

JOHN PEPPER'S

cookery for

THE

family

©

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## PASTAS

## PASTA

## RIGATONI WITH AVOCADO

- 1.5 lb. (700 g) of Rigatoni (or Penne or Fusilli or most of the short pastas)
- 1 avocado
- juice of ½ a lemon (but squeeze an entire one in case you need extra)
- pinch of ground-dried chilli
- salt & pepper
- 3 tablespoons or so olive oil
- 2 large ripe tomatoes (peeled and diced)
- 1 tablespoon finely chopped flat leaf (Italian) parsley

\* \* \*

Bring a casserole filled with water to boil, insert your tomatoes for about 5 minutes or until the skin has inflated a bit. Remove and place them in a bowl, fill it with cold water and, careful not to burn your fingers, peel off the skin. Cut into squares and let them rest on a side platter.

Bring your salted water to boil in a large pot well filled. Once the water is boiling add the pasta and cook until al dente.

Mix together the lemon juice, dried chilli powder and salt and pepper.

While it is cooking cut the avocado in half, remove the pit and the skin and then cut into slices lengthwise. Remember not to cut them too thin as they will break too easily.

Cover the avocado with the lemon so it doesn't turn brown. Add the olive oil.

Drain the pasta, transfer it to a platter and pour the avocado mixture over the pasta (reserve a few slices of avocado to place on top before serving) and toss gently. Sprinkle the tomatoes and parsley on top, dress with the remaining avocado.

Serve at once (6).

## CONCHIGLIE WITH TUNA

- 1.5 lb. (700 g) of Conchiglie (or Rigatoni or Penne or Fusilli or most of the short pastas)
- 6 tablespoons or so olive oil
- 1 red onion (optional)
- 1 tablespoon of Capers
- 7 to 10 ounces of canned tuna in water, drained and flaked
- A pinch of paprika (optional)
- Salt and pepper
- 1 tablespoon finely chopped flat leaf (Italian) parsley

\* \* \*

Bring your salted water to boil in a large pot well filled. Once the water is boiling add the pasta and cook until al dente.

While the water is heating peel, and cut the onion into paper thin slices and place them in your serving platter (reserving a few pieces to add just before serving). Peel your garlic, slice in half and remove the green 'anima'. Add your garlic to the serving platter with the paprika and 1 tablespoon of olive oil. Toss together.

Drain the pasta, transfer it to the platter and with the onion mixture. Add the tuna, salt, pepper and capers. Pour over the olive oil and toss. Sprinkle the parsley and dress with the few remaining slices of onion. Serve at once (6).

## LINGUINI WITH POTATOES AND ROSEMARY

- 1 lb. (700 g) of linguine
- 3 boiling potatoes, peeled and cut into 'julienne' strips (those are strips circa 5cm or 2 inches long and the width of a pencil)
- 6 tablespoons of olive oil (do not be afraid to add; olive oil is added according to how 'dry' the pasta is however be careful not to add too much)
- 1 small onion, finely chopped (with a wide cutting knife is better than a thin small one)
- 2 tablespoons (or three) of fresh rosemary, finely chopped (this ingredient should be fresh as it is easy to find. Fresh enhances the taste tremendously)
- Salt and freshly ground pepper

\* \* \*

Bring the water to boil and add the potatoes and the pasta and cook until it is al dente.

Meanwhile pour in half the olive oil in a frying pan and heat. Add the onion and the rosemary and stir for a minute or two. Add the rest of the olive oil and sauté stirring constantly until the onions are golden. Drain the pasta and the potatoes (careful not to break them). Reserve 1/3 of the potatoes. Remember to keep a few tablespoons of water in reserve.

Pour the drained pasta into a heated serving bowl. Pour the contents of the frying pan on top and stir very well. If it becomes a little dry add a tablespoon or two of the water the pasta was boiled in.

Just before serving add the remaining potatoes on top for dressing.

## FUSILLI WITH SWEET CORN

- 1 lb. (700 g) of Fusilli
- 3 ears of corn (NOTE that canned corn or frozen corn can also be used if this pasta is being prepared out of season)
- 1/3 cup (3 ounces or 90 grams) of unsalted butter at room temperature so that it is soft
- 2 tablespoons of finely chopped chives
- Salt and freshly ground pepper

\* \* \*

In your pasta pot bring the water to boil.

Meanwhile husk the corn, remove the silky threads and trim the ends. When the water comes to a boil add the corn and cover. When the water comes to a boil again shut the flame off and let it sit for five minutes. Then remove the corn without burning yourself and let it rest until cool enough to handle. Cut the kernels off and set them aside in a warm bowl.

Bring the same water to boil again, add the fusilli and cook until al dente.

Drain the pasta and transfer it to the bowl with the kernels. Add the butter and the chives and toss. Add salt and pepper to taste.

