

All of these recipes were passed down through our families but only with lists of ingredients—no quantities—as this is the way that most Italians cook! Over the years, we have done our best to refine the recipes so that others can actually make them without one of us standing next to the cook who is adding an ingredient and saying, “Ok, that looks like enough!”

Happy cooking!

Dena

Sister Dolores (Aunt Doe) and Father Nesti’s Pasta Sauce

(This is a *chunky* sauce!)

Olive oil

1 ½ *heads* of garlic, finely chopped

1 t red pepper flakes (or more, if desired)

5 cans (14.5 oz) Del Monte Italian Style Stewed Tomatoes with Basil, Garlic, & Oregano, place in bowl and crush with hands

3 cans (18.75 oz) whole tomatoes, cut each tomato in half, remove the seeds, then place tomatoes in bowl and crush with hands (use juice)

1 can (15 oz) tomato puree

1½ bunches Italian parsley, chopped

Salt

Cover bottom of large pot with olive oil. Add chopped garlic and red pepper flakes. Sauté garlic until beginning to turn golden. Add crushed stewed tomatoes, crushed whole tomatoes, tomato puree, and chopped parsley. Salt to taste. Simmer, stirring occasionally, until dark around edge of pot!

Grammy’s Spaghetti Sauce

(This is a *thin* sauce!)

1# pork butt

3 6 oz cans tomato paste

1 15 oz can tomato sauce

1 t basil

½ t oregano

½ t garlic powder

1 t salt

½ t black pepper

Brown the pork. Add tomato paste plus 3 cans of water for *each* can of paste. Then add the tomato sauce and 1 can of water. Add the remaining ingredients and cook for 3 hours.

Mom D's Meatballs

1# (80%) ground beef
4 slices white bread
2 T dried parsley
¼ t garlic salt
Dash of black pepper
1 t cinnamon
1 T sugar
½ c grated Pecorino Romano cheese
2 eggs, slightly beaten

Place ground meat in large mixing bowl. Quickly wet each slice of bread, squeeze slightly, then break into small pieces and add to meat. Mix together with fork. Add remaining ingredients and mix with hands until blended. Roll into meatballs and freeze or drop into simmering sauce. DO NOT STIR—shake pot back and forth if necessary! Later, use spoon to make sure the meatballs are not sticking. Simmer 1 hour or more.

Pork in Sauce

(You can use either of the sauce recipes OR use Rao's Tomato Basil for an easy meal!)

1-2# Boneless Pork Sirloin Steak
5 cloves garlic, finely chopped
Seasoned Salt
Homemade sauce (or 2 jars Rao's)
Grated Parmigiano Reggiano (or Pecorino Romano, if preferred)

Sprinkle Seasoned Salt on the pork. Place pork in skillet with a little olive oil and begin browning the pork on all sides. When almost done browning, add the garlic—you don't want the garlic to burn. Place pork and garlic in casserole dish and cover with sauce. Cover with foil and bake at 300 degrees for 2-3 hours until very tender. When done, sprinkle with grated Parmigiano Reggiano or Pecorino Romano and serve over pasta.

Spaghetti Aglio Olio

¼ c extra virgin olive oil (+ 1T to drizzle at the end)
4 cloves garlic (or more if preferred), thinly sliced
¼ t red pepper flakes
¼ c pasta water (or more if desired)
2 T (or more if preferred) chopped parsley
Salt
½# thin spaghetti (or preferred pasta)
Grated Parmigiano Reggiano (or Pecorino Romano, if preferred)

Begin cooking spaghetti in boiling (salted) water. In a skillet heat olive oil over medium heat. Add garlic and red pepper flakes. Sauté until garlic is just beginning to turn golden. Remove from flame and slowly stir in pasta water. Add chopped parsley and salt to taste. Simmer 10 minutes.

Spaghetti should be cooked until almost al dente. Add drained pasta to skillet and toss to coat. Add more pasta water if desired. Finish with grated Parmesan-Reggiano and drizzle with teaspoon of olive oil. Serve in pasta bowl!

Ricotta Gnocchi

2 c (1#) whole-milk ricotta
2 large eggs, lightly beaten
1 c grated Parmigiano Reggiano (plus additional to serve)
1 ¼ c all-purpose flour
¼ t salt
¼ t black pepper

Stir together ricotta, eggs, cheese, and salt and pepper. Add flour, stirring to form a soft, wet dough. Shape dough on a well-floured surface with lightly floured hands into 2 (1" thick) ropes. Cut crosswise into 1" pieces with a lightly floured knife. Put in 1 layer on lightly floured parchment-lined baking sheet. Cook gnocchi in 2 batches in a pasta pot of gently boiling salted water (3 T salt for 6 quarts water), adding a few at a time to pot and stirring occasionally until cooked through (cut one in half to check), 3-4 minutes per batch. Lift out with a slotted spoon and drain in colander. Place in large pasta bowl with sauce, toss lightly, and sprinkle with grated Parmigiano Reggiano.

