

COOKING AT REN

May 14, 2012

Bruschetta, Roasted Tomatoes, Fresh Ricotta and Prosciutto

6 tablespoons plus 1 teaspoon extra-virgin olive oil
2 large garlic cloves, minced
2 teaspoons finely chopped fresh rosemary
1 teaspoon coarse salt
1 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
6 large plum tomatoes (about 1 1/2 pounds), quartered lengthwise
14 1/2-inch-thick diagonally cut baguette slices (each 3 to 4 inches long)
14 tablespoons ricotta cheese, divided
7 thin prosciutto slices, cut in half crosswise
1 teaspoon fresh lemon juice
1 cup microgreens or baby arugula

Preheat oven to 425°F. Stir 12 tablespoons oil, garlic, rosemary, 1 teaspoon salt, and 1 teaspoon pepper in a bowl to blend. Add tomato quarters and stir to coat. Let stand 5 minutes. Line baking sheet with foil. Take tomatoes from marinade and arrange, cut side down, on baking sheet (reserve marinade for toasts).

Roast tomatoes until skin is browned and blistered and tomatoes are very tender, about 35 minutes. Cool tomatoes. Keep oven temperature at 425°F.

Arrange bread slices on baking sheet. Brush top of each with reserved marinade (including garlic and rosemary bits).

Roast bread until top is golden, 10 to 12 minutes. Cool toasts.

Spread 1 tablespoon ricotta cheese on each toast; sprinkle with pepper. Fold prosciutto halves over and place on ricotta. Arrange 2 tomato quarters atop of that. Whisk lemon juice and remaining 2 teaspoon oil in bowl to blend; season with salt and pepper.

Add microgreens and toss to coat. Top bruschetta with microgreens.

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Rich Homemade Ricotta

3 cups whole milk
1 cups heavy cream
1/2 teaspoon salt
3 Tbl fresh squeezed lemon juice

Pour the milk, cream and salt into a large nonreactive saucepan. Attach a candy or deep-fry thermometer. Heat the milk to 190°F, stirring it occasionally to keep it from scorching on the bottom.

Remove from heat and add the lemon juice, then stir it once or twice, gently and slowly. Let the pot sit undisturbed for 5 minutes.

Line a colander with a few layers of cheesecloth and place it over a large bowl (to catch the whey). Pour the curds and whey into the colander and let the curds strain for at least an hour. At an hour, you'll have a tender, spreadable ricotta. At two hours, it will be spreadable but a bit firmer, almost like cream cheese. Eat the ricotta right away or transfer it to an airtight container and refrigerate until ready to use.

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Pickled Pear Salad with Creamy Lemon Dressing

1 1/2 cups water
2 Tbl sugar
1 tablespoons kosher salt
1/2 teaspoon fennel seeds
1/2 lemon
2 large Asian pears—halved, cored and thinly sliced lengthwise
1/4 cup crème fraîche or sour cream
1/4 cup fresh lemon juice
1 medium shallot, minced
1/2 teaspoon finely grated lemon zest
1/2 cup extra-virgin olive oil
Salt and cayenne pepper
2 small heads frisée lettuce (1 pounds), tender green and white leaves only, torn into bite-size pieces
2 bunches watercress (1 pounds), thick stems discarded
1/2 red onion, thinly sliced lengthwise
3 oz ricotta salada

In a medium bowl, combine the water, sugar, kosher salt and fennel seeds; stir to dissolve the sugar and salt. Squeeze the lemon halves over the water and drop them in the bowl. Add the Asian pears and stir to separate the slices. Cover the pears with a plate to keep them submerged and refrigerate overnight or for up to 2 days.

In a bowl, whisk the crème fraîche with the lemon juice, shallot and lemon zest. Gradually whisk in the olive oil and season with salt and cayenne.

Drain the pears in a colander. Add the pears, frisée, watercress and red onion to the dressing, season with salt and cayenne and toss. Shave the cheese over the salad and serve.

Quick Pickled Asian Pear

2 large Asian pears cored and thinly sliced lengthwise
1/4 cup sugar
1/2 cup rice wine vinegar
1/2 cup water
1 serrano chile seeded and sliced

Bring sugar, vinegar, water and chile to a simmer until sugar is dissolved. Pour over pears in bowl and allow to cool to room temperature

Chicken Scarpariello

1 small fryer chickens, (about 2 1/2 pounds each)
 salt
 freshly ground pepper
 1/4 cup olive oil, or as needed
 1/2 pound sweet Italian sausage, cut into 1-inch pieces
 10 garlic cloves, peeled and chopped fine
 5 pickled cherry peppers, cut in half and stemmed
 1/4 cup red wine vinegar
 1/2 cup dry white wine
 1 cup chicken stock, or canned reduced-sodium chicken broth
 1/4 cup Italian parsley, freshly chopped

Cut chicken into 12 pieces. Wash and pat the chicken pieces dry, then season them generously with salt and pepper. Preheat oven to 475 degrees F.