## LINGUINI WITH BASIL SAUCE

- 1 1/4 lb. (600 g) of linguine
- 1 Cup (1.5 ounces or 45 gr) of firmly packed, well-washed and dried - - fresh basil leaves (they can be bought at most supermarkets)
- 3 tablespoons of freshly grated Parmigiano (you can have a 1/2 cup or more on hand that each person can add to the pasta on their plate - -after they have tasted it!)
- 2 tablespoons of freshly grated Romano cheese
- 5 tablespoons (1.5 or 50g) of pine nuts
- 2 gloves of garlic (up to 4 if you like garlic)
- 1/2 cup of olive oil

\* \* \*

In your pasta pot bring the water to boil.

Place the basil and salt (about 1/4 teaspoon) and a tablespoon of olive oil (not more) in the blender or food mixer. Put it on pulse and process the mixture until it is chopped - -just a few seconds. Add the cheeses (holding a few tablespoons in reserve), the garlic, pine nuts, olive oil and process until it is a smooth, creamy sauce (if a little dry add a little olive oil; if too wet add some more pine nuts or failing that a tablespoon of parmigiano).

Add the linguini to the boiling water and cook al dente. Reserve a little water (you can add a tablespoon of the pasta water to the sauce at this time and blend it in order to make it into a smooth paste, if necessary).

Drain the pasta and arrange it onto the warm serving platter. Add half the sauce and toss well. Taste and add salt and pepper to taste. Add the rest of the sauce and toss some more.

Serve immediately with additional freshly grated parmigiano on the side so that each person can add some to the top of their plate - -to taste.

## SPAGHETTI WITH SHRIMP SAUCE

- 1 lb. (480 g) of spaghetti
- 3 tablespoons of olive oil
- 1 small onion, chopped
- 1lb (480 grams) of shrimp (prawns), peeled
- 1/3 (to 1/2) cup of dry white wine
- 10 ounces (300 grams) of ripe Italian (long ones) tomatoes, peeled and chopped (for peeling procedure see Rigatoni with avocado recipe) or you can use whole peeled canned tomatoes, they are not as good in my opinion, but make certain you get rid of all the juice in the can!)
- 1 tablespoon of fresh, chopped flat leaf (Italian) parsley
- Salt and freshly ground pepper

\* \* \*

In your pasta pot bring the water to boil.

In a large frying pan heat the olive oil over low heat. Once it is very hot add the onions and fry slowly until they become golden (about 3 minutes). Add the shrimp and raise the heat to medium and cook, stirring constantly (about 2 minutes). Now add the white wine and cook until it evaporates (about 2 minutes). Add the tomatoes and season to taste with salt and pepper (about 2 minutes).

At the same time, when the water is boiling, add the spaghetti and cook until barely al dente.

Drain the pasta and add it to the frying pan containing the tomato sauce. Add the parsley and cook over medium heat, stirring frequently and energetically (about 2 minutes)

Arrange on a platter and serve piping hot.

## FUSILLI WITH ONION AND BACON

- 1 1/4 lb. (600 g) of fusilli
- 1/3 ounce (10 g) of dried porcini mushrooms or 6 ounces (180 g) fresh cultivated (button) mushrooms
- 6 tablespoons (3 fluid ounces or 90 milligrams) of olive oil
- 10 ounces (300 g) of onions thinly sliced
- 1/2 cup (4 fluid ounces or 120 millilitres) of dry white wine
- Salt and freshly ground pepper
- 3 ounces (90 g) smoked bacon or smoked pancetta cut into thin julienne slices (those are strips circa 5cm or 2 inches long and the width of a pencil)
- 1/2 cup (2 ounces or 60 g) freshly grated parmigiano

\* \* \*

NOTE: you can omit the mushrooms and replace with 1 tablespoon fennel seeds with the white wine.

In your pasta pot bring the water to boil.

If using the porcini mushrooms place them in a bowl of lukewarm water and let them sit for half an hour. If you are using fresh mushrooms then wipe them clean with a cloth (do not wash); remove the stems and discard and then slice them thin.

In a large frying pan heat the olive oil over medium heat. Once it is very hot add the onions and fry slowly until they become golden (about 5 minutes). Add the wine and the mushrooms and salt and pepper. Reduce the heat and cover and let simmer gently for about 40 minutes. In a small frying pan heat the remaining 2 tablespoons of olive oil over medium flame and, when hot, add the bacon. Cook for 5 minutes then set aside.

Cook your Fettuccini and drain when barely al dente. Add the pasta to the large frying pan and stir (2 minutes) add the contents of the small frying pan and stir for another 2 minutes.

Pour the pasta in a hot serving bowl and add the parmigiano.

## RIGATONI WITH 4 CHEESES

- 1 1/4 lb. (600 g) of fusilli
- 2 ounces (60 g) Fontina cheese cut into julienne strips
- 2 ounces (60 g) Gorgonzola, crumbled
- 2 ounces (60 g) Swiss cheese cut into julienne strips
- 1/2 cup (4 fluid ounces or 120 millilitres) of heavy cream
- salt and freshly ground pepper
- 1/2 cup (2 ounces or 60 g) of freshly grated parmigiano cheese.

\* \* \*

In your pasta pot bring the water to boil.

Meanwhile, in a saucepan, place the Fontina, Gorgonzola and Fontina and the cream. On a medium/low flame melt the cheese stirring continuously until they have almost dissolved. Keep warm (important) and stir occasionally so they do not solidify again.

