

## **Sarello's Signature Wild Mushroom Soup**

From 2000 to 2015, my husband, Tony, and I owned and operated Sarello's, a fine dining restaurant in Moorhead. This Wild Mushroom Soup was a signature menu item from the start, and one of our most-requested recipes.

This soup is easy to make and features a blend of three different mushrooms – Shiitake, Crimini and Button – but feel free to use whatever variety is available in your local market. A simple roux of cooked butter and flour is added to the soup to help it thicken, and a half-cup of heavy cream gives this Wild Mushroom Soup a lush and velvety finish. Simple, fresh and delicious, this soup is versatile enough to serve for lunch or as a starter course for an elegant dinner.

**Serves:** 4 to 6

### **Ingredients:**

½ yellow onion, diced

2 large garlic cloves, chopped

4 tablespoons (½ stick) unsalted butter

1 cup Shiitake mushrooms

1 cup Button mushrooms

1 cup Crimini mushrooms

¼ cup sweet Marsala wine

1 quart chicken stock

2 tablespoons roux

½ cup heavy cream

salt and pepper to taste

### **Directions:**

In a large stockpot, sweat the onions and garlic with the butter over medium heat until onions are soft and translucent, about 5 to 6 minutes. Add the mushrooms and continue cooking over medium heat for 2 minutes, stirring often.

Add the Marsala wine and continue cooking over medium heat for another 2 minutes. Add the chicken stock, increase the heat to medium-high and bring the mixture to a gentle boil, stirring occasionally, for 30 minutes.

Reduce to medium heat and stir in the roux. Cook for about 5 minutes until well incorporated. Use a handheld immersion blender to puree the entire mixture in the stock pot, or transfer to a food processor or liquid blender, and then return the soup back to the pot.

Add the heavy cream while stirring constantly, then strain the soup through a wire strainer to ensure a smooth consistency. Transfer to serving bowls and garnish with fresh mushrooms. Serve and enjoy.

To store, transfer the soup to an airtight container and refrigerate for up to 1 week or freeze for up to 3 months. Reheat it on the stove or in the microwave before serving.

### **Roux Ingredients**

¼ cup butter or shortening

¼ cup all-purpose flour

### **Directions:**

Melt the butter in a medium saucepan over medium-low heat, then gradually whisk in the flour until it is completely incorporated with the butter.

Cook over medium-low heat for about 4 to 6 minutes, whisking constantly until a light straw color is achieved. Use immediately or store in the refrigerator for up to 2 weeks. The roux will harden when refrigerated so that you can break it into pieces as needed.

### **Sarah's Tips:**

- For a gluten-free version, omit the roux, add an extra half-cup of mushrooms and reduce the chicken stock or liquid by a half cup.
- If a sweet Marsala wine isn't available, use dry Marsala, Madeira or any type of Sherry. However, do not use a port or red wine as these will overpower the soup.

## **Baked Ziti Casserole**

This Baked Ziti Casserole is the ultimate Italian hotdish and an all-time Nasello family favorite. The inclusion of authentic Italian ingredients like fresh mozzarella and Parmesan cheeses, as well as Italian sausage and fresh herbs, elevates the status of this dish to “deluxe hotdish” or what most of us would call a casserole.

This Baked Ziti Casserole can be on your table in under an hour, from start to finish, and it is so delicious that I encourage you to double the recipe and stash one in your freezer for those occasions when you need an easy – and delicious – weeknight dinner.

**Serves:** 6

**Casserole Ingredients:**

1 pound dried ziti pasta

Kosher salt

Sausage marinara sauce, see recipe below (add all the sauce)

1 pound fresh mozzarella, half cut into 1/2-inch cubes and half thinly sliced

1 cup freshly grated Parmesan, divided

1/2 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper

Pinch red pepper flakes

**Directions:**

Preheat oven to 400 degrees F and lightly grease a 9x13-inch baking dish with oil or cooking spray.

