



Italian food is my favorite food in the whole world! It is a good thing that I am Italian and inherited a flare for it from the LaPietro, DiAntonio, Mongelli, and Pecoraro families.

My Great Grandma Anna (Pecoraro neè Mongelli) LaPietro was quite old when she passed; a hearty 92 years in 1993. I recall only a few times enjoying something that she made, and I was very young, perhaps five when I tasted her cooking. In the early 1980's, she sat down with my parents who were working on a genealogical study of our family in preparation for adopting my brother. They preserved Grandma Anna's family history on tape cassettes. She mentions a great deal about growing up in New York and meeting my Great Grandfather John Joseph LaPietro (Giovanni Giuseppe LaPietro). She also mentions her mother constantly cooking and recalls the great meals they shared. Her favorite dishes were her mother's lasagna and spaghetti with meatballs. Another dish was a family favorite, broiled chicken. Not everyone could afford a chicken in the early part of the 1900's but Great Grandma Anna said that they had a cousin who owned a chicken market, and thus, they got chicken more frequently than other families.



The LaPietro and DiAntonio sides of my family hail from Palo del Colle, in the Apulia Region, Bari Province which is in the

south of Italy, right on the Adriatic sea; which is at the very top of the heel of the boot. It is considered southern Italy. The dominant meat in Puglia is lamb, and this part of the country is known for calzone, homemade pasta, and ricotta and pecorino cheeses. Yum, yum lasagna! Three quarters of the area of Puglia is surrounded by the sea and thus, dishes of this region are filled with sea turtle, oysters, mussels, cuttlefish, and octopus. Besides seafood and pasta, Puglia is known for its olive oil.

The Pecoraro side of my family hails from the Naples region, which is located on the west side of the boot, facing Spain. This is also in southern Italy. Naples is by tradition the home of pizza. Accordingly, the Naples region is also known for mozzarella, pasta, parmesan, baked eggplant, and a unique pastry called rum babà or sciù. Naples is also known for pastiera a traditional Easter cake. Oranges and orange flavored desserts are also very Neapolitan.



The Mongelli side of my family hails from the City of Toritto, also in the Apulia Region, Bari Province of Southern Italy.

Most people equate Italian food with spaghetti and meatballs. Well, what I have experienced at various dinner tables around this country is by no means real Italian spaghetti. I won't even go into the sauce and its preparation, for each family has their own secret, as do I, and I am not ready to part

with it. You won't find spaghetti and meatballs in this cookbook. Too many people are in too much of a rush and would prefer to open a jar of what I think is horrid store bought sauce, full of salt, sugar, and preservatives than make my sauce. It isn't even labor intensive, but it's not the terribly thick American style Ragu Sauce everyone is familiar with. So, fa'getta 'bout it. I will divulge my Ultimate Spaghetti Bolognese recipe, and I dare you not to love it.

Same goes for pizza. I think America is stuck on Domino's and Papa John's. Don't get me wrong. I love American pizza, Chicago pan crust being my all time favorite. The best Chicago style pizza I ever had was at Chicago Pizza Works on Pico Blvd, next to Igby's Comedy Club in Los Angeles. I was amazed at their crust! I have attempted to recreate a version of their crust and have included it in this section. Still, there are many different shapes, sizes and kinds of pizza found in true Italian cuisine.

The Neapolitan pizza, whose fame has spread around the world, is the famous disc of thin bread dough smothered with a savory mixture of tomatoes, cheese, anchovies and aromatic herbs.

Yet, pizza for the most part is a substantial rustic dish. Most are nothing more than a crust topped with fresh tomatoes, basil, and mozzarella, not the cheese oozing creations most Americans call pizza. I shudder to think of CiCi's Pizza in Wichita that makes

taco pizza. Still, I'll give what I consider 'true pizza' a mention when I get to the recipes, but not many of my American friends call what I know as pizza, true pizza to them. Oh well.

The recipes I am including are my own personal take on traditional Italian cuisine, with a slight twist. I have even included some of my favorites that I can't make anymore due to my current situation. I have a hard time finding fresh quality seafood. Who would have guessed it would be difficult to get fresh squid in Kansas? I really thought it would have been no problem since some of the best seafood I have ever had was in Albuquerque, New Mexico. It even beat out Seattle on my top ten lists. Oh well, life goes on.

There is some basic information about Italian cuisine I want to impart. I have taught myself a great deal about this through

reading and research. I've gone to true Italian restaurants (in England and France of all places), which are hard to find nowadays even in the states, and pulled the cook aside and had long talks with them about their recipes.

