

Aprile Recipes

Jeff's Paella

One of my favorite all time dishes is paella. It is interactive to cook as folks can stand around the kitchen while it is being prepared or you can do it over the barbecue outdoors. Drink a bottle of Gargiulo Pinot Grigio or Rosato and make some tapas while you're preparing it. The dish tastes great and goes well with Aprile and its spicy notes. There are many versions of this dish, but here is the basic one I use. You can use many kinds of meat and seafood, but let's keep it easy and user friendly.

Feeds at least 6 – 8 people

1 large yellow onion chopped
2 green bell peppers chopped
3 good size cloves of garlic chopped not too fine
1 ½ lb of chopped tomatoes (can be fresh ripe, or canned)
2 or 3 large pinches of saffron
Large can of chicken stock or broth
Olive oil
1 cup dry white wine
1lb smoked sausage chopped into small pieces
4 chicken half breasts (bone in) cut into 6 pieces each
12 med shrimp peeled and de-veined
¾ to 1 lb of Arborio rice (La Bomba is the best. Spanishtable.com)
For Garnish
3 red peppers roasted and peeled
A bunch of asparagus blanched and or grilled

Warm chicken broth in pot, add chopped tomatoes. Use Paella pan or a large skillet and liberally cover the bottom with olive oil. Add the sausage and cook until just getting brown then remove onto a plate or bowl, add chicken to pan, and sauté until golden brown on both sides, remove. Now add onions, garlic, and green peppers and sauté and stir a few times until onions just start to brown, add rice to onions, peppers and now the saffron, keep stirring rice mixture until it starts to get a bit crusty and starts to stick to the pan. The saffron should be turning the rice yellow. Add wine to deglaze and scrape the pan, add back meat and sausage and ladle chicken broth until all submerged in broth, cook uncovered over medium heat, and like a risotto, add chicken broth a few more times as it evaporates. After 15 minutes or so, take pan off burner, add shrimp, and put into 400 degree oven uncovered for 10 minutes. Check rice to see if done, take out of oven, add asparagus and red peppers on top and cover with foil for 10 more minutes on top of stove no heat. You can add heat if you want a crispier crust on bottom.

Uncover and serve usually in the center of the table with crusty bread and Aprile. Everyone just keeps helping themselves.

PAPPARDELLE WITH BEAN BOLOGNESE SAUCE

2 tablespoons olive oil
1 1/2 cups chopped onion
1 large carrot, chopped
1 large celery stalk, chopped
3 tablespoons chopped fresh Italian parsley, divided
2 garlic cloves, chopped
3/4 teaspoon minced fresh rosemary
1/2 teaspoon dried thyme
1 bay leaf
2 tablespoons tomato paste
1 3/4 cups 1/2-inch cubes peeled butternut squash (8 ounces)
1 28-ounce can Italian-style tomatoes in juice, drained (juice reserved), tomatoes chopped
2/3 cup each drained canned white beans, kidney beans and garbanzo beans
1/2 cup dry white wine
1 cup vegetable broth
2 tablespoons whipping cream
8 ounces dried pappardelle or other wide noodles
1 1/2 cups grated Parmesan cheese (about 5 ounces), divided

Heat oil in heavy large pot over medium heat. Add onion, carrot, celery, 2 tablespoons parsley, garlic, rosemary, thyme, and bay leaf. Sauté until vegetables begin to brown, about 8 minutes. Add tomato paste; stir 1 minute. Add squash; stir 1 minute. Add chopped tomatoes and all beans; stir 1 minute. Add wine and simmer 2 minutes. Mix in broth, cream, and reserved tomato juice. Simmer until sauce thickens, stirring occasionally, about 20 minutes. Season sauce to taste with salt and pepper. Can be made 1 day ahead.

Cook pasta in large pot of boiling salted water until just tender but still firm to bite, stirring occasionally. Drain. Return pasta to same pot. Add sauce; toss over medium heat until coated. Transfer to large bowl. Sprinkle with 1/2 cup cheese and 1 tablespoon parsley.

Makes 4 servings.