Meanwhile add the Rigatoni (this pasta can be made with any type of 'short' pasta - i.e. not spaghetti or fettuccine - to the boiling water. Drain the pasta and place in a warm serving platter and serve immediately.

## SPAGHETTI WITH EGG AND BACON

- 1 1/4 lb. (600 g) of spaghetti
- 3 egg yolks (yellow of the eggs)
- 6 tablespoons (1 1/2 ounces or 45 g) of freshly grated parmigiano cheese.
- 6 tablespoons (3 fluid ounces or 90 milligrams) of olive oil
- 3 ounces (90 g) smoked bacon or smoked pancetta cut into thin julienne slices ((those are strips circa 5cm or 2 inches long and the width of a pencil)
- salt and freshly ground pepper

\* \* \*

NOTE: the heat of the just-drained pasta cooks the yolks in this recipe favoured by the Romans.

In your pasta pot bring the water to boil.

In a bowl beat the egg yolks with the parmigiano. Season with salt and pepper.

In a large frying pan heat the remaining 2 tablespoons of olive oil over medium flame and, when hot, add the bacon. Cook for 5 minutes.

Meanwhile add the spaghetti to the boiling water and cook until it is barely al dente.

Drain the pasta and add to the frying pan stirring over low heat for about 2 minutes.

Arrange the pasta on a warm serving platter. Pour the egg yolk mixture over the pasta and toss it energetically to coat the spaghetti with the mixture.

Serve piping hot (note: you can have additional parmigiano on the table for each person to sprinkle on their plate.

## FARFALLE WITH WALNUTS AND LEMON ZEST

- 1 1/4 lb. (600 g) of Farfalle
- 1/3 cup (3 ounces or 90 g) unsalted butter (room temperature)
- 2/3 cup (2 ounces or 60 g) walnuts (or pine nuts), very finely chopped
- 1 tablespoon grated lemon zest (the yellow skin, no white)
- 2 tablespoons of cognac (or calvados)
- salt and freshly ground pepper

\* \* \*

NOTE: a 'double boiler' is when you put 3 or 4 fingers of water in the bottom of a casserole and then place another pan (such as a frying pan or a 'low sauce pan') over it. When the water in the lower pan boils the heat gently cooks what is in the top pan).

In your pasta pot bring the water to boil and then add the farfalle.

Meanwhile in the top pan of the double boiler melt the butter. Stir in the nuts, the lemon zest and the cognac and keep warm over low heat. Drain the pasta and place it in a warm serving platter. Add the butter-nut mixture and sprinkle to taste with salt and pepper. Toss it energetically and well.

Serve piping hot.

## TAGLIATELLE WITH BUTTER AND SAGE

- 1 lb. (520 g) of fresh tagliatelle (made the same day - -or else you can use the packages of tagliatelle from say, DeChecco).
- 1/3 cup (3 ounces or 90 g) unsalted butter (room temperature)
- 20 fresh sage leaves
- ¾ cup (3 ounces or 90 g) freshly grated parmigiano
- 2/3 cup (2 ounces or 60 g) pine nuts
- salt and freshly ground pepper

\* \* \*

In your pasta pot bring the water to boil.

Meanwhile, in a saucepan melt 2/3 of the butter and add the sage and let cook over medium heat until the butter is golden and the sage turns slightly darker (about 5 minutes).

In a separate, smaller frying pan, add the remaining butter and melt on gentle flame. Add the pine nuts and toss until they are golden brown. Remove the pine nuts and dry in paper towels. Discard the remaining butter.

Add the tagliatelle to the boiling water and cook al dente.

(NOTE: fresh tagliatelle take a very short time, about 2 minutes, whereas the dry version takes about 6 minutes).

Drain the pasta and arrange it in a warm serving platter. Pour on the butter and sage mixture and half the parmigiano. Toss energetically. Add the pine nuts and the other half of the parmigiano.

Toss again and serve piping hot.

## BAKED PAPPARDELLE WITH HAM AND CHEESE

- 1 lb. (520 g) of fresh pappardelle (made the same day - -or else you can use the packages from say, DeChecco)
- 8 tablespoons (4 ounces or 120 g) unsalted butter (room temperature), plus 1 tablespoon for the baking dish
- 1 Cup (1 ounce or 30 g) of all-purpose (plain) flour
- 1 ¼ cups (10 fluid ounces or 300 millilitres) of milk
- 8 ounces (240 g) ham cut into julienne strips (those are strips circa 5cm or 2 inches long and the width of a pencil)
- ¾ cup (3 ounces or 90 g) freshly grated parmigiano
- pinch of freshly grated nutmeg
- salt and freshly ground pepper

\* \* \*

In your pasta pot bring the water to boil. NOTE: as pappardelle are large and cumbersome, it is best to have as much water in your pot as it can hold - -beware of the water rising and overflowing when you insert the pappardelle.

In a small pan heat the milk until boiling. Lower the heat so the milk simmers.

