

Cauliflower and Broccoli Salad

Yvonne Massie, Mt. Prospect

½ c white vinegar ½ c sugar 1 c mayonnaise
1 small head cauliflower 1 small head of broccoli
1 bunch green onion ½ lb bacon fried and crumbled

Break cauliflower and broccoli into small pieces. Add the bacon. Combine the remaining ingredients and toss. Chill before serving.

Sautéed Green Bean with Bacon

Roger Freeman, Brookfield

½ t salt ½ t pepper 8 bacon slices, chopped ¼ c water
4 green onions, chopped (only white bottoms & light green tops)
1 ¾ pounds fresh green beans, trimmed

Place green beans and water in a large micro-safe bowl. Cover and microwave for 4-7 minutes or until tender. Plunge green beans into an ice bath to stop the cooking process. Drain well and set aside. Cook chopped bacon in large skillet over medium heat until crisp, removed bacon and drain on paper towels; chop when cooled. Reserve 2 T of bacon drippings and discard the rest. Sauté green onions in hot, bacon drippings over med-high heat for 1 minutes. Stir in green beans, salt, pepper and sauté for 2-3 more minutes, then stir in chopped bacon. Serve warm!

Bruschetta

Donna Nykaza-Jones, Steger

1 loaf French bread sliced thin & toasted Salt & pepper
5 medium tomatoes seeded & chopped Grated asiago cheese
5-6 fresh basil leaves chopped or torn 1-2 clove garlic minced
1 T extra virgin olive oil 1 t balsamic vinegar

Place chopped tomatoes in a bowl, mix all ingredients with tomatoes. Top on toasted bread and sprinkle with cheese.

Rhubarb Cake

Joan St. Paul

1 c buttermilk 1 t vanilla ½ t salt
2 c flour ½ c butter 1 egg
2 c brown sugar, plus 1 c 1 c pecans, chopped, plus 1 c
2 c rhubarb, cut in ½ in cubes 1 t baking soda

Cream butter with 2 cups brown sugar. Add 1 egg and 1 t vanilla. Mix dry ingredients (baking soda, salt, flour) separately. Add to mixture alternately with 1 cup of buttermilk. Fold in 2 c of rhubarb and 1 c chopped pecans. Place in greased 9 x 13 in pan. Sprinkle in another 1 c brown sugar mixed with another 1 c chopped pecans over top of mixture. Bake at 350° for 45 minutes or until toothpick inserted in center comes out clean. May adjust brown sugar to desired sweetness.

Fancy Crepes

Cherie Davis, Lansing

1 c flour 1 c milk 2 fresh eggs ¼ c honey ¼ t flaxseed (ground)

Mix all ingredients. Cook in lightly oiled pan over medium flame; cook thin and flat.

Dilly Carrots

Charles Walker, Lemont

1 ½ lb baby carrots 1 T dried red pepper 2 t salt
2 c cider vinegar 3 cloves garlic peeled 2 c water
1 T dill seeds 4 sprigs fresh dill cut in 1 in lengths with stems

Scrub or pare carrots and trim ends if dark. Heat the water, vinegar, garlic, pepper flakes, dill seeds and salt in large saucepan to rolling boil. Add carrots and heat to simmering. Reduce heat and simmer covered for 10 minutes. Using tongs, arrange carrots in hot sterilized pint jars. Ladle hot vinegar mixture into jars, covering carrots and distributing spices evenly. Tuck fresh dill between carrots. Cover jars tightly with new lids; let cool. Store in refrigerator 2-3 days. Flavor improves with storage.

Rhubarb Pecan Muffins

Joyce Hoste

2 c flour ¾ c sugar 1 t salt
1 ½ t baking powder ½ t baking soda ¼ c vegetable oil
1 large egg ¾ c pecans, chopped ¾ c orange juice
2 t grated orange peel 1 ¼ c fresh rhubarb, finely chopped

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. In a large bowl combine flour, sugar, baking powder, baking soda, salt and nuts. In a medium bowl, beat egg. Add oil, orange peel, and juice; add to flour mixture all at once and stir until batter is moistened. Stir in rhubarb. Lightly grease 12 large muffin cups and fill 3/4 full. Bake 25-30 minutes. Makes 12 large muffins. These are scrumptious.

