

Crespelle Batter and Ricotta Spinach Filling

Adapted By Robin and Bob Young from Food52.com
Makes 12 manicotti

Ingredients:

3 lg Eggs
1½ c Whole Milk
3 T Melted unsalted Butter
1 c All-Purpose Flour, or more if needed
Pinch Sea Salt
Cooking Spray

Ingredients Filling:

1 lbs Whole Milk Ricotta Cheese
½ lbs Whole Milk Mozzarella Cheese, shredded
2 lg Eggs
Zest of 1 Lemon
1 t EACH, Sea Salt, Turbinado Sugar, ground Tellicherry Pepper and ground fresh Nutmeg
½ c Fresh Italian Parsley, finely chopped
5 ounces Bag, Fresh Baby Spinach, chopped

Directions:

Make the Crêpe (CREPELLE):

In a large bowl, whisk together the eggs, milk and melted butter. Gradually whisk in the flour and salt until the mixture is smooth. Cover with plastic wrap and refrigerate for about 1 hour until slightly thickened. Bring to room temperature before making the crêpe. If the room is cool, cover with plastic wrap and store at room temperature to thicken for about 1 hour.

Spray an 10" non-stick skillet, or a crêpe pan, with cooking spray. Place the pan over medium heat. With a small ladle, pour about 4 tablespoons (¼ cup) of the batter into the pan. Turn the pan at a 45 degree angle to coat the pan evenly so the batter forms a perfect circle. Cook the crêpe only until set; do not brown, about 30 seconds or until the top is set. Slide the crepe onto a 12- inch flat plate and continue the process with the remaining batter.

Spray the pan with cooking spray when making each Crêpe. Stack the crêpe between waxed paper so they don't stick. You can prepare these crêpe a day in advance covered in plastic wrap in the refrigerator. No need to reheat the crêpe before filling and baking. You can also use an electric crêpe maker.

Make the ricotta filling:

In a large bowl, add all the ingredients for the ricotta filling. With a large wooden spoon or spatula, stir all the ingredients until well blended. Store covered with plastic wrap in the refrigerator until ready to stuff the manicotti. You can make this filling the day before.

Fresh Marinara Sauce

Ingredients:

¼ c Garlic infused Extra Virgin Olive Oil
1 sm, Sweet Onion, chopped fine
6 Cloves Fresh Garlic, peeled & chopped fine
1- 28 oz can, Crushed Tomatoes, preferably San Marzano type
1 -28 oz can, Fire Roasted Tomatoes with Basil
½ c Fresh Basil Leaves, Chiffonade
1 c Red Wine, Chianti if you have it
1 t Each, Sea Salt and fresh ground Tellicherry Pepper, more if taste necessary
1 c Fresh Italian Parsley, finely chopped
3 Bay Leaves, optional

Ingredients Topping:

¼ c Extra Virgin Olive Oil
½ c Grana Padano [or Pecorino/Parmesan] Cheese, grated or more if you like
12 Whole Fresh Basil Leaves

Directions - Marinara Sauce

In a large heavy non-reactive saucepan with a lid, heat the olive oil on medium heat. Stir in the onion and garlic and cook until fragrant but NOT browned.

Add the crushed tomatoes to the pan, use a potato masher if there are any tomato chunks. Add ½ the basil leaves, Bay leaves and parsley. Simmer 30 minutes, slightly covered, on medium-low heat, stirring every so often as not to burn the bottom of the pan. Add the remainder of the basil leaves and salt and pepper to taste; simmer for another 10 minutes until the sauce is slightly reduced. Taste and re-season as necessary. You can make this sauce the day before; store in a plastic container in the refrigerator. No need to reheat when assembling the dish.

Put the dish all together:

Preheat the oven to 375°F (350°F convection).

Evenly coat the bottom of a 13 X 9 glass or ceramic baking dish, or a Pampered Chef 12" oval casserole dish, with 2 cups of the prepared marinara sauce.

Spoon 4 tablespoons of the prepared ricotta filling 1 inch from the edge of each crêpe. Roll evenly into a log, keeping the filling even as you roll. Repeat with the remaining crêpe. Trim each end of the manicotti about ½" so they fit in the pan neatly and don't overlap.

Place manicotti seam side down. Remove the Bay leaves. Spoon 2 cups of sauce over the middle of the manicotti. Sprinkle with grated Grana Padano cheese. Top each manicotti with a whole basil leaf. Spray the top with cooking spray. Cut a 13x9 piece of foil or parchment and coat one side with cooking spray. Cover the baking dish loosely with the sprayed side down. Bake about 20 minutes.

Uncover and bake another 15- 20 minutes until the topping is golden brown and the sauce is bubbling on the sides. Let rest about 15 minutes before serving to firm up the manicotti filling.