

The Go-To Meal

Written by
Tuesday, 11 May 2010 12:35



If your life is anything like mine is this spring, you're probably finding yourself running from activity to activity with little time to prepare proper meals. It's so tempting to just order a pizza or pick up a rotisserie chicken, but even those easy treats can get old. During hectic times like these, it's good to have what I like to call my "Go To Meal," something that doesn't require many ingredients but can be prepared and enjoyed fairly quickly. Vince and I love Makaronia me Kima! This hearty Greek pasta and meat sauce dish is a quick and satisfying entree. I almost always have the ingredients on hand and I know there won't be groans of objections when I announce what's for dinner (like I hear when I do actually bring home one of those rotisserie chickens.) What's more, the extra sauce freezes well and reheats nicely. This is not fine dining, it's just hearty, home-style food. Snack on triangles of fresh pita bread topped with easy-to-make Tzatziki sauce while you're preparing the meat sauce. Round out the meal with a simple Greek Salad. And, Greek Nut Wedges are the closest thing to baklava – without all the work. It's a great dessert! All you need to complete your "Go To Meal" is a good bottle of your favorite red wine. Easy and delicious!

Pasta with Greek-Style Meat Sauce (Makaronia me Kima)

1 pound ground beef

1 medium onion, diced

2 tablespoons olive oil

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2 cloves garlic, minced

1/4 cup red wine

1/4 cup chopped fresh Italian parsley

1/2 teaspoon ground cinnamon

1 teaspoon dried oregano

1 teaspoon dried mint

Salt, to taste

Freshly ground black pepper, to taste

1 (15-ounce) can tomato sauce

1/4 cup water

2 tablespoons ketchup

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1/2teaspoon butter

1 pound pasta

Grated Kefalotyri or Parmesan cheese

In a 4-quart saucepan, brown the ground beef over medium-high heat. If the ground beef is very lean, add the olive oil before adding the onion and garlic. Add the onions and saute until translucent. Add the garlic and saute until fragrant, about one minute. Add the wine and allow it to simmer for about three minutes. Add the parsley, cinnamon, oregano, mint, salt, pepper, tomato sauce and water. Bring the heat down to low and simmer uncovered for about 20 minutes, stirring occasionally. Add the ketchup and ½ teaspoon butter. Prepare the pasta according to package directions. Serve pasta topped with meat sauce and grated cheese. Serves 4 to 6.

Tzatziki

1 cucumber

2 cups plain yogurt

1 teaspoon dried minced onion

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Dill weed

Salt

Pepper

Peel cucumber, remove seeds, and dice. Place yogurt in a small bowl, add cucumber and onion. Season with dill, salt, and pepper. Refrigerate for 30 minutes before serving. Serves 8 to 10.

Greek Salad (Zorba)

6 cups torn iceberg lettuce

4 cups torn romaine lettuce

1 cup Kalamata olives

1 (6-ounce) jar marinated artichoke hearts, drained and quartered

4 tomatoes, cut into wedges

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2 large cucumbers, sliced

1/2 cup olive oil

3 tablespoons red wine vinegar

1 tablespoon oregano

1 teaspoon freshly ground pepper

1 teaspoon salt

Dash sugar

1 cup crumbled Feta cheese

Combine first 6 ingredients in a large bowl; toss well. Combine olive oil, vinegar, oregano, pepper, salt, and sugar in a jar. Cover tightly and shake vigorously. Pour dressing over salad, tossing to coat. Sprinkle with Feta cheese. Serves 6 to 8.

Greek Nut Wedges

1 (14-ounce) package refrigerated pie crusts (2 pie crusts)

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1/4 cup sugar, divided

1 cup finely chopped walnuts or pecans

1/3 cup sugar

2 tablespoons honey

1 teaspoon ground cinnamon

1 teaspoon lemon juice

Milk

1/8 cup sugar

Preheat oven to 375 degrees. Roll each half of dough into a 12-inch circle. Dust each piece with 1/8 cup sugar. Roll sugar into dough with a rolling pin. Transfer one circle to a lightly greased cookie sheet. For the filling, in a small bowl, combine the nuts, 1/3 cup sugar, honey, cinnamon and lemon juice. Spread nut mixture over dough circle on cookie sheet. Top with remaining dough circle, sugar side down. With tines of a fork, press edges to seal and prick dough. Brush lightly with milk. Trim excess dough around the edges. Sprinkle with 1/8 cup sugar. Bake in preheated oven for 25-30 minutes or until pastry starts to brown. Cool on cookie sheet on a wire rack for 10 minutes. While warm, cut into 16-20 wedges. Cool completely before serving. Serves 6 to 8.

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