Garlic Dill Pickles

Charles Walker, Lemont

4 lbs cucumbers (5-6 in long) ½ c minced garlic
2 jalapenos thinly sliced ½ c fresh dill

Slice cucumbers into ½ in thick slices and put in a clean crock or non-corrosive container. Add the garlic, jalapenos and dill.

Brine:

6 T Kosher salt 2 c water ½ c sugar 4 c white vinegar
2 T pepper corns 2 T mustard seed 5 T pickling spices

Combine the brine ingredients in a sauce pan and bring to a boil. Cool for several minutes and stir into the cucumber slices and mixture to combine. Let cool at room temperature. Cover with a lid and store in the refrigerator for one week before beginning to eat.

Hibiscus Gin & Tonic

Ray's Quality Greenhouse, Steger

½ c dried hibiscus flowers ½ c sugar
¼ c fresh lemon (1 or 2 lemons) ¾ c gin
1 ½ c of tonic water 1 c water

Bring dried hibiscus flowers, sugar, and 1 cup of water to a boil in small saucepan. Reduce heat to low and simmer, stirring till sugar is dissolved, about 2 minutes. Transfer to a small bowl and chill in refrigerator 1 hour. Strain the hibiscus syrup into a jar. Combine gin, ¼ c hibiscus syrup and lemon juice in a small pitcher. Stir in the tonic water. Fill 4 glasses with ice, pour in the cocktail and enjoy. Dress glass with a fresh hibiscus flower for that wow effect!

Bean Cakes

Mike O'Brien, Summit

½ c peppers diced – any type 1 egg ½ t sea salt
2 c beans, back or pint (dry stock or canned) ½ t black pepper
½ to ½ c unbleached flour ¼ c canola oil or bacon grease
1 small onion chopped 1 carrot chopped

Garnish: fresh herbs, Tabasco, sour cream

In blender or food processor mix bean, onion, carrot, peppers and egg to a pulp. Transfer to mixing bowl, add salt and pepper. Add enough flour to be able to form patties. Add oil to a skillet over medium-high heat and ladle into formed patties into patties. Fry until golden brown. Remove and garnish as desired.

Freeman Fence Slow Cooker Chili

Freeman Fence Co, Brookfield

1 ½ lb lean ground beef 1 onion, chopped
2 cloves garlic, minced 1 t ground cumin
2 c red kidney beans, cooked (16 oz can) 2-3 t chili powder
1 small green bell pepper, chopped 1 t pepper
2 c fresh tomatoes, diced with liquid (14.5 oz can) 1 t salt

Cook beef, onion, bell pepper and garlic together in a skillet on med-high heat until beef crumbles and no longer pink. Place drained beef mixture in a 5 quart slow cooker and add remaining ingredients and cook on high for 3-4 hours or on low for 6 hours.

Fried Green Tomatoes

Yvonne Massie, Mt. Prospect

3 large tomatoes ½ c flour ½ c cornmeal
2 beaten eggs 2 T Parmesan cheese ¾ t salt
pinch of black & cayenne pepper

Core and slice tomatoes into ¼ inch slices. Drain and season with salt. Dredge slices in flour, then dip in egg and then cornmeal (which has been seasoned with cayenne, salt and pepper). Fry in vegetable oil over medium heat until golden, about 3 minutes per side.