Speaking a wee bit of Italian and using my maiden name made it easier. Italians who care about food take enormous pride and delight in explaining the secrets of their favorite dishes. Believe me, I got an ear full from many a 'Mama Lucia'. I have a few



invitations to visit people in Milano Trentino, and Lombardia that are pushing 24 years old. I've been told that gastronomic dinners are held regularly each year near Genoa, at Treviso near Venice and other places. I plan to get to 'the old country' someday. I just hope that when I do, I don't find a McDonald's on every corner and Trattoria (homely type restaurant) selling nothing more than non-descript 'international' meals.

Remember this when thinking about cooking Italian: Italian cookery is remarkably well suited to the needs and tempo of present day life. It has great simplicity, considerable originality and it is flexible enough to be adapted to all types of meals and occasions. Here is another truism that my Great Grandmother's family was a perfect example of: Italian housewives, many with large families and limited means, have for generations concentrated on making the best use of fresh local produce for which they shop daily and the result is a heritage of practical dishes with distinctive flavors. Thus, the hallmarks of good Italian cooking are simplicity, quality of ingredients and freshness of flavor. A restaurant serving overcooked lukewarm pasta smothered in a heavy blanket of reheated sauce does not represent the best of Italian cuisine.

Only recipes for which the ingredients are reasonably easy to come by have been included; and where likely to be needed, substitutes have been suggested. In order to preserve both the original flavor and texture a special effort should be made to use Italian cheeses as indicated. It should be stressed that the flavor of Parmesan cheese is much finer, and the cost much less when it is bought by the lump and grated freshly.

The only thing that makes an Italian meal even better than it could be using real Italian

cheese is by serving it with Italian wines. I am by no means a lover of the fermented grape, but I do have a few favorites. Seeing how this food is my favorite food, and a part of my genetic make up (I swear I have got olive oil flowing in my veins instead of blood), I have dedicated one whole page of this section on Italian food to Italian wines.

Over 2,000 years ago, the Greeks named Italy 'OEnotria' meaning the land of wine. Italian wine is known the world over as some of the best wine ever made. Overall, the wines are light and fresh, perfectly suited to various Italian regional cuisines. They are the natural accompaniment to food without too much sophisticated consideration of vintage, 'nose' and pedigree one usually associates with French wine or even some California wines. In general, the majority of wines are sold and drunk when about six months old. There are wines, red in particular, which improve with age and for which vintage years are important. Genuine Chianti, for example, is one and Barolo, said to be best at seven years old, is another. Just know that Italian wines are right with Italian food, but which wine to serve with what is very much a matter of individual preference. The following are my notes from my many discussions with Italian cooks in England, France, and the US, all immigrants escaping Italy's seemingly never ending/changing corrupt government.

**Meal Starters** No wine can compete with pickled or highly flavored dishes, but with blander flavors serve a dry white or light rosé wine.

**Rice and Pasta** With mild flavors, meatless dishes, fish risottos and herb flavored dishes, serve a dry white wine. With dishes containing meat or tomato sauces serve a light red wine or robust rosé wine.

**Pizza** Serve a rough red wine.

**Fish** With mild flavored fish or shellfish dishes, serve a dry white wine. With fried fish and fish soups, serve a medium dry or light rosé wine.

**Meat** With roast, grilled or fried meat, and chicken or turkey serve a light red wine. With game or strong flavored dishes serve a full-bodied red wine.

**Cheese** With mild and not too fat cheese serve a semi-dry or medium white wine or light rosé wine. With richer and stronger cheeses a light red wine and with Gorgonzola or spicy cheese dishes a full-bodied red wine.

### Some White Wines

#### *Dry*

Capri bianco

Est! Est! Est! (secco)

Frascati (secco)

Orvieto (secco)

Sansevero

Soave – (one of the best whites!)

Terlano – (from the Veneto region)

Valtellina

#### *Medium Dry*

Lacrima Christi del Vesuvio

Termeno aromatico

Verdicchio di Jesi

#### *Semi-Sweet*

Albana di Romagna

Est! Est! Est! (abboccato)

Frascati (amabile)

Orvieto (abboccato)

#### *Sparkling*

Asti Spumante

Lacrima Christi (spumante)

Prosecco di Conegliano

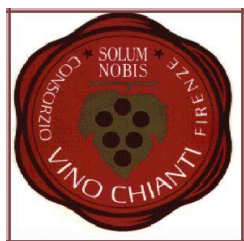
### Some Red Wines

#### *Light*

Bardolino

Chianti - (from the Toscana region, varies greatly in quality – look for a black cockerel seal for Genuine Chianti)

Freisa



Grignolino

Grumello

Nebbiolo

Rosso

Piceno

Sassella

#### *Generous – full bodied*

Barbaresco

Barbera

Barola

Gattinara

Inferno – (from the Lomdardia region – very good red wine!)