In a heavy saucepan melt two tablespoons of butter over medium heat; add the flour and stir with a whisk until the butter and flour form a coagulated mass that resembles dry putty. Add the hot milk, gradually in a gentle, continual flow and stir very energetically until it becomes smooth and creamy (about 5 minutes). Add the ham and stir it in well. Add half the parmigiano and 6 tablespoons (3 ounces or 90 g) of butter. Stir this in well with the rest of the sauce (it is called a béchamel). Last but not least stir in half a teaspoon of the nutmeg (tasting as you add it). Continue stirring until all the butter has melted. If it gets too thick add a little warm milk. If it is too thin gradually sprinkle in more flour and this will thicken it.

Grease an 8 x 12 inch (20 30cm) ovenproof dish with 1 tablespoon of butter (if you need more use more) by holding it with your fingers and rubbing it into the pan. Be certain not to forget the sides of the pan.

Add your Pappardelle to the water and cook until they rise to the surface (about 2 minutes). Drain and immediately lay them in the baking dish. Pour the béchamel sauce (the white sauce) over it and toss very well until the sauce is spread through out the pappardelle. Grated some more nutmeg over the pasta and toss again (be careful not to overdo the nutmeg). Spread the pasta flat on the dish and sprinkle the remaining parmigiano over the top - -if you wish you could actually cover it with parmigiano as though it were a thin blanket.

Place the dish in the top portion of the oven, just under the broiler, and let it cook for about 3 minutes or until the top is golden.

**VARIATION ON THIS DISH :** At times, if there is a hungry crowd, it is possible to add chicken to this dish making it even more exquisite.

You will need:

- double the quantities in making the béchamel (white sauce) as you will need more.
- either purchase a freshly cooked whole chicken at a Rotisserie or bake a whole chicken in the oven or, simpler, cook four (4) chicken breasts.

If you are using a whole chicken, simply remove the skin and then remove the flesh from the bone. Cut your chicken into thin strips about 4 inches long (julienne) and 1 inch wide, and toss into the pasta before adding the béchamel, then continue as described above. If you are using chicken breasts, cut them into julienne strips and add them as described above.

Add 3 or 4 minutes more when under the broiler - -but keep a vigilant eye so that it doesn't burn.

The important thing is that there be enough béchamel for the chicken to remain moist as it is put under the broiler.

## SPAGHETTINI WITH SAUTEED SCALLOPS

- 1 lb. (520 g) of spaghetti (key for this type of pasta recipe)
- 12 sea scallops (Coquilles St Jacques)
- 6 tablespoons (3 fluid ounces or 90 milligrams) of olive oil
- 1 (or more) cloves of garlic, the 'anima' removed and chopped
- 1 small white onion, finely chopped
- salt and freshly ground pepper
- 1 tablespoon of chopped 'Mexican' / 'Italian' / flat leafed parsley (it is the spicy one).

\* \* \*

In your pasta pot bring the water to boil.

Wash your scallops under cold water removing the orange 'tail' and the thin black line along the side. Pat them dry with a paper towel and set aside in the freezer for 5 minutes - -they will harden slightly. Once this has occurred cut each scallop into three equal sizes. Set aside at room temperature.

In a large frying pan, over low heat, add the olive oil, the garlic, then after 2 minutes, add the onion and sauté until the mixture is golden (about another 3 minutes).

Raise the heat of the pan to high and add the scallops laying them all flat, on one side. Leave for about 2 minutes and then flip to the other side for 1 more minute. SCALLOPS ARE VERY DELICATE AND COOK RAPIDLY. They shouldn't be too cooked as this will dry them and make them hard.

Once you have turned the scallops over, add the spaghetti to the water and toss them well. They should cook in about three minutes - -or as long as it takes you to finish cooking the scallops. Turn the heat off the frying pan while you are draining the pasta.

Toss the pasta into the frying pan, add the parsley and turn the heat back on to medium. For about three minutes toss the pasta and scallops energetically.

Arrange the pasta on a warm serving platter, sprinkle the remaining olive oil on top and serve at once.

# POLLO

## CHICKEN

Three important things to keep in mind when you are preparing chicken (and chicken breasts):

- It is paramount that you ALWAYS wash the chicken inside and out with cold water. Once you have washed it and drained the water, do it again! Salmonella, a disease that is caught from eating poorly cleaned chicken, is very serious and is deadly. Once you have washed the chicken, dry it with paper towels (not cloth) and put it to rest on either more paper towels or on a platter. NEVER put the washed chicken to rest on a counter surface or even on your carving block - unless this has been washed very, very well in hot water.
- The tip to a successful SAUTE (i.e.: the trick to making certain your chicken breasts will not over cook or be too dry when sauté in a pan): chicken breasts are very delicate in that if they are either cooked on too high a heat or cooked for too long, they will dry out. However, as chicken is a dish that requires herbs, onions and other ingredients that need to be 'prepped' it is important that you do the measuring, the chopping, the dicing, the slicing etc well in advance. It is also imperative that you keep all these 'prepped' ingredients within your arms reach for. Should you need to spend a single minute 'here' and a single minute 'there' you will risk ruining the cooking of the chicken breasts. It will make the difference between their being 'moist', as they should be, and the breasts being dry and reminiscent of the leather of the bottom of your shoes.
- Herbs: are primary elements of cooking chicken. And herbs are not always found fresh, as they should be for their taste to be an enhancing asset to the dish. However there is a trick: if you are stuck with 'dry' herbs, place them in a sieve, run warm water over them and then dry them in a paper towel. This will restore their taste. However it is important that you never use dry parsley. This is the only herb that cannot be 'retrieved'. And, please retain that there can be no comparison between freshly ground pepper and pre-ground pepper. It is imperative that you always have freshly ground pepper.
- Chicken stock: If you can make it fresh, it is better. But I don't adhere to the religious fanaticism that one cannot use 'cubes' or other substitutes.