Heat 2 tablespoons of the olive oil in a large skillet. Add as many pieces of chicken, skin side down and starting with the leg, thigh and wing pieces, to the skillet as fit without touching. Cook the chicken, turning as necessary, until golden brown on all sides, about 8 minutes. Remove the chicken pieces as they brown and drain them briefly on paper towels. Place the drained chicken pieces in a roasting pan large enough to hold all of them in a single layer.

Repeat with the remaining chicken, adding more oil to the pan as necessary. After all the chicken has been added, tuck in pieces of sausage and cook, turning until browned on all sides.

Remove all chicken and sausage from the pan, add the garlic and cook until golden, being careful not to burn it. Scatter the cherry peppers into the skillet, season with salt and pepper and stir for a minute. Pour in the vinegar and bring to boil, scraping the browned bits that stick to the skillet into the liquid and cook until the vinegar is reduced by half. Add the white wine, bring to a boil and boil until reduced by half, about 3 minutes.

Pour in the stock and bring to a boil. Pour the sauce over the

chicken in the roasting pan and stir to coat. Place the chicken in the oven and roast, stirring occasionally, until the sauce is thick and sticky, like molasses, about 10 minutes. If the sauce is still too thin, place the roasting pan directly over medium-high heat on the stovetop and cook, stirring, until it is reduced, about a minute or two. Once the sauce is thickened, toss in parsley and serve.

Broccoli Rabe with Melted Garlic

1/3 cup extra virgin olive oil
6 cloves garlic thinly sliced
1/2 tea crushed red pepper
2 lbs broccoli rabe thick stems trimmed
Salt and Pepper

Bring a large pot of salted water to a boil. Add the broccoli rabe and cook until just tender but still bright green about 3 mins drain and coarsely chop.

In a large deep skillet, heat the oil. Add the garlic and red pepper and cook over low heat until the garlic is golden about 3 mins. Add the broccoli rabe and cook over high heat stirring until hot about 4 mins season with salt and pepper.

Creamy Soft Polenta

2 cups water
2 cups milk
1 cups cream
1 cups polenta
2 Tbl butter
3 Tbl finely grated Parmigiano-Reggiano

Put the polenta meal, water, milk and cream in a large saucepan and bring to a boil over medium-high heat. Reduce the heat to low and simmer for 45 minutes, stirring occasionally to prevent the bottom from burning. Whisk in the salt, pepper, butter and parmesan.

season with salt and pepper. Stir in the reserved cream and parsley taste for seasoning

Mushroom Ragout

1 cups cream
1/2 teaspoon minced fresh thyme
1/8 teaspoon nutmeg
1/4 cup finely grated Parmigiano-Reggiano
2 teaspoon olive oil
8 oz small cremini mushroom, cleaned, stemmed and quartered
4 oz assorted wild mushrooms cleaned
2 medium shallots minced
1/2 teaspoon salt
1/2 teaspoon pepper
1 Tbl parsley

While polenta is cooking, pour the cream in a pan and simmer over low heat until it is thick and reduced by half, about 15 - 20 mins. Whisk in the thyme, nutmeg, and cheese. Remove from heat and set aside

Heat a skillet over high heat. Add the olive oil and coat pan. Add the cremini mushrooms and cook until the mushrooms release their juices and start browning about 5 - 10 mins. Stir in the wild mushrooms, shallots, and garlic and cook until mushrooms are tender

Italian Stone Fruit Betty with Zabaglione

1 lbs stone fruit pitted, and cut into 1/4 inch wedges (plums, peaches, or apricots)
 3 Tbl sugar
 1 Tbl rum
 2 large anisette toasts
 1 1/2 Tbl unsalted butter, melted

Zabaglione

1/4 cup sugar
 3/4 cup Moscato d' Asti
 8 large egg yolks

Preheat the oven to 400°. Generously butter a 8 inch square baking dish. Toss the stone fruit with the sugar and rum; arrange in the dish in an even layer. With a rolling pin, crush the toasts in a bag to 1/4 inch crumbs or pulse in food processor. Toss the crumbs with the butter and scatter over the fruit. Bake for about 15 minutes until fruit is soft and the top is golden.

Zabaglione

In a medium stainless steel bowl, whisk the egg yolks with 1/4 cup of sugar and 3/4 cup of Moscato. Fill a large bowl with ice water. Set the bowl with the eggs over a medium saucepan filled with 1 inch of barely simmering water (you can also use a double boiler). Continue whisking until the mixture is thick and tripled in volume 5-7 minutes

Remove the zabaglione from the heat and whisk in 1 tablespoon of olive oil. Carefully set the bowl in the ice bath and whisk the zabaglione until chilled, about 5 minutes.

Serve warm or room temperature. Transfer the fruit to shallow bowls, top each one with a large dollop of zabaglione and serve right away.