Santa Madena

Valpolicella (lightest smoothest of the full bodied red wines)

### Some Dessert Wines

Aleatico di Puglia

Marsala (dolce) – (true Marsala from Sicily)

Moscato

Vino Santo

## Alison's Easy Italian Chicken

This Italian chicken dish is easy to prepare and to cook. The marinade transforms this basic chicken dish into a great, fast dinner.

Preparation time: 5 minutes

Cook time: 30 minutes

4 boneless skinless breasts of chicken

1 can of French cut green beans

approximately 1 1/2 cups Caesar salad

dressing (I like Ken's Steak House)

Put some of the dressing on the bottom of a glass casserole dish. Add the chicken and cover it with the rest of the dressing. Drain the beans and add them to the dish. Cover with lid.

Bake in the oven for about 30 minutes on 325°, until the chicken is tender. It will be marinated with the dressing which makes a delicious, quick and easy meal.

## Alison's Seven Cheese Red Lasagna

Preparation: 30 minutes

Baking time: 30 minutes

1-2 boxes oven-ready lasagna noodles



2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil

1 pound Italian sausage

(or ground beef, or boneless chicken)

2 sliced large green, red, or yellow bell peppers (or a combination of all three)

1 medium zucchini, sliced

1 large yellow onion, sliced

8 medium button mushrooms, sliced

1 can sliced black olives



2 large cans diced tomatoes (including juice)

2 cans tomato paste

2 medium can tomato sauce



16 ounces shredded mozzarella cheese

8 ounces ricotta cheese

8 ounces large curd cottage cheese

16 ounces shredded parmesan cheese

8 ounces grated Romano cheese

8 ounces crumbled Gorgonzola

8 slices of Provolone

Chopped garlic

Italian seasoning

For this recipe, I buy an aluminum throw away pan. Make sure it is the deepest pan you can find. Save yourself time by buying a jar of chopped/minced garlic in olive oil from the store. Having everything sliced and ready is the best way to begin. Be sure to strain all liquid from the olives before using them.

In two separate large skillets or woks, brown the meat and sliced veggies, olives not included, with one tablespoon of olive oil. If the sausage is in links, remove it from the casing and treat it like ground beef, or slice into coin sized circles. If you can't find

Italian sausage and want to spice up regular ground beef, you can add about 12 pieces of sliced pepperoni or Italian seasoning and garlic to taste.

While the meat and veggies are browning, combine ricotta cheese and cottage cheese in a bowl, mixing thoroughly. Add 1 tablespoon of Italian seasoning, 1 tablespoon of chopped garlic, and all of the Romano cheese.

In another bowl, combine all tomato products with parmesan cheese.

Pour 1 tablespoon of olive oil into the lasagna pan and coat the bottom thoroughly. Strain some of the liquid from the tomato mixture into the bottom of the pan.

Next, layer the lasagna in this order bottom up:

Noodles  
Sliced veggies  
Provolone cheese  
Tomato mixture  
Noodles  
Ricotta mixture  
Meats (be sure to strain away extra liquids before using)  
Tomato mixture  
Noodles  
Mozzarella cheese  
Tomato mixture  
Gorgonzola cheese  
Olives

Sprinkle Italian seasoning on top for pretty green effect. Bake at 400° for 30 - 45 minutes. Remove from oven and let cool. If you cut a lasagna while hot, everything runs together and makes a mess.

For best serving, bake early in the morning, then let cool. Cover with aluminum foil and place in refrigerator for an hour or more.



About an hour before serving, place the oven on warm or low. Place covered lasagna in the oven and let it warm. Or, while still cold, cut lasagna into perfect slices and place on individual oven safe plates or on a cookie sheet, then place in oven and allow it to warm. Then serve.

If you like extra sauce with your lasagna, you can make the tomato mixture portion of the above recipe in a sauce pan; add a little garlic and seasoning and heat until it bubbles. Pour sauce into a gravy boat and place on the dinner table.

### Alison's Tomato Sauce

This is the handy dandy sauce I use for some pasta, chicken, and calzone recipes. It's not my spaghetti sauce recipe, since that's a secret. Make a big batch by doubling the recipe and keep it in the refrigerator for up to a week.

Preparation time: 5 minutes

Cook time: 30 minutes – 2 hours

4 tablespoons olive oil  
1 large clove garlic, peeled  
1 14 ounce can peeled tomatoes  
2 level tablespoons tomato paste  
salt, pepper and sugar to season

Heat oil and garlic in a saucepan over gentle heat for several minutes. Discard the garlic. Add contents of the can of tomatoes, tomato paste and seasonings to taste. Cover pan and simmer gently for at least 30 minutes, preferably much longer. If the sauce becomes too thick add a little water or, if cooked for the shorter time, in may be necessary to reduce a little by rapid boiling without the lid.