# POLLO ARROSTO

**IMPORTANT NOTE :** ALL RECIPES FOR CHICKEN ARE FOR 2 TO 4 PERSONS (EXCEPT THE POLO ARROSTO AND THE CURRY CHICKEN WHICH IS FOR 6). IF YOU WISH TO COOK FOR MORE JUST INCREASE THE QUANTITY OF THE INGREDIENTS. HOWEVER, IT IS EASIER TO JUST DOUBLE THE AMOUNTS AND BE READY FOR SIX TO EIGHT PERSONS - -OR HAVE LEFTOVERS...

\* \* \*

- ¾ cup good butter, at room temperature
- 1 cup of white wine (always use good quality when cooking)
- 1/2 cup of chicken broth (either natural or using a cube)
- 4 lb. (2.5 k) free-range chicken
- salt and pepper
- 3 lemons: squeeze the juice out of the lemons and reserve. Cut the lemons into quarters.
- several sprigs of thyme and tarragon and rosemary cut into 4inch bits.
- 5 garlic cloves, peeled, cleaned and crushed
- 2 heaping tablespoons finely chopped flat leaf (Italian) parsley
- Cooking needle and cooking thread (or a normal sowing needle and thread)

Preheat the oven to 450° (the highest setting)

Cover a large roasting pan, with tall sides, with part of the butter.

Wash the bird inside and out and dry. Make thin and slightly deep slices into the flesh of the chicken (the breast, the legs, the underbelly) and insert a little of the garlic in each cavity.

Salt and pepper the inside making certain to cover the inside walls of the chicken.

Stuff the bird with lemon quarters, the herbs, half the garlic and the parsley - -the lemons will add an additional fragrance. Once stuffed pour half the lemon juice into the belly of the chicken.

Once this is done sow well the rear cavity of the chicken so as to prevent the contents from falling out.

With your well-washed hands smear the remaining butter all over the chicken and place it into the roasting pan.

Pour ½ of the white wine and ½ of the chicken broth into the bottom of the pan.

Place the chicken in the middle of the oven for 10 to 15 minutes until the skin begins to turn a golden colour. Lower the heat to 375° and turn the chicken upside down. Leave it in this position for 10 minutes then turn the chicken onto one side for another 12 minutes (if necessary take a small brush and baste the side of the chicken facing up).

Pour the remaining ½ of the white wine and ½ of the chicken broth into the bottom of the pan.

12 minutes later repeat the operation by turning the chicken on the other side. Finally place the chicken back on its bottom for another 15 minutes - - and baste the top of the chicken every five minutes.

The chicken should be golden and crisp on all sides.

With a sharp knife poke the thigh of the chicken and a clear liquid should come out. That is your clue that the chicken is ready.

Turn the oven off and leave the chicken in it with the oven door ajar (you might need to use a wooden spoon for this) for 15 minutes. This allows the flesh to relax and the meat to retain then juices. Once it has cooled remove the 'bouquet' from the belly.

The best way to carve the chicken is to do it by keeping it in the roasting pan. This will allow any additional juices to flow to the bottom of the pan.

## POLLO CON ACETO BALSAMICO

- 4 lb. (2.5 k) free-range chicken cut into 8 pieces
  - 6 very ripe tomatoes, peeled, its seeds removed and chopped into rough pieces.
  - ½ cup good butter, at room temperature
  - 2 tablespoons of olive oil
  - 1 cup of Balsamic vinegar (important it be Balsamic)
  - 1 cup of chicken broth (either natural or using a cube)
  - 2 heaping tablespoons finely chopped flat leaf (Italian) parsley
- salt and pepper

\* \* \*

Season the chicken with salt and pepper. Heat ½ the butter and the olive in a coated frying pan until the butter turns a deep gold. Add the chicken and fry gently, turning occasionally, until golden brown all around.

Add the chopped tomatoes and ½ the parsley and carry on frying until the liquid evaporates and it becomes a dark paste (attention not to go too far).

Add the vinegar and lower the flame to a simmer. Toss the chicken as you go along.

Once the vinegar has been reduced add the chicken broth and, again, simmer until reduced by half.

Remove the chicken and place in a warm serving platter and keep warm.

Add the remaining butter and the remaining parsley and give it a glossy finish.

Pour the sauce onto the chicken and serve with boiled tomatoes.

