

Allison's Recipes

The following recipes are pictured in the photo gallery of my Web site and are listed here alphabetically. To see more of my recipes go to the following sites: zursunbeans.com, demedici.com or visit boston.com/bostonglobe/

Blue cheese sampler with dried pears and cherries

The following cheeses are used to make this blue sampler:
Point Reyes Farmstead Cheese Company, CA: Original blue
Old Chatham Shepherding Company, NY: Ewe's blue
Jasper Hill Farm, VT: Bayley Hazen Blue

Bruschetta al Pomodoro

Toasted bread with chopped tomatoes
Serves 4

In this traditional Tuscan recipe, heat enhances extra virgin olive oil's natural bouquet as it warms atop toasty country bread. Tomatoes, fresh garlic and basil are added as the final embellishment to this flavorful, simple appetizer also known as Fettunta.

4 mature tomatoes, finely chopped
¾ cup Badia a Coltibuono Extra Virgin Olive Oil
4 thick slices Italian country bread
4 cloves garlic, finely chopped
1 cup fresh basil leaves, finely shredded
Salt and pepper to taste

1. Place tomatoes in colander, add salt to taste and allow them to drain.
2. Set the oven at 425 degrees. In small dish, pour ½ cup olive oil and add salt and pepper. Using a pastry brush, lightly coat each side of bread with oil and place on baking sheet.
3. Toast the bread in oven for about 15 minutes until crisp and golden brown, turning once.
4. In bowl, transfer tomatoes and gently mix with garlic, basil and the rest of the olive oil, reserving some basil for garnish if desired.
5. Spread each slice of the toasted bread with the chopped tomato mixture, and to serve arrange on individual plates or large platter.

Adapted from: Recipes from a Tuscan Wine-Farm by Lorenza de Medici

Cannellini bean soup

Serves 8

Originally cultivated in Argentina and beloved in Italy, Cannellini beans are also known as white kidney beans. With a mild, nutty flavor and creamy texture, these ivory legumes are versatile - enjoy in soups, salads and pasta dishes.

1 lb. dried Cannellini beans
½ cup olive oil
2 large red onions, chopped
2 carrots, chopped
2 stalks celery, chopped
8 cups water
Salt and pepper to taste

Sort beans and soak overnight in bowl using 3 times as much water as beans. The next morning rinse beans thoroughly with cold water. In soup pot, sauté onion, carrots and celery in 4 tablespoons olive oil for 10 minutes. Add drained beans, fresh water and bring to boil. Reduce heat to a simmer and cook 1 - 1½ hour, until soup is thick and creamy and beans are tender. Season soup with salt and pepper; remove from heat and stir in remaining olive oil.

Chicken Cutlets with Dijon Mustard

Serves 4

With a layer of savory Dijon mustard, these boneless chicken cutlets are crisp on the outside and bursting with flavor. The mustard is mixed with onion, flat-leaf parsley, and olive oil into a paste that you press onto skinless, boneless breasts. You can also use other fresh herbs, such as tarragon or thyme, to flavor the cutlet. Pat the chicken dry before dredging with flour (the flour adheres better) and pan-fry the pieces in olive oil until they're golden. Accompany the cutlets with steamed broccolini or slice the chicken and serve it on romaine leaves drizzled lightly with a white wine vinaigrette.

1 medium onion, finely chopped
1 tablespoon chopped flat leaf parsley
3 tablespoons Dijon mustard
½ cup olive oil, or more to taste
½ cup flour, or more (for dredging)
Salt and pepper, to taste
4 boneless, skinless chicken breast halves
1 lemon, cut into wedges (for serving)

1. In a food processor, combine onion, parsley, mustard and 1/4 cup of the olive oil. Work the mixture into a thick, smooth paste; do not let it get too thin.
2. On large plate, place enough flour to cover the bottom of the plate generously. Add salt and pepper. Dredge each chicken piece with flour, gently shaking off the excess flour. Set them on a clean plate. Rub the mustard mixture over chicken. Dredge again in flour.
3. In large skillet that will hold all the breasts, heat the remaining 1/4 cup olive oil over medium heat. Fry the chicken for 6 minutes on each side or until golden brown and cooked through. Garnish with lemon wedges.

