



TOMATO FLAN

Ingredients

1 1/2 pounds vine-ripened plum tomatoes

1 envelope (about 2 1/2 teaspoons) unflavored gelatin

1/3 cup fresh basil or flat-leafed parsley leaves (or a combination of both), washed well, spun dry, and chopped

3 garlic cloves, minced

1 small hot red chili, seeded and minced (wear rubber gloves), or dried hot red pepper flakes to taste

1 to 1 1/2 teaspoons salt

3 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil plus additional for drizzling over aspics

Preparation

1. Lightly oil five 4- to 6-ounce ramekins.
2. Halve tomatoes and squeeze juice and seeds into a sieve set over a 4-cup measure. In a food processor, blend tomato halves until smooth and force puree through sieve into a bowl, pressing hard on solids. Discard solids and add enough strained tomato puree to juice in measuring cup to measure 2 1/4 cups.
3. Transfer 1/4 cup tomato mixture to another bowl and sprinkle with gelatin. Let gelatin soften 1 minute. In a small saucepan bring 1/2 cup tomato mixture just to a boil and add to gelatin mixture, stirring to dissolve gelatin. Stir in remaining 1 1/2 cups tomato mixture and other ingredients (except for additional oil) and divide mixture among ramekins. Chill aspics, covered, until set at least 3 hours and up to 1 day. Run a thin knife around edge of each ramekin and dip in a bowl of hot water for 20 seconds. Invert each ramekin onto a plate and drizzle aspics with additional oil.



FRESH CORN RISOTTO

Ingredients

3 ears of corn, sliced lengthwise from the cob

1 shallot, minced

1 onion, chopped fine

3 T butter

1 T of ex.virgin olive oil

1 1/2 cup of grated parmigiano reggiano

1 cup arborio rice (or vialoni nano or canaroli)

1 cup of white wine or champagne

*6 cups of broth**

**Add a few veggies and the corn stalks to make a vegetable broth, or use a veg bouillon cube*

Preparation

1. Place half of the butter (1.5 T) and olive oil in a deep dish frying pan. Heat for a moment before you put in the minced shallot, chopped onion and the corn. Sauté until onion is translucent. Add the rice. Briefly sauté until a bit dry, then bathe with white wine or champagne. It will sizzle and evaporate.
2. At this point, start adding a ladle of broth, like three at a time to keep the rice wet. Stir once to incorporate the broth, then don't stir for the first 4 minutes. After that, keep adding broth one ladle at a time every 5 minutes or so, to keep it moist and not sticking to the bottom of the pan. As the rice cooks it will swell. Arborio is meant to keep its opaque middle cooking from the outside in. Place a little bit on a plate to taste. When you think it's al dente, add another ladle of broth to keep it loose. Don't let it over cook or get too sticky.
3. Turn off the heat, add the rest of the butter and half of the grated parmigiano. Plate when the risotto is still loose. It changes quickly. Sprinkle parmigiano over each plate with a drizzle of ex virgin olive oil. Garnish with flowering cilantro or just cilantro or parsley.



BEEF, AVOCADO, AND RED ONION SALAD

Ingredients

4 medium beets (try the cooking method you prefer). If they are cooked whole, slice into quarters.

1 small red onion, thinly sliced

1/4 cup of ex virgin olive oil, plus extra to finish

3 T sherry vinegar

1 to 2 t of Tabasco or Cholula hot sauce

2 medium avocados, peeled, pitted and sliced (or chunks if beets are)

2/3 cup of cilantro, chopped

1/3 cup of mint (optional)

2/3 cup of pea shoots or mache if you have it

Salt and black pepper to taste

Preparation

1. Cook beets according to your preferred method.*
2. Put cooked beets in a bowl with the olive oil, onions, sherry vinegar, hot sauce, salt and freshly ground pepper. Mix and let sit for about 10 minutes.
3. Serve together on a platter with the avocado, cilantro, and mint. Finish with a drizzle of olive oil and a turn of black pepper.

*I use a pressure cooker. I add the beets whole and unpeeled with only enough water to cover half way. I cook for 5 minutes. When you take the beets out, you can easily slide the skins off and are left with a beautiful smooth beet that hasn't lost any of its potent juices. This can be done in a pot, covering the beets with water and simmering for a half hour. You can also slice them thin, blanch them for 5 minutes and let them cool.



TAGLIATA~ BISTECCA ALLA FIORENTINA

Tagliata sliced thinly over fresh arugula with shaved parmigiano

Ingredients

1 T- Bone or Porterhouse steak at least 3 inches thick and 3 - 3 1/2 pounds

1 bunch of fresh rosemary

1 bunch of fresh sage

2 T extra virgin olive oil + 3 T for greens

Coarse salt and freshly ground pepper to taste

6 cups arugula

1/2 cup shaved parmigiano reggiano

Preparation

1. Preheat a grill or grill pan on medium high heat. Pat the steak dry.
2. Tie the rosemary and sage bunches together with butcher's twine to form an herb brush. Use the herbs to brush the steak with olive oil.
3. Put the steak on the grill pan and char it well. Cook ~12 minutes on the first side, flip and cook ~9 minutes on the second side. This steak is traditionally cooked rare. Tuscans don't add salt in the beginning, they think it encourages the steak to give up it's juice. Do it immediately after and let it sit for 5 minutes before you slice it off the bone.
4. Once you have cut the steak into strips, enjoy as is or place atop an arugula salad with shaved parmigiano reggiano, a drizzle of e.v. olive oil, a pinch of good salt and ground black pepper.