

Christina Pirello

Christina Cooks

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Red Pepper and Mushroom Bruschetta

Makes 6 servings.

What's a party without bruschetta? Boring. Simple to make and easy to eat, and so incredibly delicious and beautiful, that just placing the platter on the buffet gets the party started.

extra virgin olive oil

2 cloves fresh garlic, minced

½ red onion, very thinly sliced into half moon pieces

sea salt

1 large red bell pepper, roasted over an open flame, peeled, seeded, thinly sliced

4-5 crimini (or other) mushrooms, brushed free of dirt, thinly sliced

White wine

2-3 stalks broccoli rabe, finely chopped

5-6 fresh basil leaves, finely shredded

6, ½-inch thick diagonal slices whole grain sourdough bread

Place a small amount of oil, garlic and onion in a skillet and turn heat to medium. When the onions begin to sizzle, add a pinch of salt and sauté for 2-3 minutes. Stir in mushrooms and red pepper, with a generous splash of wine, season lightly with salt and sauté until the mushrooms wilt. Stir in broccoli rabe, season to taste with salt and sauté until greens wilt. Turn off heat and stir in basil.

Mound sautéed vegetables on each slice of bread and serve immediately.

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Pappardelle with Creamy Saffron Sauce

Makes 5-6 servings.

I have been playing around with saffron for a long time and I love its spicy zing and the incredible depth of color it gives my sauces. This pasta will be such a hit; you'll never want to be without this spice in the pantry.

For the sauce:

2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil

2 cloves fresh garlic, crushed

½ red onion, diced

Sea salt

10-12 saffron threads, crushed between fingers

1 can diced tomatoes, (2 cups)

Grated zest of ½ fresh lemon

1 cup coconut milk

Cracked black pepper

2-3 sprigs fresh flat leaf parsley, coarsely chopped

1 pound pappardelle

10-12 black olives, halved

Make the sauce. Place oil, garlic and onion in a deep skillet over medium heat. When the onions begin to sizzle add saffron and a pinch of salt. Sauté until the onions are translucent, about 2 minutes. Stir in tomatoes, lemon zest, coconut milk, a light seasoning of salt and black pepper to taste. Simmer for 4-5 minutes, until the sauce is lightly bubbling. Adjust seasonings to taste and simmer for 2 minutes more. Remove from heat and stir in parsley.

While the sauce cooks, bring a pot of water to a boil. Add a generous pinch of salt and a generous drizzle of olive oil. Cook the pappardelle al dente, about 8 minutes. Drain well, but do not rinse.

Toss pasta with hot sauce and serve immediately, garnished with black olives.

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Red Pepper and Mushroom Bruschetta and Pappardelle with Creamy Saffron Sauce

Ingredients (for 100-150 samples):

2 qts Extra virgin olive oil
6 heads Fresh garlic
1 pound Sea salt
1 container Cracked black pepper
½ cup Saffron threads
12 cans Coconut milk
6-7 Whole wheat baguettes
6 pounds Pappardelle
8 bunches Fresh basil
6, 32-ounce Canned tomatoes
10 bunches Broccoli rabe
6 jars Roasted red peppers
3 pounds Crimini mushrooms
8 bunches Flat leaf parsley
8 jars (pitted, to make life easier) Black olives

Utensils needed for demo:

1 large wooden cutting board
1 chef knife (I am not bringing one to avoid checking a bag...)
Wooden spoons
Spider (for lifting pasta from water)
2 large skillets
Pasta pot
Deep skillet (for sauce)
Platters for finished dishes