Chili beans with fire roasted tomatoes

Serves 6-8

Snowcap is an especially beautiful heirloom bean, ivory and coffee colored with burgundy markings. It cooks up plump with a rich, earthy, yet mild flavor and in this recipe simmers with fire-roasted tomatoes creating a thick, smoky, broth.

- 1 lb. dried snowcap beans
- 1 quart water
- 1 cup yellow onion, chopped
- 1-2 tsp. chili powder
- 4 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 can (14.5 ounces) fire roasted tomatoes
- 1-2 tsp. salt

Sort beans and soak overnight in bowl using 3 times as much water as beans. The next morning rinse beans with cold water. In large pot combine drained beans, fresh water, onions, chili powder and garlic. Bring to simmer, then partially cover and cook, stirring occasionally, for 45 minutes. Stir in fire roasted tomatoes and salt and continue cooking until beans are very tender and broth is thick.

Countess Bicocchi's "Torta Numerouno"

Traditional olive oil lemon cake

Serves 8

Italian cooks use the highest quality olive oils for baking because of its unique combination of buttery taste and rich density. This easy, traditional olive oil cake with lemon has a light, but tight crumb and stays moist for days (if it lasts that long). Countess Romana Bicocchi of Numerouno olive oil estate in Tuscany gave me the recipe last year, which I adapted using American flour. Serve wedges of this cake midmorning with coffee, in the in the afternoon with tea, or after dinner with oranges or clementines.

Butter or olive oil (for pan)

Flour (for pan)

7 eggs, separated and at room temperature

1 ½ cups granulated sugar

1 cup top-quality olive oil

1 cup flour

3 tablespoons corn starch

1½ teaspoons baking powder

Grated rind of 1 lemon

Confectioners sugar (for sprinkling)

1. Set the oven at 375 degrees. Butter a 9-inch springform or 10-inch cake pan and dust it with flour, tapping out the excess.
2. In a bowl using a whisk, beat the egg yolks and gradually beat in the granulated sugar and olive oil.
3. Add the flour, cornstarch, baking powder, and lemon rind. Mix well.
4. In an electric mixer, beat the egg whites until they form soft peaks. Gently fold the whites into the yolk mixture until no white patches show.
5. Transfer the batter to the pan. Bake the cake for 40 minutes or until the top springs back when pressed with a fingertip.
6. Let the cake cool. Unlatch the spring and slide the cake onto a flat platter (or invert if using cake pan). Sprinkle generously with confectioners' sugar.

Adapted from: Countess Bicocchi, Numerouno Estate

Dulce de leche caramel apples

Dulche de leche, referred to as milk caramel, literally translates as “sweet from milk.” Made in Argentina, Dulche de leche is produced from fresh milk, sugar and vanilla. A fun twist on caramel apples popular in North America, this recipe offers a quick, wholesome snack or dessert enjoyed by children and adults.

1 fresh crisp red apples per person
1-2 tablespoons Dulce de leche per person
Cinnamon powder to taste
1 tablespoon roasted almonds, chopped per person (optional)

For each serving wash apple, cut in quarters, and remove core and seeds. Cut each quarter into thick slices and arrange on small plate. Leave on skins if apples are organic otherwise peel apples.

Put spoonful of Dulce de Leche on plate beside apples and add a dusting of cinnamon powder. Sprinkle each plate with 1 tbsp. roasted chopped almonds if desired. Serve with a small butter knife to spread the caramel on apples

Flageolet bean salad

Serves 6

Flageolets, the quintessential French legume, are the young delicate seeds of haricot beans gathered and shelled while they're a pale shade of ivory-green. In this dish, the dried beans are soaked overnight, then cooked and tossed with sweet red onion, dry-cured black olives, garlic, fresh herbs, olive oil, and white wine vinegar. (You can also use the quick-soak method given here.) Garnish the dish with roast tomatoes to add some flavor from the south of France. Spoon the salad beside juicy lamb chops or slices from a roast leg of lamb, or serve it as a weekend lunch with crusty bread, aged local cheddar, and a bowl of crisp apples.