## CHICKEN BREASTS WITH SAGE AND RED WINE

- 2 whole chicken breasts (2 lb) boned and halved
- 4 tablespoons (1/2 stick) of good 'slated' butter, at room temperature
- 4 fresh sage leaves or ½ teaspoon crumbled dried sage (rinsed as described in the introduction to this section)
- salt and pepper to taste
- ½ cup dry red wine
- ½ cup chicken stock

\* \* \*

In a large frying pan, over medium/high heat, melt the butter. Add the chicken breasts and sauté for 3 minutes on each side, until they are golden-brown.

Lower the heat to medium, add the sage, sprinkle on the salt and pepper and toss for a minute or so then add half (1/4 cup) of the red wine.

COVER and let it cook for about 8 minutes; uncover and continue to cook for another 2 minutes or until the chicken breasts are tender but have lost all trace of pink on the inside.

Remove the breasts to a heated platter and keep warm. Retain the juices in the pan.

Turn up the heat to high, add the remaining wine and the chicken stock and stir until it is reduced by half. (If you wish to thicken it a little you can add a teaspoon of flour.). Pour over the serving dish and serve piping hot.

## CHICKEN BREASTS WITH CURRY A LA CREOLE

- 3 whole chicken breasts (3 lb) skinned and halved
- 4 tablespoons (1/2 stick) of good 'slated' butter, at room temperature
- 2 garlic cloves (the 'anima' removed) and then crushed
- 1 large onion sliced into thin round slices
- 1 small red pepper finely chopped (or ¼ teaspoon of crushed pepper flakes or pepperoncino)
- 2 ½ tablespoons of curry powder
- ¼ teaspoon ground fresh ginger
- ¼ teaspoon of finely crushed saffron
- salt and pepper to taste
- 4 tablespoons of sugar
- 1/4 cup chicken stock
- 1 FRESH coconut, whose meat has been grated (without the exterior) and where the milk has been reserved

\* \* \*

In a large frying pan, over medium/high heat, melt the butter. Add the garlic and cook until brown. Add the onion and sauté for another 3 minutes or more until it is golden.

Increase the heat to medium-high and add the chicken breasts, bone side up do the fleshy part cooks first, and sauté 1 to 2 minutes on each side or until lightly brown. Remove the chicken breasts (actually one says 'reserve') to one side on a dish and keep warm.

Add the red pepper, the curry powder, ginger (sliced in very, very, thin slices), the saffron, salt and sugar. Lower the heat and simmer together all while stirring, slowly and continuously, for 1 to 2 minutes. Bring the heat back to medium (but be careful not to make it too high as chicken breasts must not seize too fast or else it seizes and gets dry), add the chicken breasts, the stock and the coconut and cover and let simmer for 20 minutes - -you will need to adjust the heat to a lower flame once you have placed the cover on the pan - -but keep it at a low boil.

After 10 minutes you should turn the breasts over and add the coconut milk and make certain the heat is now on low.

10 minutes later ascertain they are tender (and no red on the inside). If they need a few more minutes go for it - -but cautiously.

Remove the chicken breasts to the serving platter, add the 'solids' on top of the breasts and then scoop the 'liquids' over them and serve piping hot.

## CHICKEN BREASTS EN PAPILLIOTTE

**NOTE :** 'En papillotte' is a term that indicates the food, in this case the chicken (but it can be done with fish or veal or even vegetables), is wrapped tightly around either wax paper (special for ovens) or aluminium foil - - which I will use in this recipe. HOW TO: Cut 1 large (about 20 cm or 12 inches) piece of tin foil per chicken breast (in this case 8) and set them in a dry place. Place the breast in the centre and then you fold the paper in half and seal off the sides by folding them in on themselves so that no heat will escape. Traditionally one also folds over the top to seal it off. I do that but I also use a classic paper stapler and staple the top shut (particularly if you are using wax paper). Suggestion: start with the aluminium foil and 'graduate' to the wax paper (noting that the taste is 'finer' with the wax paper and it looks cooler when you present it on the table).

\* \* \*

- 2 whole chicken breasts (2 lb) boned with their skin removed and cut into quarters to make eight pieces.
- 8 very thin lemon slices
- 4 scallions chopped (include the white and some of the green leaves)
- 4 tablespoons of sesame seeds
- ½ cup light soy sauce
- 2 tablespoons of sugar
- ½ cup of Sake
- 1 tablespoon of vegetable oil
- ¼ teaspoon of freshly ground black pepper

\* \* \*

In a large frying pan, over medium/high heat, toast the sesame seeds until they are golden brown and begin to pop. Remove from the heat and set aside to cool.

Place the soy sauce, the sugar and the sake in a bowl and whip energetically for about 2 minutes. Add the chicken breasts, cover and let marinate for 1 hour (you can do it in 30 minutes if in a rush but no less than that).

Preheat the oven to 175 C (350 F).

Lightly brush each piece of foil on the inner side with the oil.

Now to make the papillotte: lift a chicken breast from the marinade and, with its juices still on it, place it at the bottom of the sheet of foil. Sprinkle with the black pepper, the sesame seeds and the scallions and place 1 lemon slice on the top. And 'wrap' the breast tightly so as not to let any air out as described in the 'note' above.