As an Italian chef, I'll give you a tip. When using canned tomatoes, the longer it is

cooked the better it will be. That doesn't mean boil them to death though.

### Bacon and Tomato Risotto



Preparation time: 5 minutes

Cook time: 10 minutes

½ pound sliced bacon  
1 large white onion, chopped  
2 large handfuls cherry tomatoes  
1 can chicken broth  
½ cup milk  
2 cups of minute rice  
1 tablespoon dried parsley  
Grated parmesan cheese

Cooked sliced bacon and chopped onion in a large skillet or wok. Drain. Slice cherry tomatoes in half. Stir them into the bacon and onion, adding chicken broth, milk, rice and parsley. Bring to a boil over medium heat, cover, simmer for 5 minutes over low heat. Stir in a few shakes of parmesan cheese. Let stand 5 minutes. Sprinkle with more cheese and serve.

### Basil-Balsamic Chicken and Pasta Toss

Although this recipe originated as a good way to use up leftover pasta, it's also very good served over couscous.

1 large chicken breast  
¼ teaspoon salt

¼ teaspoon pepper  
1 tablespoon olive oil  
3 tablespoons balsamic vinegar  
1 cup halved cherry or grape tomatoes  
3 cups cooked short pasta  
¼ cup whole fresh basil leaves  
1 tablespoon water  
2 tablespoons shredded Parmesan cheese

Cut chicken into bite-size pieces. Sprinkle with salt and pepper. Heat oil in a non-stick skillet set over medium-high heat. Add chicken and cook for 2 minutes or until golden. Turn and cook for 2 minutes longer. Drizzle in balsamic vinegar and toss to coat. Add tomatoes and cook for 2 minutes longer. Stir in pasta and basil. Add water and cook, tossing, for 2 to 3 minutes or until heated through. Taste and adjust seasoning if necessary. Sprinkle with Parmesan cheese. Makes 2 servings as a main course, or enough filling for 4 sandwiches.

Tip: If serving with couscous or without pasta, add basil leaves with tomatoes and omit water.

### Calzone



Preparation time: 20 minutes  
Cook time: 20 minutes

Make 1 pizza dough recipe



¼ mozzarella cheese (not shredded)

¼ cup ricotta cheese  
2 ounces salami or bacon  
2 ounces cooked ham  
butter



1 ¼ cups tomato sauce recipe  
Grated Parmesan cheese

Prepare pizza dough. Preheat oven to 425°. Turn dough onto a floured board, knead lightly and divide into 3. Roll each piece into a 6 inch diameter circle.

Mix the cheeses together. Cut the salami and ham into thin strips; divide each evenly between the 3 circles. Fold each circle into a half-moon shape pressing edges firmly together to enclose the stuffing securely. Spread each calzone with butter, place on a greased baking sheet and back for about 20 minutes, until dough is cooked. Baking a calzone is similar to cooking a Stromboli.

Or, put olive oil in a skillet and fry the calzone Puglia style as shown above. Calzones that are baked and served with tomato sauce thus resemble Stromboli. Serve hot covered with a thick tomato sauce and sprinkled with grated cheese. Stromboli is not a traditional Italian dish.

### Chicken Cacciatora

Preparation time: 20 minutes  
Cook time: 45 minutes

3 pounds fryer chicken pieces  
3 tablespoons olive oil  
1 small yellow onion, finely chopped  
1 clove garlic, crushed  
¾ cup dry white wine  
1 14 ounce can diced tomatoes  
1 teaspoon tomato paste  
¼ teaspoon dried oregano  
1 package sliced mushrooms  
salt and pepper

sugar to taste  
chopped fresh herbs to garnish

Heat the oil in a shallow saucepan or wok and over a gentle heat fry the chicken until golden on all sides, about 12 minutes.

After 5 minutes, add onion and garlic and fry with chicken. Add wine and allow to bubble briskly until reduced by half the stir in the tomatoes, tomato paste and oregano. Cover the pan and simmer gently for 20 minutes. Add the mushrooms and seasoning to taste. Continue cooking gently, without the lid, for another 10 minutes or until mushrooms are cooked and tomatoes have reduced to a sauce consistency. Serve in a shallow dish and sprinkle with chopped fresh herbs.