1 pound dried flageolets
3 quarts water
6 plum tomatoes, halved lengthwise
Olive oil for sprinkling
Salt and pepper, to taste
½ red onion, finely chopped
½ cup dry-cured black olives, coarsely chopped
1 clove garlic, finely chopped
1/3 cup olive oil
1/3 cup white wine vinegar
½ cup chopped parsley
4 leaves fresh basil, torn up

1. In large bowl, combine beans with enough water to cover by several inches (not the water from the ingredient list). Alternatively, place beans and plenty of water in large saucepan and bring to bowl. Turn off heat and let sit for 1 hour.
2. Set oven at 400 degrees. In a baking dish, set the tomatoes, cut sides up. Sprinkle with olive oil, salt, and pepper. Roast for 1 hour or until tomatoes are soft and slightly wrinkled.
3. Drain and rinse the beans. In a soup pot, combine the beans with the 3 quarts of water. Bring to a simmer and lower the heat. Continue cooking for 45 minutes or until the beans are tender. Drain beans and let cool slightly.
4. In serving bowl, combine beans with onion and olives. Sprinkle with garlic, olive oil, vinegar, salt, and pepper. Toss gently. Add the parsley and basil. Toss again. Garnish with roasted tomatoes.

French Vinaigrette

Makes ½ cup

2 tablespoons Martin-Pouret or Kimberley white wine vinegar

Sea salt to taste

½ tsp. Edmond Fallot Dijon Mustard (optional)

6 tablespoons A L'Olivier or Castelas extra virgin olive oil

Fresh-ground black pepper to taste

1-2 tablespoons fresh green herbs such as: parsley, chives, tarragon, basil, minced (optional)

1. In bowl, beat with whisk the vinegar and salt (and optional mustard) until the salt is dissolved.
2. Add the olive oil by droplets and beat until thoroughly blended. Season with pepper.
3. Stir in the optional herbs and correct seasoning just before dressing the salad.

Goat cheesecakes with fig sauce

Seasoning with A L' Olivier Fruit Vinegars

Serves 4

Offered in seven luscious flavors, A L' Olivier innovative fruit vinegars are the new go-to ingredients for seasoning seafood, eggs, cheese, salads, vegetables and grains. Made with fresh fruit purée, the vinegars have a rich sauce-like texture and irresistible tangy-sweetness. Sample our recipes and then discover fun, new ways to spice-up your favorite dishes using A L' Olivier fruit vinegars.

8 ounces fresh log-shape goat cheese

16 round whole wheat crackers

A L' Olivier Fig Vinegar

Orange blossom or lavender honey to taste

Fresh or dried figs for garnish

1. For each serving, place 4 crackers on small plate and top with ½ ounce goat cheese circle (divide 8 ounce log into 16 equal portions).
2. Drizzle goat cheese cakes with fig vinegar and honey to taste and garnish with figs.

Greek-style baked lima beans

Serves 4

Limas (also known as butter beans) are named after the city of Lima, Peru and are an ancient legume thought to be cultivated in North America around 1300s. Cream-colored, flat and kidney-shaped, limas have a buttery texture and delicate flavor.

½ lb. dried large lima beans
¼ cup olive oil
1 onion, chopped
1 carrot, chopped
3 large, fresh tomatoes, finely chopped
Salt and black pepper to taste
¼ cup fresh parsley, finely chopped
1 tsp. dried oregano

Sort beans and soak overnight in bowl using 3 times as much water as beans. The next morning rinse beans with cold water. Put drained beans in saucepan and cover with two inches of water. Bring to a slow boil, reduce heat and simmer uncovered until tender (35-45 minutes). Drain beans reserving ½ cup liquid.

In large flame and ovenproof casserole, heat the oil, add onion and cook for 2 minutes. Add carrots and cook another minute, then add tomatoes and cook for 10 minutes. Turn off heat. Add cooked limas, bean liquid, salt, pepper, parsley and oregano. Stir to mix. Put the casserole in preheated 325-degree oven and bake, uncovered for 1 hour. Serve hot.