Repeat for each chicken breast until you have one for each diner.

Place each foil on a baking sheet and slide it into the oven. Cook for 20 to 25 minutes. This is a tricky one to check. What I do is choose one breast and, very carefully, slit open one top end and check to see if it needs any additional time. I then close it up and make certain I know which one it is and serve it to myself so the others are entirely closed. Warm the individual plates under scalding water, dry, and place each papillotte on a plate, garnish with your vegetable, and serve immediately.

NOTE: if you are serving rice with this you can place the rice in a serving bowl and present it separately.

## CHICKEN BREASTS A LA PARMIGIANA

- 2 whole chicken breasts (2 lb) skinned, boned (have the butcher do it for you), halved and flattened to about ½ inch thick
- ½ to 1 cup of all-purpose flour
- 4 garlic cloves (the 'anima' removed) and then crushed
- 1 teaspoon of coarse salt (1/2 is optional)
- 1 teaspoon freshly ground pepper (1/2 is optional)
- 2 eggs well beaten
- 2 cups of freshly grated parmigiano cheese
- 8 tablespoons of butter (about 125g or one stick in the US)
- ½ cup finely chopped Mexican (or flat) parsley
- 1 kilo of whole peeled tomatoes with their juice reserved on the side (optional)
- 1 onion finely chopped (optional)
- 8 tablespoons of extra virgin olive oil (optional)
- ½ cup of white wine (optional)

Spread the flour on a wooden board or a flat marble surface (very dry) coat each chicken breast with flour on each side then sprinkle the chicken breasts with the salt and pepper.

In a bowl beat the eggs and add the parmigiano, slowly, until you have a thick batter (similar to when you make pancakes). Dip each piece of chicken into the batter and make certain it is thickly covered on both sides. Set aside on a platter. Once they have all been coated place them back in the bowl with whatever remaining batter there is.

Let the breasts rest at room temperature for about 1 hour.

Preheat the oven to 175 C (350 F).

Butter the bottom and the sides of a baking dish large enough to contain the breasts side by side, barely touching.

In a large frying pan, over medium/high heat, melt the butter. Add 2 garlic cloves and cook until brown. Sauté each individual chicken breast (if you can fit several in at the same time without their touching, better) for about 3 minutes on each side, until they are golden on each side.

Remove each breast when done and place the baking dish side by side on a single layer. Add a dollop of butter to the top of each piece of chicken.

Bake for 12 to 15 minutes then remove from the oven, place on a warm serving platter, sprinkle with half of the parsley and serve piping hot.

**OPTIONAL SIDE SAUCE (VARIANT):** While the chicken breasts are marinating you can make a tomato sauce that you can serve on the side. It is known as a 'coulis'.

In a small frying pan (or a medium sauce pan) on a medium to high flame, heat the olive oil until it is scalding. Add the 2 remaining cloves of garlic and toss until they are golden. Add the onion and the other half a cup of parsley and the pepper. Cook for about 3 minutes, stirring continuously, until the onions are golden brown and everything has meshed together. When it begins to dry add half the white wine and continue for another 2 minutes.

Carefully place the whole peeled tomatoes on the bottom of the pan, trying to keep them in one piece while doing such. Once they are all in the pan toss them about until they begin to break and bubble. Add the salt, toss, then add the remaining wine and lower the heat to medium all while stirring so they decompose and become a sauce.

Lower the heat, cover and let simmer for 20 minutes, stirring regularly then remove the lid and lower the flame to very low so that a constant, slow, bubble continues. Stir frequently and taste - adding salt, pepper or even a hit of wine to taste - for another 25 minutes.

The sauce should reduce by half. If after ten minutes of the second part (when you have removed the lid) the sauce is still very liquid, then raise the heat to increase the bubbling - be careful it is not too high or it will splatter and burn.

Once reduced keep it at a simmer. When you serve the chicken pour 2 tablespoons of the sauce onto the side of each plate and place the remaining in a sauce recipient and place on the table alongside the main platter.



# PESCE

# FISH

We will now move onto several fish recipes. I will endeavour for these to be relatively simple and not too expensive. In addition the choice of fish chosen will not be too complex - salmon, sea scallops, and maybe a white fish.

The essential factor is, of course, freshness. Because you are buying at an open market does not ensure freshness.

As the fish we are going to use is mostly cut or shelled, it is difficult to ascertain its real freshness when you are purchasing it on an open stall. The trick is to go to a whole fish and lift the hard surface, known as the 'cheek' (through which it breathes) and observe the colour of the actual 'lungs' - the closer they are to burgundy red (or dark in colour) the better it is. This will be proof that the fishmonger is not selling you old fish. When it comes to shellfish such as sea scallops (Coquilles St Jacques or Pétoncles) it is always best to attempt to purchase them in their shell. When this is not possible be certain to smell them and then, once at home (as with everything but particularly with fish in general) to wash them under cold water and dry them with a paper towel.

It is possible to find very good fish in supermarkets (no need to go to organic markets as these are most often just trying to hoodwink you) but then be certain to cook them the same day - inevitably these are already several days old and have been preserved through refrigeration.