Thousand Island Dressing

Jane Cunningham, Riverside

1 qt mayonnaise 4 oz chopped pimentos 12 oz chili sauce
4 eggs hardboiled & chopped 1 c green pepper chopped

Mix all ingredients well. Cover and refrigerate. Makes a great dip or used in place of yolk for deviled eggs.

t = teaspoon lb = pound
T = tablespoon oz = ounce
c = cup lg = large

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Quinoa Risotto with Arugula & Parmesan

Chef Marcia, Flossmoor

1 T olive oil ¼ t salt 1 garlic clove minced
1 c quinoa, well rinsed ½ yellow onion, chopped (about ½ c)
2 c stemmed arugula, chopped ¼ c grated Parmesan cheese
¼ t freshly ground black pepper 1 small carrot, finely shredded
½ c thinly sliced fresh shiitake mushrooms
2 ½ c low-sodium vegetable stock or broth

In a large saucepan, heat the olive oil over medium heat. Add the onion and sauté until soft and translucent, about 4 minutes. Add the garlic and quinoa and cook for about 1 minute, stirring occasionally. Don't let the garlic brown. Add the stock and bring to a boil. Reduce the heat to low and simmer until the quinoa is almost tender to the bite but slightly hard in the center, about 12 minutes. The mixture will be brothy. Stir in the arugula, carrot and mushrooms and simmer until the quinoa grains have turned from white to translucent, about 2 minutes longer. Stir in the cheese and season with the salt and pepper. Serve immediately.

Pumpkin Nut Chocolate Chip Cookies

Jessica Miller, Bridgeview

1 c 100% pure pumpkin 2 c flour 1 egg
2 t cinnamon 1 t cardamom ½ c sugar
½ c brown sugar 2 t vanilla extract ½ t baking soda
2 c white, chocolate or dark chocolate morsels
2/3 c coarsely chopped nuts (we like macadamia)

Pre-heat oven to 350°. Mix flour, cinnamon, cardamom, and baking soda. Beat in butter, sugar. Add brown sugar. Continue to add pumpkin, egg and vanilla until well mixed. Stir in nuts and morsels. Use spoon to drop onto baking sheets, flatten slightly. Bake in oven for 11-14 minutes or until centers are fully done. Let cool for 2 minutes on wire rack. Makes 4 dozen cookies...enjoy!

Easy Fantastic Rolls

Pamela Bruns, Mt. Prospect

2 packages yeast ¾ c water at 100-110° F
4 ½ c all purpose, unbleached flour sesame seeds, optional
½ c fresh local honey 1 ½ t salt
2 large eggs slightly beaten 1 stick butter

In large bowl dissolve yeast in water. Add 2 cups of flour and add honey, salt, eggs, and butter. Mix well before adding remaining 2 ½ cups flour. Stir until smooth. Dough will be soft, but it is not necessary to knead. Cover with plastic wrap and allow to rise to 80-85 degrees at least 2 hours. Pinch off approximately 2 inch pieces of dough and shape into smooth balls tucking edges together. Place smooth side up on greased pan, about 1 inch apart. Brush tops with melted butter and sprinkle with sesame seeds if desired. Allow to rise again until doubled, about 2 hours. Pre-heat oven to 425° and bake for 10-12 minutes. If you are using a conventional oven, bake at 350° for 9 minutes turning if necessary. Makes about 2 dozen.

Lemon Rosemary Vegetable Stacks with Lentils & Creamy Horseradish Vinaigrette

Chef Marcia, Flossmoor

Vegetables:
juice of 1 lemon 3 t grapeseed oil
1 small celery root, peeled 1 fat sweet potato, peeled
1 large beet, peeled 1 head of cauliflower, trimmed
2 sprigs of rosemary (leaves removed & chopped)

Lentils:
2 t grapeseed oil 1 shallot, diced fine 1 c water and extra
½ c rinsed lentils (I used a mix of French & brown) salt to taste

To serve: black olives and very roughly chopped parsley

Preheat the oven to 400 degrees F. Line 2 medium-large baking sheets with parchment plus 1 extra, smaller baking sheet. Set aside. Combine the rosemary, lemon juice and oil in a small bowl. Set aside. Slice the celery root + sweet potato about an inch thick across. You want to cut them so that you get a large cross section for stacking. Lay the celery root and sweet potato slices on one of the medium-large baking sheets. Brush both sides of all vegetables with the rosemary and lemon oil, season with salt and pepper, and slide baking sheet into the oven. These should take about 35-40 minutes to brown up and soften. Remove and set aside.