Grilled summer squash with gremolata

Serves 4

The weather is cooling off, but there's still plenty of succulent fresh zucchini, yellow crookneck, and pattypan squash at farmers' markets. This dish tops grilled squash with gremolata, the classic Italian condiment made by chopping flat-leaf parsley, garlic, and lemon rind together. Citrusy and spicy, the relish also adds a garden-fresh brightness when sprinkled on sliced tomatoes, oven-roasted potatoes, corn-on-the-cob, seafood, and chicken. Gremolata is the classic garnish for osso buco, the dish of braised veal shanks. Newer gremolatas are made with chopped mint or capers (nice with lamb or salmon). Familiar vegetables just got a lot more interesting.

SQUASH

4 medium zucchini, yellow crookneck, or pattypan squash
Olive oil (for sprinkling)
Salt and pepper, to taste

1. Light a charcoal fire or turn a gas grill to medium-high.
2. Halve the squash lengthwise. Coat it with olive oil and sprinkle with salt and pepper. Grill the squash until it is lightly charred. Move the squash to a cooler part of the grill and continue cooking for 5 minutes or until tender.

GREMOLATA

½ cup packed Italian flat-leaf parsley leaves, coarsely chopped
4 cloves garlic, coarsely chopped
Grated rind of 2 lemons
Sea salt to taste

1. On a board, chop the parsley, garlic, and lemon together until finely chopped. Transfer to a bowl. Stir in the salt.
2. Sprinkle the mixture over the grilled zucchini or squash.

Hero bread

A family favorite and named for my two sons (who are superheroes!), this cheesy nosh fuses Parmesan and sweet butter with chewy Paesano bread.

Ingredients: unsalted butter, best-quality Parmesan cheese, thin-crust country bread, like round Paesano or rectangular Ciabatta.

To make: cut bread into 1-inch thick slices, spread with soft butter and sprinkle with a generous amount of fresh-grated cheese. Place in 400-degree oven (a toaster oven also works) and bake until bread is golden and crispy, butter is sizzling and cheese is warm and melted. Serve with juicy red grapes.

Italian rice salad with cranberry beans

Serves 6

Traditionally used for risotto, Arborio rice also makes a splendid underpinning for a main course salad. In this recipe dried beans supply the protein; they're mixed with the fluffy, aromatic rice, fragrant lemon, sautéed onion, sun-dried tomatoes, capers, fruity olive oil, and a sprinkle of parsley. Preparing the salad requires thinking ahead. After simmering the beans for 2 minutes, you need to let them sit for an hour. When it's time to toss the salad, handle it gently; heavy mixing makes mushy rice. If you're in a hurry, use a can of pinto beans (drain and rinse them first), but the rich, earthy, sweet flavor, and pleasantly mealy texture of dried cranberry beans is worth the extra effort. Serve the salad at room temperature on a bed of spicy Italian greens such as arugula. Add a side dish of melon slices. This year, peaches taste especially good, so you might want to cut those up as well. Meat-eaters in the family may appreciate this substantial dish; if not, indulge them with a few slices of ham or chicken breast.

¾ cup dried cranberry beans (1½ cup cooked)

7 cups cold water

2 cups Arborio rice

4 tbsp. olive oil

1 onion, finely chopped

Salt and pepper, to taste

½ cup lemon juice

1/2 cup capers, drained

1/3 cup sundried tomatoes (packed in oil), drained and coarsely chopped

½ cup chopped fresh parsley

1. In a saucepan, bring the beans and 4 cups of the water to boil. Simmer for 2 minutes. Remove from the heat and let the pot stand, covered, for 1 hour. Drain the beans into a colander and rinse with cold water.
2. Return the beans to the saucepan with 2 inches of cold water. Bring to a boil, lower the heat, and cook the beans for 35 to 45 minutes or until they are tender.
3. Meanwhile, rinse the rice.
4. In a large flameproof casserole, heat 2 tablespoons of the olive oil. When oil is hot, add the onion and cook, stirring often, for 8 minutes or until it softens. Add the rice and cook, stirring constantly, for 3 minutes or until the grains become opaque.
5. Add the remaining 3 cups water and a large pinch of salt. Bring to a boil, lower the heat, and cover the pan. Simmer for 15 minutes or until all the water evaporates. Remove from the heat and let the rice stand for 15 minutes.
6. Turn the rice out into large bowl. Gently break up any lumps. Add the lemon juice and remaining 2 tablespoons olive oil. Toss gently. Set aside to cool.
7. Add the capers, tomatoes, parsley, beans, and pepper. Taste for seasoning and add more salt, if you like.

