

Franco's

il pesto di finocchietto selvatico

(Wild Fennel Pesto)

Cultivated fennel does not have the same depth of flavor as wild fennel but it will do :)
Pick bulbs with large, fresh looking fronds and, by all means, use the bulb to make a fresh fennel and orange salad (recipe attached)

Ingredients

½ lb. fennel fronds and stems
2 T pine nuts
1 T almonds
½ cup pecorino cheese
¼ cup extra virgin olive oil
1 clove fresh garlic
½ t each salt and pepper

10 oz. fresh Pici pasta (recipe attached)

Make the fresh Pici and set aside

To prepare pesto

Clean the fennel removing the larger stems, keeping the feathery fronds intact; blanch them in salted water for five minutes. Drain the fennel, without throwing water because it will then be used to cook the pasta.

Lightly toast the pine nuts and set aside.

Put the blanched fennel into a blender together with the oil, the almonds and a half of the pine nuts, start to blend then add salt, pepper and cheese.

Blend until you get a creamy mixture and add more oil to soften the pesto.

Boil the pasta in fennel water until it floats (about 4-5 minutes) drain and pour into a large pasta bowl, drizzle with the pesto, stirring well. Sprinkle the pasta with remaining toasted pine nuts.

Serve immediately

Servings: 4

Ready in: 10 Minutes



Franco's Hand Made Pici Toscani Pasta

INGREDIENTS for about 4 people

2 ½ cups flour (00 Italian or All purpose)
1 glass of water plus a tablespoon
1 tablespoon extra-virgin olive oil
Pinch salt

To make the pasta

Pour the water, oil and a pinch of salt into a large bowl and mix with a fork. Slowly add the flour, a little at a time, continuing to mix with a fork until somewhat blended. Place the dough onto a pastry board and continue to knead with your hands until the dough is moist and firm texture.

Let rest in the bowl for 15 minutes.

After 15 minutes, cut the dough into 4 equal pieces and flatten with your hand to allow the piece to fit into the widest opening of a pasta rolling machine. Roll out the dough, progressively making the dough thinner until it reaches the height of ¼ " (usually 2nd to last setting) ; brush with the oil, to prevent drying.

Cut dough into ½" strips and using the palm of the hand roll the strips into long thin pieces. Place rolled out pasta onto a large floured tray



“I admit my love affair with Gorgonzola. (the city and the cheese!)

This dish is flavorful *and* decadent, yet so simple to make you’ll wonder how you ever lived without it! Buon appetito!”

Chef Franco

Gnocchi al Gorgonzola da La Grotta

Ingredients

Fresh gnocchi: ½ cup cooked mashed potatoes and ½ cup all-purpose flour

6 oz. Gorgonzola cheese

4 oz. Mascarpone cheese

2 C Cream

1 T Salted butter

1 T Extra virgin olive oil

1 clove garlic, peeled

Salt

Black Pepper, Freshly Ground

1 T minced parsley



Cooking Instructions

Bring a large pot of salted water to a boil.

Fresh Gnocchi

Combine flour and potatoes; knead to create a soft dough (about 5 minutes) cut into ½ inch strips and rollout each piece using your tips to make a thin rope; cut into ½ inch pieces

Sauce

Place a medium sauté pan over low heat and add olive oil. Place whole garlic clove into hot oil and sauté for 1 minute; stir in butter to melt. Add ½ of the mascarpone and half of the cream; stir until cheese is thoroughly incorporated; Add remaining mascarpone and gorgonzola and stir, allowing cheeses to melt gradually. (add more cream if necessary to thin sauce) Add gnocchi to boiling water and remove as soon as most of it floats; place into sauce. Stir gently to combine, Remove garlic clove. Season with salt and pepper; garnish with minced parsley.



Franco's simple bread dough recipe

3 cups all-purpose flour plus ½ cup or so
2 teaspoons dry yeast (about 1 packet)
½ teaspoon sugar
1¼ cups warm water (110°)
2 teaspoons salt
1 tablespoon extra-virgin olive oil
1 egg beaten for egg wash

Equipment: food processor

Add the sugar to warm water. Sprinkle in yeast and mix to combine. Let sit for 5-8 minutes until yeast “blooms”.

FOOD PROCESSOR: Place 3 cups flour in food processor and add salt. Turn on processor and add oil. Slowly pour in yeast mixture until a ball forms and moves easily around the bowl. Continue allowing the ball to move around the bowl for 3 minutes. (Looks too wet? Add a bit of flour, a little at a time; Too dry? Add a little water)

Sprinkle flour onto a flat surface and remove dough ball. (Dough should be soft and a bit sticky) Place onto flat surface and knead by hand until dough is soft and smooth, like a baby's behind. Pour a teaspoon or so of olive oil into a large mixing bowl and use paper towel to oil the sides and bottom of the bowl. Place dough ball into bowl and cover loosely with plastic wrap and a kitchen towel. Put bowl in a warm area. And let dough rest for 90 minutes. (I turn on my oven for 1 minute and then turn it off; I then put the covered bowl in the oven; the perfect rising temperature needs to be about 90-100 degrees)

Dough will be doubled in size. Remove from oven and gently turn out onto a floured work area. Turn on oven to 450°. Divide dough ball into two pieces and shape into loaves. Place onto a pizza peel or a flat cookie sheet so loaves can easily slide off. You can also use parchment paper and place it on a cookie sheet, then sprinkle with semolina and add loaves (this is easier than trying to transfer soft dough onto a hot stone) Keep loaves at least 3 inches apart or they will bake together. Cover with a clean dish towel and allow to rest until oven is up to temperature.

Remove towel and egg wash the loaves. Using a sharp knife or razor blade, score the loaves with 3 slits a few equal cuts down the length of each loaf. If you have a pizza stone, make sure it heats in oven then sprinkle with semolina flour or corn meal and carefully slide loaves onto stone.

Bake for about 15 minutes or until golden brown and sounds hollow when you thump them on the bottom.

Couple of things: The loaves don't have to look pretty for your first attempts but after a few tries they'll look better than store bought. Loaves can be round, torpedo shaped, football shaped or look like shoes but they'll taste great. This recipe can easily be doubled.