### Chicken Florentine



Preparation time: 20 minutes

Cook time: 20 - 30 minutes

½ pound fresh spinach -- stems removed, wash

4 tablespoons butter

1 whole large onion, cut into rings

2 whole chicken breasts, cut into 2" pieces

6 ounces mushrooms, sliced

1/3 cup dry white wine

1 tablespoon flour

1 cup sour cream

1 pinch garlic powder

4 ounces cheddar cheese, grated

Steam spinach until wilted, drain and chop. Melt 2 tablespoons of butter in large skillet and sauté onions until golden. Remove onions with slotted spoon, mix with spinach and place in buttered casserole. Add 1 tablespoon butter to skillet. Brown chicken and remove to warm plate. Sauté mushrooms in remaining butter and remove to plate with chicken. Add wine to pan and then stir in flour. Slowly add sour cream and stir until hot and thickened. Add chicken, mushrooms, and garlic powder. Place on spinach, sprinkle with cheese and bake uncovered at 350° for 20 to 30 minutes.

### Chicken & Artichoke Pasta Toss



Cooking time: 12 – 18 minutes

1 boneless skinless chicken breast per person

1 can petite diced tomatoes

1 can black olives

1 can artichoke hearts

2 tablespoons olive oil

2 tablespoons minced garlic

1 tablespoon Italian seasoning

1 pound penne pasta

In a large sauce pan, boil water with a pinch of salt, add penne pasta. Cook, strain, and set aside.



Place chicken breasts in a large skillet with olive oil. When chicken is about half cooked, slice into bite size chunks and add tomatoes (including water from can), olives, artichoke hearts, minced garlic, Italian seasoning and cook until chicken is nearly cooked.

Take the cooked pasta and add to the large skillet. Toss until all the pasta is coated with the olive oil, spices, and pan juices. Sprinkle with your favorite cheese, parmesan, Romano, fine mozzarella, whatever floats your...Gondola.

### Ciambella All'Arancia

Orange Ring Cake



I put a great deal of thought as to IF I would include any desserts in the Italian section of my cookbook. I debated if it would be appropriate since the dessert section has other dishes in it that are ethnic in origin. For example, my Almond Biscotti recipe could have been included in this section. Yet, Starbucks and other java purveyors around the US have hijacked biscotti and it just doesn't seem Italian enough for me anymore to put it in this section.

Italian desserts as a whole tend to be fruit based. Not many are dripping in chocolate. There aren't any true Italian housewives who will whip out a cake recipe that could rival anything you'd find in France or

Germany. Its not slander, its truth, and I believe it is so because of another truth. Italian food is so darn good you tend to stuff yourself silly during the meal and thus hardly have room for dessert. That, and the fact that most Italian dinners tend to be on the rich and hearty side, so following up a sausage lasagna with a chocolate fudge cake doesn't make appetizing sense.

Thus, fruits, gelatos, and ices are the norm in Italian cuisine. I do have some pudding and cake recipes hailing from Italy, but honestly, I think this torte recipe is the most traditional. It, of course, is made of what else... oranges! Italian desserts are resplendent with citrus fruit, oranges and lemons the foremost! So, enjoy this well loved traditional Italian cake, served primary as a birthday cake.

- 3 oranges (I use red oranges if available)
- 4 ounces walnuts, chopped
- 1 ¾ cups + 4 tablespoons sugar
- 4 eggs, separated
- ¼ cup unsalted butter, melted
- 1 ¾ cup flour
- 1 ½ teaspoons baking powder
- ¼ teaspoons vanilla extract
- Pinch of salt

Another orange, cut into thin horizontal slices, and some minced nutmeats, to fill the ring. Begin by caramelizing 4 tablespoons of sugar in a non-stick ring pan. Peel two of the oranges, slice them into slices, and line the pan with them. Grate the zest of the remaining orange, and squeeze it. Sift the flour with the baking powder. Preheat your oven to 360°. Whip the whites to firm peaks with a pinch of salt. Beat the yolks with the remaining sugar until the mixture is pale yellow, then stir in the orange zest and juice, the walnut meats, the melted butter, the vanilla extract, and sift the flour into the mixture, stirring until the batter is smooth

and uniform. Fold in the beaten egg whites and pour the batter into the ring mould. Bake for 40 minutes or until a toothpick inserted comes out dry. Remove the ciambella from the oven, let it cool, and unmold it, running a thin-bladed knife along the edges to separate it. Fill the ring with the remaining orange and nutmeats, if you want to, and serve.

### Gnocchi



This is a potato gnocchi recipe – ‘Gnocchi di Patate’ – and is widely enjoyed in the Lombardy region.

1 pound mashed potatoes  
 ½ cup flour  
 1 egg  
 Salt & pepper  
 Grated nutmeg to taste

Add flour to the mashed potatoes. Next add the egg, seasonings, nutmeg and mix thoroughly. Turn on to a floured board, roll into 1-inch finger shapes.

