

Incredibly Italian

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with

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Pasta e Fagioli

Cuccidati



Pasta e Fagioli

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Beans, Soups

Servings: 6

INGREDIENTS

4 ounces pancetta, diced
1/4 cup olive oil
1 medium onion, diced
2 carrots, shredded
2 celery ribs, chopped
3 cloves garlic, minced
1 tablespoon fresh rosemary, minced
4 tablespoons flour
2 tablespoons tomato paste
1 tomato, small dice, or small can of petite diced tomatoes
4 cups chicken broth
2 cans cannellini beans, drained and rinsed
salt and pepper to taste
1 pound soup pasta such as ditalini or small shells
grated Parmesan

DIRECTIONS

Add pancetta and oil to the soup pot and cook over low heat until cooked through and crispy. Add the onions, carrots, celery and sauté until softened, about five minutes. Add the garlic, and rosemary. Cook for one more minute. Sprinkle the flour over the vegetables, stir and cook for about two minutes. Add the tomato paste and diced tomatoes. Turn down heat and begin to stir in chicken broth 1/4 cup at a time at first. Combine until well blended before the next addition. Bring to a boil, cover, and simmer for 20 minutes.

Add one can of beans to the pot.

Purée the other can of beans in a blender or food processor and add to the pot. Cover and simmer for 5 minutes, just long enough to heat everything through.

In the meantime, bring a large pot of salted water to a boil. Add the pasta and cook until al dente. Drain and add to the individual soup bowls. Add soup to the bowls. Serve with grated Parmesan.

NOTES

To make this vegetarian, omit the pancetta.

To make this vegan, omit the pancetta, substitute vegetable broth for the chicken broth, substitute vegan Parmesan for the grated Parmesan.



Cuccidati (Italian Fig Cookies)

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Cookies

INGREDIENTS

- 1 1/2 pounds figs (Black Mission, California, or similar)
- 1 pound raisins
- 1/2 pound dates, pitted
- 1/2 pound toasted almonds
- 6 - 8 ounces citron
- 6 - 8 ounces candied lemon peel
- 6 - 8 ounces candied orange peel
- 1/2 pound honey, more as needed
- 3 ounce Southern Comfort, or similar (Bourbon, Grand Marnier, Rum)
- 2 teaspoons cinnamon
- 1 teaspoon ground nutmeg
- 1/2 teaspoon ground allspice

For the cookie dough:

- 7 cups all purpose-flour (2 pounds, 3 ounces)
- 3 tablespoons baking powder
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 2 1/2 sticks unsalted butter, at room temperature
- 1 1/3 cups sugar
- 3 eggs, at room temperature
- 1 cup milk, at room temperature
- 2 teaspoons vanilla extract

1/4 cup vegetable oil for wetting hands

Icing for 10-12 cookies:

- 1 tablespoon eggnog
- 1/2 cup confectioner's sugar, more or less as needed
- decorative sprinkles

DIRECTIONS

Preheat the oven to 400 degrees.

Spread the almonds in a single layer on a cookie sheet and toast for about 10 to 15 minutes, until starting to turn golden. Remove and set aside to cool.

For the cookie dough:

In a large bowl combine the flour, salt, and baking powder. Set aside.

In the bowl of a stand mixer, with the whisk attachment, on high speed, combine the softened butter with the sugar. With the mixer running on medium speed, add the eggs, one at a time, milk, and vanilla.

Switch to the bread hook and with the mixer on low gradually add the flour with a large spoon. Add more flour as needed until the dough pulls away from the sides of the mixing bowl. When all of the flour is added, bring together into a ball, cover with plastic wrap, and refrigerate for at least 30 minutes. (Overnight is preferable.)

For the filling:

Remove the stems from the figs. (If you are using dried figs, soak in hot water for 30 minutes)

In a small bowl combine the cinnamon, nutmeg, and allspice. Mix and set aside.

In a large bowl combine the figs, raisins, dates, almonds, citron, lemon peel, and orange peel. Mix well. (Combining ingredients before grinding saves mixing time later.) Add the spice mixture and fold together.

Grind all the ingredients in a meat grinder at a medium-grind setting.

Combine the honey and Southern Comfort. Add the mixture to the ground filling and knead to combine.

To assemble the cookies:

Preheat the oven to 375.

You will need: floured work surface, or silicone baking sheet, rolling pin, sharp knife, pizza cutter, bench scraper, 12 inch ruler, small bowl with 1/4 cup vegetable oil.

The dough rolls and works best when it is cold. Cut off some cookie dough about the size of a large bar of soap and shape it roughly into the shape of a rectangular bar of soap. Roll it out into an 1/8 inch thick rectangle 6 inches front to back. The width will be about 12 inches but is not important. Flour the work surface as needed.

Using the pizza cutter, cut the rolled dough into two strips 3 inches wide.

Put about 1/4 cup of vegetable oil in a small bowl. Coat palms with vegetable oil and taking some of the filling, roll it into 1/2" - 3/4" logs. Place it onto the center of a strip of dough; repeat until the lengths of dough are covered from one end to the other.

Working with the far strip first, carefully wrap the dough toward you over the filling and gently roll the dough and filling toward you. Roll it back toward you until all of the filling is covered.. (Like pigs-in-a-blanket.) Roll until the seam is on the bottom.

With a sharp knife, cut the roll diagonally into 1 1/2 inch cookies. Place the cookies on a parchment covered cookie sheet about 1/2" apart. Wipe the knife clean with a wet cloth frequently.

Bake at 375 until cookies begin to turn golden, rotating the cookie sheets half way through. about 12 to 15 minutes total.

Remove to a cooling rack and allow to cool completely before storing or decorating. (freeze cookies without icing)

For the icing combine the eggnog and confectioner's sugar in a small bowl and mix until smooth and creamy.

Ice the cookies and decorate with colored sprinkles, jimmies, etc as desired.

NOTES

These cookies store very well in an air-tight container in the freezer. Place sheets of wax paper between layers of cookies in the container. Take out as many as needed at one time, allow to thaw, and frost. They will taste as fresh as the day they were baked.