Slice the beets about ¼ - ½ inch thick. Lay the slices on the smaller sheet. Brush with the lemon, rosemary and oil mixture, season with salt and pepper. Cover baking sheet with foil and place in the oven. Roast for 20 minutes covered. Remove the foil and roast for another 10-15 minutes. Remove and set aside. Slice the cauliflower into 1 inch thick cross sections with the core intact. Lay the slices on the last baking sheet and brush with the rosemary + lemon oil on both sides. Season with salt and pepper and slide into the oven. The cauliflower should take about 20-25 minutes, so make sure you prep this one last. Remove and set aside. While the vegetables are roasting, start the lentils. Heat the 2-t grapeseed oil over medium heat. Add the diced shallots. Stir them around until they become translucent and soft, about 3 minutes. Add the rinsed lentils to the pan and stir them around in the oil and shallots. Add the water to the pan. Bring lentils to a very faint simmer, like just a couple bubbles coming to the surface here and there. Cook until the lentils are soft with a tiny bit of bite intact, topping up the pot with more water as necessary, about 25-30 minutes. Season lentils with salt and stir in a glut of olive oil to keep the lentils individual.

To serve, divide the warm lentils among 2 dinner plates, pressing down on them with the back of a spoon to make a flat surface. Stack the roasted vegetables on top of the flattened lentils. Drizzle the whole thing with horseradish vinaigrette. Garnish with olives and chopped parsley. Serve warm.

Creamy Horseradish Vinaigrette

¼ c apple cider vinegar splash of water 1 t Dijon mustard
horseradish to taste salt & pepper 1 ½ t maple syrup
heavy 1/3 c grapeseed or olive oil

I used 2 heaped tsp of fresh grated horseradish root

Combine all the vinaigrette ingredients in a blender and blend on medium-high until mixture is creamy and incorporated. Check for seasoning, adjust to your liking and set aside.

Pumpkin Pecan Cake

Mary Gavenda, Lemont

Cake Topping:
¼ c butter ¼ c whipping cream
¾ c pecans, chopped 1 c packed dark brown sugar

Cake Batter:
½ c water 4 eggs 1 ½ t pumpkin pie spice
2 c fresh pumpkin (1 c canned solid pumpkin) 1/3 c vegetable oil
1-15.25 oz yellow cake mix plus ½ c dry mix from a 2nd cake mix

Icing:
5-6 c powder sugar, measure then sift
12 oz cream cheese softened ¾ c solid white shortening
1 t vanilla ¾ t pumpkin pie spice

Pre-heat oven to 325° F. Add whipping cream and brown sugar in a saucepan, stir together and add butter. Cook over low heat, stirring occasionally, just until butter is melted. Spray only sides of pan with non-stick spray. Divide mixture into 2 8 in round cake pans, then sprinkle with chopped pecans. Set aside.

Prepare batter- blend cake mix, pumpkin, water, oil, eggs and pumpkin pie spice using a hand mixer on low. Continue mixing for 2 minutes on medium speed. Divide batter gently over pecan mixture pan, evenly without disturbing the pecan mixture. Bake about 45 minutes or until cake springs back to touch. Cool only 3-5 minutes and remove from pans to cooling rack or parchment paper, to avoid sticking and losing pecan mixture. Cool completely (1-2 hours) before assembling cake.

Make Icing by creaming together the cream cheese and shortening using mixer until blended. Add 5 cups of sifted powder sugar, 1 c at a time, scraping sides of bowl to blend completely. Add vanilla and beat for additional 2 minutes. If icing is too soft, add additional powdered sugar as needed until icing is right consistency to frost cake and hold shape.

