

Food for Thought

By Leslie Barnes



This time of year seems to be hectic for many of us. Between winter sports and getting ready for the holidays, having dinner on the table every night can seem a bit daunting, especially when you've spent the day out of town. With that in mind, these recipes are freezer friendly. After preparation, these recipes can be divided, half for now and half frozen for a quick, homemade meal after a long day.

MAC 'N' CHEESE WITH BACON

Kosher salt
4 cups milk
4 cloves garlic, smashed and divided
3 T unsalted butter
5-1/2 cups shredded sharp white Cheddar, divided
Freshly ground black pepper
4 slices bacon, cut crosswise into thin strips
1 large onion, diced

1 lb elbow macaroni
2 or 3 sprigs thyme
3 T all-purpose flour
1/4 cup divided
1/4 cup chopped flat-leaf parsley
Leaves from 1/4 bunch fresh thyme

Bring a pot of salted water to a boil over high heat. Add the macaroni and cook for 8 to 9 minutes, until al dente. Drain.

Preheat oven to 400°F.

In a small saucepan heat milk with the thyme sprigs and 2 garlic cloves. Melt butter in a large, deep skillet over medium-high heat. Whisk in the flour and cook for about 1 minute, stirring constantly to keep lumps from forming. Strain the solids out of the milk and whisk it into the butter and flour mixture. Continue to whisk vigorously, and cook until the mixture is nice and smooth. Stir in 4 cups of the cheese and continue to cook and stir to melt the cheese. Season with salt and pepper. Add the cooked macaroni and the parsley, and fold it all in to coat the macaroni with the cheese mixture. Scrape into a 3-quart baking dish and sprinkle with the remaining 1-1/2 cups cheese. Bake for 30 minutes, or until hot and bubbly.

While that bakes, heat a sauté pan. Add the bacon, render the fat and cook until crispy. Add onion, 2 cloves garlic and thyme leaves and cook for about 5 minutes to soften the onion. Season with salt and pepper.

To serve, scatter the bacon mixture over the mac and cheese. Use a big spoon to scoop out servings, making sure you get some of the bacon mixture on each spoonful.

Serves 6-8.

TURKEY AND SPINACH-STUFFED SHELLS WITH ARRABBIATA SAUCE

1 (12-oz) box jumbo pasta shells
1/2 large yellow onion, chopped (about 1 cup)
3 cloves garlic, chopped
1/2 tsp kosher salt, plus 1/2 tsp
1/4 tsp freshly ground black pepper, plus 1/4 tsp
1 (8 to 10-oz) package frozen spinach, thawed and coarsely chopped
1 (15-oz) container ricotta cheese
3/4 cup grated Parmesan cheese
1/4 cup chopped fresh basil leaves
2 T chopped fresh flat-leaf parsley
5 cups Arrabbiata Sauce, recipe follows
1-1/2 cups grated mozzarella (about 5 ounces)

3 T extra-virgin olive oil
1 lb ground turkey
2 eggs, lightly beaten

Bring a large pot of salted water to a boil over high heat. Add the pasta and partially cook until tender but still very firm to the bite, stirring occasionally, about 4 to 5 minutes. Drain pasta.

Meanwhile, in a large heavy skillet, heat the olive oil over medium-high heat. Add the onions and the garlic and cook until the onions are soft and starting to brown, about 3 minutes. Add the ground turkey, 1/2 teaspoon salt, and 1/4 teaspoon black pepper and continue to cook, stirring occasionally, until the meat is slightly golden and cooked through. Add spinach and stir to combine. Remove from heat and let cool.

In a large bowl combine the cooled turkey mixture with the ricotta cheese, Parmesan cheese, eggs, basil, parsley, and the remaining salt and pepper. Stir to combine.

To stuff the shells, cover the bottom of a 9x13 by 2-inch baking dish with 1 cup of Arrabbiata sauce. Take a shell in the palm of your hand and stuff it with a large spoonful of turkey mixture,

about 2 T. Place the stuffed shell in the baking dish. Continue filling the shells until the baking dish is full, about 24 shells. Drizzle the remaining Arrabbiata Sauce over the shells, top with the grated mozzarella. If freezing, cover tightly with plastic wrap and place in the freezer for up to 1 month.

To bake, preheat the oven to 400°F. Bake until the shells are warmed through and the cheese is beginning to brown, about 60 minutes (20 minutes if shells are unfrozen.)