Lentilles du Puy with roasted carrots and beets

Serves 6

This recipe was developed for the esteemed lentils from Le Puy (which have been granted an appellation d'origine contrôlée by the French government), but any French-style lentil will do.

3 small beets, peeled and diced
1 large carrot, peeled and diced
4 shallots, peeled and halved
3/4 cup extra-virgin olive oil
2 sprigs fresh parsley
2 sprigs fresh thyme
Salt and freshly ground black pepper
3/4 lb. lentilles du Puy, or other French-style green lentils, picked over and rinsed
3 tbsp. sherry vinegar
1/4 cup chopped fresh parsley

Preheat oven to 400°. Place beets, carrots, shallots, and 1/2 cup oil in a medium-roasting pan. Stir to coat vegetables evenly with oil. Add parsley and thyme, season with salt and pepper, and cook, stirring once, until vegetables begin to brown, about 20 minutes. Add lentils and 3 cups of water, stir, then cover pan with foil. Cook until lentils are tender and all water is absorbed, about 1 hour.

Remove pan from oven. Remove and discard herb sprigs, then dress lentils with vinegar and remaining oil. Allow to cool slightly, and then stir in chopped parsley. Adjust seasoning and serve.

Recipe credit: Saveur Magazine

Mini cheesecake sampler

This isn't real cheesecake, but rather goat cheese with berries, honey, and biscuits. Any handmade chevre in a log is good for this plate. Look for cheeses that are made in New York and New England, including Coach Farm chevre log, or Westfield Farm's goat cheese. Add sliced native strawberries, artisan honey, and sweet whole-wheat biscuits. Each guest sets a piece of cheese on a cracker, adds a slice or two of berries, and tops them with a drizzle of honey.

For four people, you need an 8-ounce log of cheese, cut into 1/4-inch-thick circles; 1 pint of fresh berries, hulled and sliced; 3 ounces of local honey in a ramekin; and 6 ounces of biscuits, such as Carr's assortment, which has many hearty selections.

Oil and vinegar “dressing”

According to Italian cookbook author Marcella Hazan, salad dressing is a process rather than an object, a verb rather than a noun; it is the act that transforms greens and vegetables into a salad. Although the method is uncomplicated, the ingredients – salt, olive oil, and vinegar – must all be immaculate like the ones offered in this recipe.

Ravida sea to taste

Colonna Unfiltered Italian or L'Estornell Spanish extra virgin olive oil

L'Estornell Red Wine or Sherry Vinegar

Freshly ground black pepper (optional)

Fresh basil, shredded or Italian parsley, chopped (optional)

1. For green salad, make sure leaves are quite dry. Sprinkle small amount of salt on salad (more can be added later).
2. Drizzle enough oil (use a tablespoon to distribute oil rather than pouring directly from the bottle) to coat salad greens or vegetables. Give them a surface gloss, but not so much to make the salad soggy.
3. Add vinegar, so that a hint of tartness appears, but does not overwhelm.
4. Toss salad taking care not to bruise delicate greens. Taste and correct seasonings for oil, salt, or vinegar and add black pepper and herbs, if desired. Serve immediately.

Pantry essentials for cheese plates

Used as accoutrements to cheese plates, this selection of pantry items includes: Arnaud brand French green brined olives with herbs and black dry-cured olives with herbs, cornichons, American Spoon Foods red pepper relish, June Taylor orange marmalade, Fallot Dijon mustard, Bazzini dried fruit and nut mix, Bella Viva dried pears and walnuts, and Marcona almonds.

Shrimp with tomato cilantro dip

Seasoning with A L' Olivier Fruit Vinegars

Serves 4

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16 large raw shrimp, peeled and deveined

Olive oil for grilling shrimp

½ cup A L' Olivier Tomato Vinegar

Sea salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste

2 tbsp. fresh cilantro, finely chopped

1. Set indoor stovetop grill at highest temperature or use cast iron skillet on burner set at highest setting. Place 3-4 shrimp on wooden skewer and brush with olive oil. Cook for 2-3 minutes per side until pinkish-white and tender.
2. To serve, drizzle shrimp hot from the grill with tomato vinegar and sprinkle with salt, pepper and cilantro.