Stack cake layers with pecan sides up icing in between layers. Frost cake completely and smooth. Chill cake until serving.

Roasted Beet Salad with Goat Cheese & Candied Pecans

Roger Freeman, Brookfield

4 fresh beets 2 t Dijon mustard 6 cups salad greens
2 T balsamic vinegar 1 T extra-virgin olive oil
¼ c red onion, thinly sliced ½ c goat cheese, crumbled
½ c candied pecans 1 t fresh shallot, finely chopped

Wash beets and wrap in tin foil. Bake at 400° for 45 minutes to 1 hour until tender for a fork to go through. Cool and cut into cubes. While beets cook, combine shallots, vinegar, olive oil and mustard to make vinaigrette. Salt and pepper to taste. Coat lettuce leaves with desired amount of dressing. Top with red onion, goat cheese and pecans. Serve at room temperature.

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Scott's Favorite Red Cabbage Slaw

Gina McDonald

3 T sugar 4 t salt 1 t seasoned salt
1 t black pepper ¼ c vegetable oil ¼ t onion powder
½ head red cabbage ½ c plus 2 T red wine vinegar

Shred cabbage. Combine oil, vinegar, salt, sugar, seasoned salt, pepper and onion powder. Mix well with whisk then pour over cabbage. Let stand at room temp for a few hours or overnight in fridge to allow flavors to mellow and slaw to reach a deep, red color. Stir occasionally.

Pickled Mushroom

Charles Walker, Lemont

½ c red wine vinegar ¼ c water 2 T sugar 1 ½ t salt
1 lb fresh mushroom 2 bay leaves 1 clove garlic minced

Combine all ingredients in a pot bring to a boil for 2 minutes. Turn off heat, allow to cool. Store in pint jars and keep refrigerated.

Fresh Garden Tomato Marinade

Charles Walker, Lemont

6 lg fresh tomatoes ¼ c onions ¼ c olive oil
2 cloves garlic minced 1 t salt 1 T fresh thyme
¼ c cider or wine vinegar ¼ t pepper ½ T fresh parsley

Mix all ingredients together, add tomatoes and set overnight.

Corn Rosemary Scones

Donna Nykaza-Jones, Steger

2 c all-purpose flour ¼ t salt ½ c yellow cornmeal
2 T baking powder 1 egg 6 T butter cut in ¼ inches
2 t grated lemon zest 2 T sugar 1 t fresh chopped rosemary
¾ c buttermilk 1 egg beaten confectioner's sugar for glaze

Pre-heat oven to 350°. In large bowl combine flour, cornmeal, baking powder, salt, sugar. Mix with fork. Add butter and cut in with pastry blender until mixed in even. Blend in lemon zest and rosemary and set aside. Beat egg in small bowl, add buttermilk. Put into flour mixture and stir with wooden spoon, turn out on floured board and knead. Roll out to 12-inch circle. Cut out 3-inch circles with a glass or cookie cutter. Put on uncoated cookie sheet and brush top with beaten egg. Bake 10 minutes. Remove from oven, sprinkle with sugar return to oven for 5 minutes longer. Set aside to cool on a rack. Yields 10-12 scones.

Spiced Winter Root Vegetable Soup

Chef Marcia, Flossmoor

5 c vegetable stock 1 t cumin & coriander
1 onion roughly chopped salt & pepper to taste
½ t cinnamon, nutmeg, cayenne 1 c almond milk
2 garlic, cloves, roughly chopped 1 T olive oil
1 butternut squash, peeled + roughly chopped (about 3 cups)
1 sweet potato, peeled + roughly chopped
2 carrots, peeled + chopped roughly

Heat the oil over a low heat; add the onion and garlic. Gently fry until translucent. Add the remaining ingredients and bring to a low boil. Simmer for 30 minutes. Blend the soup until smooth and adjust seasoning to taste.