Drop a few gnocchi at a time into boiling salted water and cook until they rise to the surface. Remove with a perforated spoon. Put into a buttered ovenproof dish and keep in a warm oven until all are ready. Dot with butter and generously sprinkle with Parmesan cheese. Serve with tomato, meat, or pesto sauce.

### Linguine and Clam Sauce

24 fresh topneck clams or 2 small cans chopped clams  
 ¼ cup olive oil  
 4 oz Bottle of clam juice  
 ¼ cup parsley  
 6 garlic cloves  
 ¼ cup grated parmesan cheese  
 1 pound linguine

To prepare fresh clams:

Rinse in cold water, place in plastic bag and put in freezer for 2 hours. Remove clams from shells, reserving clam juice. Coarsely chop clam meat.

Sauté garlic in olive oil until golden in color. Add juice from clams and bottled clam juice. Boil gently for 2 minutes. Add clams and simmer 2-4 minutes until clams are tender. Add parsley, pour clam sauce over linguine.

### Minestrone



There is no such thing as ‘a’ recipe for minestrone because it is a soup which varies from district to district in Italy, and according to the vegetables in season. The essential elements of true minestrone are a variety of vegetables, some aromatic herbs and a small quantity of fat, usually in the form of bacon, pork rind or oil. It is sometimes made by simmering the cut up

vegetables in water or stock, starting with those that take longest to cook and adding the others according to the time they need. Other recipes begin by gently sautéing the vegetables in oil. In either case some short pasta or rice, or both, is added towards the end of the cooking time and the result is a colorful soup, thick with tender vegetables. Owing to the time required for preparation minestrone is usually made in large quantities. A little grated parmesan or pecorino cheese is usually stirred into the soup just before serving and more is handed separately. The following recipe is a typical Milanese recipe. I did not include this in the soup section, preferring to showcase it here with my Italian offerings.

Preparation time: 30 minutes

Cook time: 2 hours

2 ounces bacon  
1 medium yellow onion  
1 small zucchini  
1 tablespoon Italian parsley  
2 sage leaves  
4 stalks celery  
1 large carrot, diced  
8 ounce peeled potatoes, diced  
8 ounce cabbage  
2 large tomatoes (or 1 can stewed tomatoes)  
1 ounce butter  
4 ounces kidney beans  
4 ounces cut green beans  
7 ½ cups stock or water  
4 ounces rice  
salt and pepper to taste  
grated Parmesan cheese

Chop the bacon and onion and finely chop the parsley and sage leaves. Finely slice the celery, dice the carrot, and potatoes. Finely shred the cabbage and skin and chop the tomatoes (if using stewed tomatoes just chop them up).

Into a large saucepan put the butter, onion, celery and carrot and cook over gentle heat stirring now and then for 10 minutes. Add in the beans, potato and stock, then cover and simmer for 1 ½ hours.

Add the cabbage, tomatoes, rice, seasoning and sage and simmer for 20 minutes. Finally, stir in parsley and 2 tablespoons grated cheese. Serve hot in winter, but half-cold – ‘semi-freddo’ - in summer in true Milanese style.

### Pizza (varieties)

#### *Pizza Dough Recipe #1 – Chicago Style:*

2 cup warm – hot water  
2 packages dried yeast (2 tablespoon)  
1 teaspoon sugar  
2 large eggs  
4 tablespoons melted butter  
6 ½ cups flour  
Any herbs and spices (optional)  
Pinch of salt

This will make two large pizzas with thick crust.

In a large bowl, combine water, yeast, sugar, salt, egg(s) and spices. Beat until frothy. Slowly pour in flour and melted butter, kneading the mixture as you go.

Once everything is combined you should have an elastic ball of dough. Wet a cloth towel and place it over the bowl. Put the bowl in a warm place to let the dough rise. The fresher the yeast the faster the dough will rise.

Depending on how fluffy you want it, let the dough rise anywhere from 10 to 20 minutes. I’ve gotten caught up in reading or watching a movie and let it go an hour before, it will only continue to rise, don’t worry.

Roll the dough onto a floured surface and knead, punching it down. Use a rolling pin to roll into your desired shape.

This dough is best for pizza, focaccia bread, bread sticks, and garlic bread. If you use sweet spices, you can use this for a sweet dessert bread as well.

Most pizzas can be baked at 450° for 16-18 minutes depending on toppings, this dough will be done cooking at that temperature as a pizza.

### ***Pizza Dough Recipe #2 – Naples Style:***

This is the pizza that has made Naples famous the world over. It was first baked in 1889 in honor of the visiting Queen of Italy, Margherita, and topped with ingredients that recalled the colors of Italy's flag: red tomatoes; green basil; and white Mozzarella. It all starts with the traditional Naples crust – thin and crispy.