Spaghetti Aglio-Olio Peperoncino

Spaghetti with garlic, oil and hot peppers

Serves 6

Simplicity and ease of approach are the keys to good spaghetti, plus well-crafted pasta. For the following recipe, select artisanal pasta made the old-fashioned way using bronze dies and slow drying that produce a pleasantly textured surface with a nutty flavor and wheaty aroma.

4-6 cloves garlic, coarsely chopped

½ cup top-quality extra virgin olive oil, such as Badia a Colitbuono

Sea salt to taste

1 pound Benedetto Cavalieri spaghettoni

3-4 anchovy fillets, coarsely chopped (optional)

1 small dried hot red chili pepper, crumbled, or ½ teaspoon hot red pepper flakes,

½ cup flat-leaf parsley, finely chopped

1. In large pot, bring 5-6 quarts of water to boil.
2. In large enough pan to hold all the drained pasta, gently sauté garlic in olive oil over medium-low heat until garlic starts to turn golden. Do not brown.
3. Add salt (1 tablespoon or to taste) to vigorously boiling water. Add spaghettine and stir.
4. If using anchovies, add them to oil and garlic. Cook briefly, mashing anchovy pieces into oil with fork. Stir in chili pepper and half the parsley, and carefully add a ladleful of the pasta cooking water. Let simmer and reduce slightly while pasta finishes cooking.
5. Start testing pasta after it has cooked for 5 minutes. When it is still a little chewy in the center, drain and add it to pan with sauce. Turn heat up slightly, and cook, mixing pasta and sauce together well for 1 to 2 minutes, or until pasta is done to taste. Turn pasta into preheated serving bowl, sprinkle with remaining minced parsley, and serve immediately.

Adapted from: "From Italy, the Truth About Pasta" by Nancy Harmon Jenkins, The New York Times

Teatime sampler

Serve this with a top-quality black tea such as pure Assam or fancy Ceylon. This mix includes the classic British combination of cheddar and marmalade. Blue cheese adds a tangy surprise.

Look for a year-old Shelburne Farms wax-wrapped brick-shaped cheddar. Shelburne's aged cheese, made in Vermont, is fruity, sharp, and nutty. Or try another Green Mountain State cheese maker such as Grafton Village farmhouse-style cheddar or Cabot's linen-wrapped farmhouse-style cheddar. Add Great Hill Blue, made in Marion, which is butter-colored and creamy, with a crumbly texture and rich, robust taste - everything a good blue should be. Another outstanding local blue is Bayley Hazen from Jasper Hill Farm in Vermont.

Put some orange marmalade into a small pot and add roasted walnuts and oat biscuits. Guests set a piece of cheddar or blue on an oatcake, add a dab of marmalade, and eat the nuts as an accompaniment. For four people, you need 6 ounces of cheddar, cut into 1/4-inch thick squares; 6 ounces of blue cheese, cut into triangle shapes; 4 ounces of orange marmalade; 4 ounces of walnuts (roast them in a 350 degree oven for 10 minutes); and 6 ounces of oat biscuits, such as Duchy Originals or Effie's Homemade Oatcakes.

Toasted Sardinia crispbread with cheese and olives

Serves 4

Originally made for nomadic island shepherds, who ate them with sheep's cheese and olive oil, classic "music paper bread" (also known as Carasatu) is an artisan staple from the island of Sardinia. The bread is twice baked in wood burning ovens, and then split apart and baked again which produces perfectly thin, fragrant and crisp layers. Simple and delicious, the following recipe serves Sardinia crispbread with Italian table cheese and olives for an authentic meal.

8.9 ounce box Guilio Bulloni Sardinia Crispbread with extra virgin olive oil
8 ounces Italian table cheese, such as Fontina Val d'Aosta, sliced
L' Estornell olives

1. On serving plate, arrange crispbread, sliced cheese and olives.
2. Drizzle with extra virgin olive oil, if desired.