A dish to share with family and friends and fill the house with wonderful aromas. Simply put, we all need some comfort food right now. Be warned, do not attempt this if you are dieting because you will come back for seconds!

Baked pasta dishes have a long history in Italian cooking, some complicated and time consuming and others simple and rustic. This recipe falls into the latter category. It should take no more than half an hour to put together and another half hour to finish itself off in the oven. Add a salad and some hearty red wine and you will have a wonderful meal fit to serve anyone deserving your table. Some may say this is an Italian version of Mac and Cheese. I say it is much more. Four cheeses combined with good tomato sauce meld together for a much more sophisticated and layered taste than the American cousin.

While this recipe calls for Ziti you may substitute any small tubular pasta such as penne or penne rigate. Do not use elbow macaroni. Please use the best cheeses you can find, it is well worth the price in final taste.

Baked Ziti with Four Cheeses

Serves six

- 1 lb. Ziti
- $\frac{3}{4}$ lb. Whole milk Ricotta
- $\frac{1}{4}$ lb. Italian Fontina, coarsely grated
- $\frac{1}{4}$ lb. Whole milk Mozzarella, coarsely grated
- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup finely grated Parmesan
- 1 qt. Tomato sauce (home made is really the best, see Recipe #10 in our library or use your favorite)
- 2 cups Bechamel sauce

Make the Bechamel:

- 2 cups whole milk
- $\frac{1}{4}$ lb. Butter
- 4 Tblsp. flour
- 1 tsp. Salt

Melt the butter in a medium saucepan – add flour and stir to blend. You are aiming for a white roux, so cook the butter/flour mixture only 2 minutes. Add the cold milk all at once and whisk to blend. Add salt. Bring to a simmer, stirring constantly until thickened. You can make this while the pasta is cooking.

Assemble the dish:

Butter a glass casserole dish, approximately 13x10, and set aside. Cook the ziti in a large quantity of boiling salted water according to package directions or until it is done to your liking (al dente, hopefully). While the pasta is cooking, warm the tomato sauce and put it into a bowl large enough to hold all ingredients. When the pasta is cooked, drain well, add to the tomato sauce, add Bechamel, then add all the cheeses except Parmesan and mix vigorously until well combined. Pour into the buttered casserole, top with Parmesan, and bake 30-35 minutes until bubbly. Let sit five minutes before serving.

Altitude adjustment: None.