3 ¼ cups bread flour  
1 teaspoon instant yeast  
1 tablespoon plus ½ teaspoon fine sea salt  
¼ cup extra-virgin olive oil

Mix the flour, yeast and 1 tablespoon of the salt in a food processor. With the motor running, add enough warm (110°F) water (about 1 and 1/4 cups) to make a soft dough that rides the blade. Process for 45 seconds. Add a little water if the dough is dry or a little flour if it is sticky. Lightly oil a bowl, place the dough in it, shape into a ball and wrap. Let rise at room temperature until doubled, about 1 hour. (Or allow to rise in the refrigerator until doubled, about 4 hours; when you are ready to shape the dough, return it to room temperature before cutting it and shaping it.)

Cut the dough into 4 pieces. Shape into 4 balls on a lightly floured counter. Cover and let rest for 15 minutes (this allows the gluten to relax, making stretching easier). Using a rolling pin (or your hands for a lighter texture), roll into 10-inch circles; the edges should be slightly higher than the center.

### ***The Classic Pizza of Naples***

Toppings:

1 14 ounce can diced tomatoes, drained  
10 anchovy fillets, halved lengthwise  
4 ounces mozzarella cheese  
1 teaspoon dried oregano or marjoram  
2 tablespoons olive oil  
16 basil leaves

Spread the pizza dough into a circle on a pizza pan, crust to your desired thickness. Cover the disc to within ½ inch of the edge with roughly chopped tomatoes, sprinkle salt and pepper, and dot with anchovy fillets. Dice the mozzarella top. Then, sprinkle with herbs and finally with oil. Bake in an oven heated to the highest temperature your oven can go, 550° for about 5 minutes or until crispy.

### ***Basic Pizza Sauce Recipe***

Makes sauce for two pizzas  
2 cans tomato paste  
1 can diced tomatoes (don't drain)  
1 tablespoon of Italian seasoning  
½ teaspoon of salt

Mix thorough in a bowl, spread on dough. See below.

### ***Rustic Italian Home-style***

Toppings:

3 tablespoons olive oil  
1 ½ cup yellow onion, finely chopped

- 1 8 ounce can diced tomatoes, drained
- 2 teaspoons dried oregano
- Medium black olives

Spread the pizza dough into a circle on a pizza pan, crust to your desired thickness. Cover the disc to within ½ inch of the edge with roughly chopped tomatoes, onions, and olive. Dice the mozzarella and top. Then, sprinkle with herbs and finally with oil. Bake in a preheated oven no longer than 25 minutes, until the dough is crisp and golden, and cheese is melted.

### Mediterranean Pizza



#### Toppings:

- 1 14 ounce can diced tomatoes, drained
- 2 sliced roma tomatoes
- 1 jar marinated artichoke hearts, drained
- 1 small red onion, finely chopped
- 4 ounces ricotta cheese
- Medium black olives
- Fresh basil leaves
- 2 tablespoons olive oil

Spread the pizza dough into a circle on a pizza pan, crust to your desired thickness. Cover the disc to within ½ inch of the edge with roughly chopped tomatoes, artichoke hearts, onions, and black olives. Dot with ricotta cheese and fresh basil leaves. Then, sprinkle with oil. Bake in a preheated oven

no longer than 25 minutes, until the dough is crisp and golden, and cheese is melted.

### Alison's Homemade Favorite

#### Toppings:

- 1 14 ounce can diced tomatoes, drained
- 1 small red onion, finely chopped
- Sliced mushrooms
- Medium black olives
- Chopped cooked chicken
- 1 cup shredded mozzarella
- 2 tablespoons olive oil

Spread the pizza dough into a circle on a pizza pan, crust to your desired thickness. Cover the disc to within ½ inch of the edge with roughly chopped tomatoes, mushrooms, onions, chicken and black olives. Cover with mozzarella, then sprinkle with oil. Bake in a preheated oven no longer than 25 minutes, until the dough is crisp and golden, and cheese is melted.

### Alison's Chicago Style Pizza



#### Toppings:

- 6 ounces pepperoni slices
- 6 ounces Italian sausage
- 8 ounces mushrooms, sliced
- 1 green bell pepper, cut into thin strips
- 1 red onion, cut into thin strips
- 8 ounces shredded mozzarella cheese
- 1 cup ricotta cheese
- 1/8 cup Italian seasoning



2 cloves garlic  
1 teaspoon salt

Roll pizza dough recipe into a rectangle, use the Basic dough recipe #1. Grease a 9" x 13" cake pan. Pull the dough so it covers the sides and flops over the top. Cover the floppy part hanging over the edges with olive oil. Add all listed ingredients into pizza pan, adding seasoning to top. Bake in a preheated oven no longer than 25 minutes, until the dough is crisp and golden, and cheese is melted.