ALL RECIPES ARE FOR FOUR - if you are eight just double the ingredients.

## SALMON EN PAPILLIOTTE

This is one of my favorites and it can be made with either Salmon, Tuna, Swordfish or even Trout - depending on budget and availability.

- 4 whole filets of salmon (or other fish) (.5 lb. or 140 g) boned with their skin still. Make certain the slice is about 4 inches wide so that it is wider than thicker.
- 1 carrot cut very thin in Julienne
- 1 zucchini cut very thin in Julienne
- 12 whole toasted almonds
- 12 to 16 whole cherries (if available); you substitute apricots if absolutely necessary.
- 4 teaspoons of Truffle oil (optional)
- 8 teaspoons of Olive oil (make it 8 TABLESPOONS if there is no truffle oil). NOTE: half are for the almonds and half for the actual papillotte.
- Balsamic Vinegar
- ½ teaspoon of freshly ground black pepper
- 4 sheets of baking paper about the size of 20cm x 20 cm; NOTE: if you do not have baking paper you can use tin foil but it does spoil the presentation a bit.
- 1 Stapler topped up with staples.

\* \* \*

Wash your chosen fish under cold water; dry it and set it aside.

Sauté the almonds (already toasted kind with skin) in half the olive oil then dry them with paper towels.

Pit the cherries and cut them in half. Set aside.

Cut paper for papillotte and place the fish in the center of the paper, skin on the bottom.

Preheat oven to max: lower oven to 180 after 20 minutes.

Pour 1 teaspoon of truffle (or Olive oil) on the length of the fish.

Sprinkle the coarse salt and pepper

Add four to six slivers of Julienned carrots in crisscross pattern. Do the same with the Julienned zucchini so that you have a 'weaved' pattern.

Insert 3 or 4 almonds in the holes created by the 'weaved' vegetables.

Place 3 (or 4) half cherries (or apricots);

Pour a filet Balsamic vinegar the length of the fish.

Pour 1 teaspoon of Olive oil over the whole 'construction' on the length of the fish.

Close the papillotte by taking the top and bottom, putting them together and then folding the tips of the sheet over several times so that it holds together; do this the length of the sheet. Take the stapler and staple the center first then move off to one side then the other. Once this is done fold each end onto itself and staple that shut as well. The whole point is to not allow any air to enter from the outside once you put it in the oven.

NOTE: you want to make sure the top of your paper is not touching the fish and that there is sufficient space between food and 'ceiling' - so the hot AIR from the oven inflates the 'bag' you have created.

Insert and cook for 20/25 minutes. If the perfume of salmon gets strong after 15 minutes lower oven to 160.

FINAL NOTE: THIS MIGHT SEEM DIFFICULT TO MAKE AT FIRST BUT IT IS ACTUALLY QUITE SIMPLE AFTER THE FIRST TIME AND A GREAT DISH TO SERVE...

## FILET OF SALMON IN ORANGE AND GINGER

- 1 whole filet of salmon (.5 lb. or 140 g) boned with their skin still on. Make certain the slice has no bones on it.
- 1 cup of ginger cut very thin in Julienne
- 1 cup finely chopped shallots
- 1/2 Cup of soy sauce
- 3 cups of orange juice
- 2 cups of white wine
- 4 teaspoons of olive oil (optional)
- 4 tablespoons of Balsamic Vinegar
- 1/2 teaspoon of freshly ground black pepper
- 12 apricots, peeled
- 1/2 cup baked almonds
- 1/2 cup green olives
- 1/2 cup dried raisins
- Coarse salt
- 125 grams of butter
- Powdered ginger
- Tin foil to cover the baking pan

\* \* \*

Preheat oven to max: lower oven to 180 and insert and cook for 20/25 minutes.

Half apricots, remove pit and the skin; sauté in butter with some powdered ginger -- set aside

Sauté the almonds (already toasted kind with skin) in half the olive oil then dry them with paper towels - -set aside

Soak the raisins in hot water until they blow up again - -set aside

Cut olives in half and remove pit - -set aside

Wash the Filet of Salmon and dry with paper towel - -set aside

Butter the bottom and the sides of the baking pan.

Lay Salmon to rest in the bottom of the pan and cover it with the onions.

Sprinkle coarse Salt and Pepper

Lay the fresh ginger en Julienne atop the filet.

Sprinkle the apricots, olives, almonds and raisins atop the fish

Add the olive oil and Soy Sauce atop the mixture lying on the salmon

Pour the white wine and orange juice in the baking dish until it comes to the edge of the top of the fish - -it should not cover the fish nor disturb the mound on top of it.

Cover well and place in the hot oven lowering the temperature to 160 or medium high.

If the perfume of salmon gets strong after 15 minutes lower oven to 140. It should be ready after about 30 minutes.

It is important you check regularly as you cook it to ascertain the liquid has not dried up or that it is not cooking too fast as it will lead to the fish drying on the inside.

NOTE: the alternate way is to lower oven immediately to 150 and let cook 45 to 55 minutes depending on thickness of Salmon and size.