Italian Meatloaf

For sauce:

1 T extra virgin olive oil
3 cloves garlic, minced
1 28 oz can crushed tomatoes
1 15 oz can tomato sauce
¼ t crushed red pepper flakes (more or less as desired)
¼ t salt

For meatloaf:

35 saltine squares
¾ c whole milk
2 large eggs
1# lean (85%) ground beef
1# sweet Italian ground sausage (loose sausage – not links!)
½ c grated Parmigiano Reggiano cheese
½ c finely chopped onion
1 t garlic powder
1 t Italian Seasoning
1 t Worcestershire
½ t salt
½ t pepper
¼ t crushed red pepper flakes
1 c shredded fontina cheese
2 T chopped fresh basil

Preheat oven to 400 degrees. Grease 9x13 pan (safe for broiling).

Sauce: heat oil in saucepan over medium heat. Add garlic and cook 1 minute. Add remaining sauce ingredients and simmer 5 minutes.

In large ziplock bag, crush saltines with rolling pin. Then stir crushed saltines, milk, and eggs in large bowl. Let sit for 5 minutes then stir so that mixture forms a paste. Add remaining ingredients (except fontina and basil) and mix. Form into a 5x9 oval and place on 9x13 pan. Pour sauce over the meatloaf and cover with foil. Bake 1 hour then uncover and sprinkle with shredded fontina. Broil until cheese is melted. Let rest for 10 minutes then spoon off any grease from tomato sauce. Slice and sprinkle with fresh basil.

Aunty Ree's Eggplant Parmigiana

Aunty Ree made her eggplant parm *without* mozzarella, and it was delicious. If you desire the more traditional recipe, just add mozzarella sliced or shredded in between the layers.

2 small OR 1 large eggplant sliced 1/4" thick
2 eggs
2 c Italian style breadcrumbs
1 T flour
1 t salt
Dash of black pepper
2 T grated Parmigiano-Reggiano + additional for each layer and the top
Olive oil
Spaghetti Sauce (or Rao's Tomato Basil works well!)

Beat eggs in bowl. In separate bowl, mix breadcrumbs, flour, salt, pepper, and Parmigiano-Reggiano. Dip each eggplant slice lightly in egg then bread crumb mixture. Lay on wax paper to drain. Cover bottom of skillet in olive oil and heat over medium heat. Fry each slice of coated eggplant on each side until golden brown. Drain on paper towels. Cover bottom of 9x13 glass casserole dish with sauce. Place a layer of eggplant followed by another layer of sauce and sprinkle with grated Parmigiano-Reggiano. Repeat until you have used all of your eggplant, usually 3-4 layers. Top with sauce and sprinkle with grated Parmigiano-Reggiano. Bake at 325 degrees for 20 minutes.

Leftover suggestion: Our family enjoys a cold eggplant and genoa salami sandwich! Butter 2 slices of Italian bread, add a slice of the eggplant parmesan and a layer of genoa salami...delish!

No-Fry Method: Beat 2 eggs and add salt and pepper. Use equal parts of panko and grated cheese. Dip sliced eggplant into eggs (let excess drip off) then into panko/cheese mixture and coat both sides. Lay on lightly sprayed (olive oil spray) pan and spray tops of eggplant. Bake at 400 degrees for 25 minutes. Layer into casserole dish as described above.

Lasagna

½# lean (85%) ground beef
½# sweet Italian ground sausage (loose sausage – not links!)
10 oz frozen chopped spinach, thawed and drained
1 medium onion, minced
15 oz whole-milk ricotta
2 eggs
1 c grated Parmigiano Reggiano (divided ¾ c and ¼ c)
1# mozzarella, shredded (divided ¾# and ¼#)
12 lasagna noodles
6 c spaghetti sauce

Brown ground beef and loose Italian sausage with onions. Add chopped spinach and let mixture cool. Boil lasagna noodles until al dente. Mix ricotta, eggs, ¾ c Parmigiano-Reggiano and ¾# mozzarella. Cover bottom of 9x13 glass casserole dish with 2 c sauce, then place layer of noodles, spread half of ricotta mixture on noodles, another layer of noodles, then spread all of the meat and spinach mixture. Add 2 c sauce over the top of the meat, then layer of noodles, remaining ricotta, layer of noodles, and remaining sauce. Sprinkle with ¼ c Parmigiano-Reggiano and ¼# shredded mozzarella. Bake at 350 degrees for 50-60 minutes. Let stand 10-15 minutes to set.

Rosemary Chicken with Sweet Potatoes

1 roasting chicken, pat dry
4 large sweet potatoes, cut into ½” slices and halved
Olive oil
Dried rosemary
Seasoned Salt
Salt & pepper

Preheat oven to 400 degrees. Place sliced sweet potatoes in bowl and drizzle with olive oil. Mix until well coated. Sprinkle generously with Seasoned Salt and rosemary and mix. Place slices in roasting pan, making sure that most are flat on the bottom of the pan and leaving room for the chicken, which will be added later. Bake sweet potatoes for 15 minutes then remove pan from oven and reduce heat to 350 degrees. Place chicken into center of roasting pan. With hands, coat chicken with olive oil. Sprinkle chicken with generous amount of rosemary and salt and pepper to taste. Return pan to oven and bake until chicken is 165 degrees. Do not mix the potatoes during cooking!