### Shrimp and Penne



1 pound penne pasta  
¾ cup olive oil  
1 ½ pound shrimp, grilled; peeled and  
1 pound ripe plum tomatoes, peeled -seeded, and diced  
½ pound mozzarella cheese, diced  
½ cup chopped fresh Italian parsley  
¼ cup chopped fresh basil  
Salt to taste  
Pepper to taste

Cook penne in rapidly boiling, salted water as directed on package until al dente. When cooked, remove from heat and drain well. Place penne in a bowl and stir in oil. Coat well. Stir in remaining ingredients. Allow to sit for 15 minutes and then serve immediately.

### Tuscan Tomato Soup



Preparation & Cook time: 40 minutes

½ cup extra-virgin olive oil, divided  
4 garlic cloves, chopped  
10 slices (1 lb.) day-old country bread, crusts removed, cut into 1/2-inch cubes  
16 canned Italian plum tomatoes, chopped  
8 basil leaves  
salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste  
6 cups chicken broth  
basil sprigs for garnish

Heat 1/3 cup of olive oil in a 4-quart pot. Add garlic and bread cubes, cooking for 3 minutes, stirring over medium-high heat until bread starts to toast lightly in spots. Add tomatoes, basil leaves, salt, pepper and broth, stirring well with a wooden spoon to break up the bread. Bring to a boil.

Lower heat to medium-low and cook, stirring often to crush bread, 30 minutes or until liquid has been almost completely absorbed by bread. Soup should be thick. Discard basil leaves. Divide among 6 bowls. Drizzle each serving with olive oil and serve hot, garnished with basil sprigs. Makes 6 servings.

Serve the soup, and roast with garlic bread, and a salad. If you want to make a multiple course meal of it, add the Shrimp & Penne recipe to the menu.

## Tuscan Pork Roast



- 8 cloves garlic, peeled
- 1 tablespoon dried rosemary
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1 (4 pound) pork loin roast, boneless

In a blender or food processor, combine garlic, rosemary, olive oil and salt; blend until mixture turns to paste. Cut gashes in roast and rub rosemary mixture over the roast; cover and let stand 30 minutes.

Place on a greased baking rack, fat side up, in a roasting pan. Bake, uncovered, at 325° degrees for 2 to 2 ½ hours or until the internal temperature reaches 160° to 170° degrees. Let stand 15 minutes before slicing.

Yields 12 servings.

## Ultimate Spaghetti Bolognese

This is one of those recipes I picked up on my travels in Europe and have modified only slightly – mainly due to my faulty memory. Trust me though, this is a keeper! It combines the delicious meat based sauce of Bologna with the lovely durum wheat pasta from Naples.

- 1 – 1 ½ ground pork sausage
- 1 small yellow onion, diced

- 2 carrots, shredded
- 3 stalks celery
- 2 small cans of tomato paste
- 1 tablespoon minced garlic
- 2 tablespoons grated parmesan cheese
- 1 bottle red wine \*see note below
- 1 cup of water
- 1 tablespoon Italian seasoning
- 2 bay leaves
- 1 sprig fresh thyme
- Salt to taste
- ¼ cup of extra virgin olive oil



In a very large skillet, brown the diced yellow onion, carrot, and celery; cook until the onions are nearly clear. Add the pork sausage to the browned vegetables just as it finishes browning, add the tomato paste and continue until the tomato sauce is ‘browned’.



Be sure to stir and scrap the pan often. You can add about half of the olive oil at this time if the mixture seems too dry, but the mixture should not be soupy at this point, it should be browned and firm-ish.



Add between a third to a half of the bottle of wine. Simmer and reduce over a low heat – about 30 minutes at the very least.

After it has been reduced, it is the time to taste the sauce, adding the garlic, parmesan cheese, salt, and Italian seasoning. The amounts I have listed are estimations. It depends on the wine that is used how much spice is really necessary.

After you've added the loose spices, add the remaining amount of the wine, stirring everything together and scraping the sides and bottom of the skillet. At this time, add about half the water. Also add the bay leaves and sprig of thyme. Simmer and reduce again – again about 30 minutes at the very least. Boil your spaghetti for 12 minutes in salted water.

After you've simmered and reduced you should have a thick dark red to brown sauce. Add the cooked spaghetti to the large skillet and cook the spaghetti in the sauce, turning the pasta so that it is coated thoroughly in the sauce.

Serve pasta with a little extra sauce, parmesan cheese, and toasted crusty herb & butter bread. The sauce will be very rich and the bread will most certainly be needed to sop up the delicious juices.

**\*Note on wine:** Use a Shiraz (Sryah), Shiraz Cabernet, or a Cabernet between 8 and 10 years old for best results.