Arrabbiata Sauce:

2 T extra-virgin olive oil
6 oz sliced pancetta, (bacon works well) coarsely chopped
2 tsp crushed red pepper flakes
2 garlic cloves, minced
5 cups jarred or fresh marinara sauce

Heat the olive oil in a large soup pot over medium heat. Add the pancetta and saute until golden brown, about 5 minutes. Add the garlic and sauté until tender, about 1 minute. Add the marinara sauce and red pepper flakes and bring to a simmer. Remove from heat and let cool until ready to use. Yield: approximately 6 cups
Serves 6 to 8.

ROASTED GARLIC SOUP WITH PARMESAN CHEESE

26 garlic cloves (unpeeled)
2-1/4 cups sliced onions
18 garlic cloves, peeled
3-1/2 cups chicken stock or canned low-salt chicken broth
1/2 cup whipping cream
1/2 cup finely grated Parmesan cheese (about 2 ounces)
4 lemon wedges

4 T olive oil, divided
1-1/2 tsp chopped fresh thyme

Preheat oven to 350°F. Place 26 garlic cloves in small glass baking dish. Add 2 T olive oil and sprinkle with salt and pepper; toss to coat. Cover baking dish tightly with foil and bake until garlic is golden brown and tender, about 45 minutes. Cool. Squeeze garlic between fingertips to release cloves. Transfer cloves to small bowl.

Add 2 T olive oil to heavy large saucepan over medium-high heat. Add onions and thyme and cook until onions are translucent, about 6 minutes. Add roasted garlic and 18 raw garlic cloves and cook 3 minutes. Add chicken stock; cover and simmer until garlic is very tender, about 20 minutes. Working in batches, purée soup in blender until smooth. Return soup to saucepan; add cream and bring to simmer. Season with salt and pepper. (Can be prepared 1 day ahead. Cover and refrigerate. Rewarm over medium heat, stirring occasionally.)

Divide grated cheese among 4 bowls and ladle soup over. Squeeze juice of 1 lemon wedge into each bowl and serve.

Serves 4.

Church Directory

NEHALEM VALLEY BIBLE CHURCH

Gary Taylor, Pastor
Grant & North Streets, Vernonia
503 429-5378
Sunday School 10:00 a.m.
Morning Worship 11:00 a.m.
Nursery available
Wednesday Service 7:00 p.m.

VERNONIA FOURSQUARE CHURCH

Carl Pense, Pastor
850 Madison Avenue, Vernonia
503 429-1103
Sunday Worship Service: 10:30 a.m.
Children's Sunday School

CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER DAY SAINTS

Marc Farmer, Branch President
1350 E. Knott Street, Vernonia
503 429-7151
Sacrament Meeting, Sunday 10 a.m.
Sunday School & Primary 11:20 a.m.
Relief Society, Priesthood and
Young Women, Sunday 12:10 p.m.

SEVENTH DAY ADVENTIST

Gary S. Walter, Pastor
2nd Ave. and Nehalem St., Vernonia
503 429-8301
Morning Worship, 11:00 a.m.
Sabbath School 9:30 a.m.

ASSEMBLY OF GOD

Wayne and Maureen Marr
662 Jefferson Ave., Vernonia,
503 429-0373
Sunday School 9:45 a.m.
Morning Worship 11:00 a.m.

VERNONIA CHRISTIAN CHURCH

Sam Hough, Minister
410 North Street, Vernonia
503 429-6522
Sunday School 9:45 a.m.
Sunday Worship 11:00 a.m.
(meets in Youth & Family Center)
Home Group Meeting
throughout the week
at various locations

FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH

359 "A" Street, Vernonia
503 429-4027
Sunday School 9:45 a.m.
Sunday Worship Service 11:00 a.m.
Wednesday Prayer Meeting 7:00 p.m.

ST. MARY'S CATHOLIC CHURCH

Rev. Luan Tran, Administrator
960 Missouri Avenue, Vernonia
503 429-8841
Mass Sunday 12:00 Noon
Religious Educ. Sunday 10:30 a.m.

VERNONIA COMMUNITY CHURCH

Grant Williams, Pastor
957 State Avenue, Vernonia
503 429-6790
Sunday Breakfast 9:00 a.m.
Morning Worship 9:45 a.m.
Children and Nursery 10:00 a.m.
Youth Group 6:00 p.m.
Preschool Mon. & Wed. 9:00 a.m.
Wednesday Prayer 6:00 p.m.
Tues. & Fri. Adult Volleyball 7:00 p.m.