

Italian Summer Supper

Written by

Tuesday, 07 August 2007 15:00

Penne with Vodka Sauce **Artichoke & Heart of Palm Crostini** **Lemon Lovers Dessert**



Penne with Vodka Sauce is a classic Italian preparation. I first sampled the combination at an Italian restaurant in North Carolina, and it's been a favorite ever since. While the sauce in its original form is quick and easy to prepare, I've simplified it further by using canned diced and seasoned tomatoes with oregano, basil, and garlic. Using the seasoned tomatoes saves you some measuring, and decreases the number of spices needed in your spice rack. Making use of this convenience product doesn't decrease the flavor of the final dish. And, the addition of diced prosciutto along with some chopped onion and dried red pepper flakes in the beginning of the recipe further enhances the sauce's flavor. The resulting dish is hearty and satisfying. Add some wine, Artichoke and Heart of Palm Crostini, and a salad for a quick dinner you'll be sure to serve often. Lemon Lover's Dessert is the perfect ending for this delicious meal!

Penne with Vodka Sauce

8 ounces dried penne pasta
2 tablespoons olive oil
2 ounces sliced prosciutto, chopped
1 medium onion, chopped (about 1 cup)
Dried red pepper flakes, to taste
1/4 cup vodka
1 (14.5-ounce) can diced tomatoes seasoned with oregano, basil, and garlic, undrained
1 cup heavy whipping cream
Freshly grated Asaigo or Romano cheese
Chopped fresh Italian parsley

Cook pasta according to package directions. While pasta cooks, prepare the sauce. Heat the olive oil in a large skillet. Add the chopped prosciutto, onion, and dried red pepper flakes and sauté until golden, about 5 minutes. Remove the pan from the burner and add the vodka. Return the pan to the burner and stir, loosening any brown bits from the bottom of the pan and reducing by half, about 2 minutes. Add the tomatoes and bring to a boil. Stir in the cream. Cook until sauce thickens, about 2 minutes. Toss hot pasta with sauce and pour out onto a large platter. Sprinkle with grated cheese and chopped parsley. Serves 6.

Artichoke and Heart of Palm Crostini

1 (6-ounce) jar marinated artichoke hearts
1-1/2 stalks heart of palm (use the rest in salads)
1/3 cup mayonnaise
2 tablespoons sour cream
1/2 cup grated Parmesan cheese
1 clove garlic, crushed
Tabasco sauce
French bread (baguette) sliced about 1-inch thick
Extra Parmesan cheese for topping
Paprika for topping

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Drain artichoke hearts and place in food processor with other ingredients and process quickly (leave a few small lumps). Mound about 2 tablespoons mixture on top of bread slice; sprinkle with extra Parmesan cheese and paprika. Place on baking sheet and put under broiler until topping is hot and bubbly. Serve immediately. Serves 6 to 8.

Lemon-Lover's Dessert

1/2 cup all-purpose flour

2 cups sugar

2 teaspoons grated lemon rind

1/2 cup lemon juice

3 egg yolks, beaten

2 cups milk

3 egg whites, beaten until stiff peaks form

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Lightly grease a 10-inch cake pan or baking dish, and prepare a water bath. In a large mixing bowl, whisk together flour and sugar. Stir in lemon rind, lemon juice, egg yolks, and milk. Fold in beaten egg whites. Pour into prepared pan. Set in hot water bath. Water should come 1 inch up sides of cake pan. Bake, uncovered, for 50 minutes, or until dessert jiggles like gelatin. Cool completely, and chill before serving. Serves 12.