Bring a large pot of water to a boil, add 2 tablespoons of kosher salt and boil the pasta according to the directions on the package until al dente (tender but still slightly firm). Drain the pasta and rinse with cold water to stop the cooking process if not using immediately.

Return the pasta to the pot and toss with the meat sauce, cubed mozzarella, 1/2 cup Parmesan cheese, black pepper, and red pepper flakes. Transfer the pasta mixture into the prepared baking dish. Layer the top of the pasta with the sliced mozzarella cheese and sprinkle with the remaining 1/2 cup of Parmesan. Bake until lightly browned and bubbly, about 25 to 30 minutes. Serve immediately.

**Sausage Marinara Sauce:**

2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil

1 pound mild or hot Italian sausage (I use an equal-parts mix of both)

1/4 medium onion, diced (about 3 tablespoons)

3 cloves garlic, chopped

1 28 oz. can whole, peeled, canned tomatoes in puree, (3 1/2 cups), roughly chopped

Sprig fresh thyme

Sprig fresh basil

1 teaspoon kosher salt

Freshly ground black pepper

**Directions:**

Heat the oil in a medium saucepan over medium-high heat. Cook the sausage until it begins to brown, about 3 minutes. Use a wooden spoon to break the meat into small pieces as it browns.

Add the onion and garlic, stirring, until lightly browned, about 3 to 4 minutes. Add the tomatoes and the herb sprigs and bring to a boil. Lower the heat, cover the pan and let simmer for 10 minutes.

Remove and discard the herb sprigs. Stir in the salt and season with pepper, to taste. Use now with the casserole or transfer to an airtight container and refrigerate for up to 3 days or freeze for up to 3 months.

## **Pumpkin Chocolate Chip Bread**

Quick breads are the ultimate when it comes to comforting baked goods, and this Pumpkin Chocolate Chip Bread is such a beloved favorite that I am making several loaves this week to bring to my son, Giovanni, when I visit him at college this weekend. This is old-fashioned, fall comfort at its finest, and the recipe yields two large loaves or several mini loaves, which can be served after cooling or frozen for several months.

Makes: 2 large loaves (9x5x3-inch) or 4 to 5 mini loaves

**Ingredients:**

3 cups sugar

1 cup vegetable oil

1 15-ounce can pure pumpkin

2/3 cup water

4 eggs

3 1/3 cups flour, plus 1 to 2 teaspoons for the chocolate chips

2 teaspoons baking soda

1 teaspoon cinnamon

½ teaspoon ground nutmeg

½ teaspoon ground cloves

¼ teaspoon salt

1 1/3 cups semi-sweet chocolate chips

1 to 2 teaspoons flour

**Directions:**

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Grease and lightly flour the baking pans, shaking off any excess flour; set aside.

Place the sugar, oil, pumpkin, water and eggs in the bowl of your stand mixer and use the paddle attachment (a handheld mixer also works) to beat on medium speed until well combined.

In a separate bowl, use a whisk to combine the flour, baking soda, cinnamon, nutmeg, ground cloves and salt.

In a small bowl, lightly toss the chocolate chips with 1 to 2 teaspoons of flour, just to coat, shaking off any excess. This will help keep the chips from falling to the bottom of the bread as it bakes.

Add the flour mixture to the wet ingredients and mix on medium speed until combined, about 1 to 2 minutes. Stir in the chocolate chips until evenly distributed.

Pour the pumpkin batter into the prepared loaf pans until about two-thirds full. Place pans in the center rack of the oven and bake, 1 hour for large loaves or about 45 to 50 minutes for small loaves. Insert a toothpick into the center of each loaf to check for doneness – if it comes out crumb-free, the bread is ready.

Remove from oven and cool in the pans for 10 to 15 minutes. Remove the loaves from the pans and transfer to a wire rack to cool completely.

To store, wrap well in plastic wrap and refrigerate for at least a week, or place wrapped loaves in a plastic freezer bag and freeze for several months.