

RICH BAKED EASTER PASTA (SAGNE CHINE)

Time: 2 hours

- 1 1/2 lemons
- 3 large artichokes
- 1/2 pound fresh pork sausage (hot or sweet or a mix), skins removed
- 1 1/2 cups freshly grated aged pecorino, caciocavallo, or Parmesan cheese
- 4 large eggs, 1 raw and 3 hard-boiled, peeled and sliced into wedges
- Freshly ground black pepper
- 1/2 cup unseasoned bread crumbs, or as needed
- 1/2 cup flour, or as needed
- 3/4 cup extra virgin olive oil, plus additional as needed
- 1/2 pound lean pork, diced small
- 2 cups plain tomato sauce
- 1/4 cup finely minced fresh basil
- 1 teaspoon cayenne pepper or hot pepper flakes to taste
- 2 celery stalks, including leaves, minced
- 1 medium yellow onion, minced
- 1/2 pound fresh mushrooms (wild, oyster or shiitake), cleaned and sliced
- 1/4 cup minced flat-leaf parsley
- 2 bay leaves
- 2 cups frozen peas, thawed
- Salt
- 1 pound fresh or dried lasagna
- 1/2 pound fresh mozzarella, thinly sliced.

1. Squeeze juice of 1 lemon into bowl of water, and set aside. Cut top third off each artichoke, and pull off all the tough outer leaves. Trim stem, halve artichoke, and scrape out thorny center in each half. Rub cut surfaces with lemon half and drop artichokes into bowl of lemon water. Reserve lemon half.
2. Combine sausage, 1/2 cup grated cheese, raw egg and plenty of pepper in bowl. Mix very well and shape into 20 to 24 meatballs about 1 1/2 inches in diameter. If mixture is too soft, mix in up to 1/2 cup bread crumbs.
3. Spread flour on plate and lightly coat meatballs. Place small saucepan over medium heat and heat 3/4 cup of oil. Brown meatballs in

batches on all sides, and drain on paper towels. Discard all but 2 tablespoons of oil. Return to medium heat and add pork. Brown on all sides, remove, and set aside.

4. Heat tomato sauce in small saucepan until simmering. Stir in basil and cayenne pepper to taste. Set aside and keep warm. In clean skillet, combine celery, onion and 2 tablespoons olive oil. Place over medium-low heat and sauté until very soft. Stir in mushrooms and parsley. Drain artichoke halves and cut each into 4 to 6 pieces. Add to pan with bay leaves and 1/4 cup water; mix well. Cover and simmer until artichokes are soft, about 15 minutes. Remove from heat and stir in peas and juice of lemon half.

5. Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Rub olive oil on bottom and sides of a 10-inch-by-13-inch baking dish. Bring 6 quarts of lightly salted water to a rolling boil. Cut fresh lasagna into strips that will fit into three layers in the dish, and parboil 1 1/2 minutes to soften but not fully cook. If using dried lasagna, cook about 4 minutes to soften but not cook. Drain on kitchen towels.

6. Line bottom of the baking dish with lasagna. Spread one-third of sauce over pasta, then spread it with half the meatballs, half the pork, half the vegetables and half the eggs. On top distribute a third of mozzarella slices and a third of remaining grated cheese. Cover with another layer of lasagna and half of remaining sauce. Spread with remaining meatballs, pork, vegetables and eggs. On top distribute half of remaining mozzarella and half of remaining grated cheese.

7. Cover with a final layer of lasagna and remaining sauce. Distribute remaining mozzarella and remaining grated cheese. Drizzle with about 2 tablespoons olive oil. Bake until top is golden brown, about 30 minutes. Remove from heat and let rest for 10 minutes, then serve.

Yield: 8 to 10 servings.

THE POPE'S RISOTTO

Adapted from Lidia Bastianich

Time: 45 minutes

For the ramp "pesto":

- 1/2 cup (packed) ramp leaves or young leeks or chives
- 1 1/2 cups (packed) spinach or Swiss chard leaves
- 1/3 teaspoon salt
- 1/3 cup extra-virgin olive oil, more if needed.

For the risotto:

- 3 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
- 1/2 cup minced scallions (about 6 scallions)
- 1 tablespoon minced shallots
- 2 1/2 cups Arborio rice
- 1/2 cup dry white wine
- 6 1/2 cups hot vegetable or chicken stock
- 1 teaspoon salt, or to taste
- 1/2 cup fresh shelled peas, or frozen
- 1/2 cup asparagus, sliced on bias in 1/2-inch chunks and blanched for two minutes
- 1 cup fava beans, shelled, blanched, skins removed (or use one extra half cup each of peas and asparagus)
- 2 tablespoons unsalted butter, cut into bits
- 1 cup grated grana padano or parmesan
- Ground black pepper to taste.

1. For pesto: Put vegetables and salt in a blender or small food processor. With machine running, add oil slowly. Process into a rough paste. Pour into a bowl and set aside.

2. For risotto: In a heavy, wide, 3- to 4-quart casserole or pot over medium heat, heat olive oil. Cook scallions and shallots together until translucent, stirring often, about 4 minutes. Add rice, stir to coat and cook until edges become translucent, 1 to 2 minutes.

3. Pour wine into pot and stir well until absorbed. Add 1/2 cup hot stock and 1/2 teaspoon salt. Cook, stirring constantly, until stock is absorbed into rice. Add another half cup stock and stir so rice remains moist. Stir in peas, asparagus and favas. Keep adding small amounts of stock, stirring constantly so rice slowly absorbs liquid. Rice should simmer very gently and become creamy but al dente. This will take a total of about 18 minutes.

4. Remove pot from heat and quickly stir in ramp pesto. Add butter and continue to stir quickly until melted; then mix in 1/2 cup cheese. Taste and add remaining salt and pepper to taste. Serve immediately, ladled into warm shallow bowls. Top with remaining cheese.

Yield: 6 servings.