Italian Wedding Soup

For broth:

1 stewing chicken
5 carrots, peel and cut into 2" chunks
5 celery stalks, cut into 2" chunks
1 large onion, quartered
1 bay leaf
Salt and black pepper
1 head endive, chopped

Broth: place chicken in large stockpot and cover with water. Add salt and pepper and bring to a boil. Add carrots, celery, onion, and bay leaf and simmer for 2 hours. Remove chicken and cool. Clean chicken from bones, making sure to remove all skin and fat. Add shredded chicken back to broth along with endive. Add meatballs when almost ready to serve the soup.

For meatballs:

1# ground beef
¾ c breadcrumbs
2 eggs, lightly beaten
¼ t onion powder
¼ t garlic salt
¼ t black pepper
2 T dried parsley
1 t dried basil

Meatballs: combine ingredients in bowl and mix with hands. Roll into marble-sized balls and place on cookie sheet. Bake at 350 degrees for 20 minutes. Add cooked meatballs to soup.

For Italian croutons:

6 eggs
9 T flour
1 T olive oil
¼ t baking powder
¾ c grated Pecorino Romano
1/2 c dried parsley

Croutons: Grease sides and bottom of 9x13 pan. In bowl, beat eggs. Add flour, baking powder, and oil and mix well. Add cheese and parsley. Pour into pan and bake at 375 degrees for 25-30 minutes. Begin checking at 20 minutes. When golden brown, remove from oven. Cut into ½" cubes. (Do *not* put croutons into simmering soup!)

To serve wedding soup, place ½ c croutons (more or less as desired) into each bowl and ladle soup over them. Sprinkle soup with Pecorino Romano and enjoy!

Sausage, Peppers, & Potatoes

6 sweet Italian sausages, cut each into thirds
2 large green bell peppers
1 yellow bell pepper
1 orange bell pepper
1 red bell pepper
3 large white potatoes, cut in half then lengthwise (½” thick wedges)
Olive oil
Seasoned Salt
Dried basil
Dried oregano
Salt & pepper
Grated Parmigiano Reggiano (or Pecorino Romano, if preferred)

Preheat oven to 425 degrees. In roasting pan, toss potatoes with olive oil and Seasoned Salt, then spread evenly over bottom of pan and cook for 15 minutes. Cut all of the peppers lengthwise into 1” slices, removing seeds. When potatoes have cooked for 15 minutes, remove from oven and lower temperature to 350 degrees. Add peppers over the potatoes then arrange the sausages over the top. Drizzle a bit more olive oil over everything then sprinkle with a generous amount of basil and oregano, and salt and pepper to taste. Return pan to oven and bake for 90 minutes. Enjoy with grated cheese on top when served.

Aunt Patty’s Famous Chicken Bake

4 whole boneless/skinless chicken breasts
8 slices Swiss cheese
1 can cream of chicken soup
¼ c dry white wine
1 c (or more if desired) Pepperidge Farm Herb Seasoned Stuffing
¼ c butter melted

Cut each chicken breast into 4 pieces and arrange in greased 13x9x2 glass dish. Top with cheese. Combine soup and wine in separate bowl and mix well. Spread evenly over chicken. Sprinkle with stuffing mix. Drizzle butter over the stuffing. Bake uncovered at 350 degrees for 50-60 minutes until chicken is 165 degrees.

Serving suggestion: This dish is amazing with peas and a salad. My daughter loves to mix the peas right into the chicken and stuffing!

Mom's Italian Stuffing

4 5oz bags Cheese & Garlic Croutons
1 ½ - 2 c warm water
4 T olive oil
10 eggs lightly beaten
2 c grated Romano cheese
1/2 c parsley
¼ t garlic powder
Dash of black pepper

Place croutons in large mixing bowl and break up into smaller pieces. Slowly add warm water (don't want the mixture watery!) and mix, then add olive oil and mix. Let stand until croutons soften up. Then add eggs, parsley, garlic powder, cheese, and pepper. Mix thoroughly. Stuff into turkey!

Bruschetta (Dad's Favorite Lunch or Appetizer)

8 slices Italian bread (¾" slices)
8 oz red pimento peppers, chopped
8 oz shredded mozzarella
Olive oil
Garlic salt and pepper
Dried oregano and basil

Drain peppers, then place in bowl. Drizzle olive oil over peppers and season with garlic salt and pepper. Mix and let stand. Place sliced Italian bread on sheet pan and broil on both sides until very lightly toasted. Remove from oven and reduce heat to 350 degrees. Spoon peppers over the lightly toasted bread slices, sprinkle with grated mozzarella, and add oregano and basil to taste. Place into 350 oven and bake until cheese has melted. Remove and place on serving tray or board.