Ziti al forno

NIBBLEDISH CONTRIBUTOR

Ingredients

Pasta: • 600 grams "ziti" pasta, or other good,quality durum wheat nonridged maccheroni • 10 grams of coarse salt Sauce: • 8 tablespoons of extravirgin olive oil • 1 small garlic clove • 3 cups (glasses) tomato sauce (For Italian recipes you will need a sauce that lists only the tomatoes amongst its ingredients: no salt, no sugar, no herbs; fust tomato) Filling • 1 small garlic clove • a handful of basil or parsley leaves • 1 cup of breadcrumbs; use either stale Italian bread that does not contain any fats, dried until it's brittle and grated with a cheese grater, or the plainest and finest breadcrumbs you can find with absolutely no kind of flavoring • 1 cup of grated Parmigiano Reggiano or half Parmigiano reggiano and half Pecorino Romano cheese (Use extra amounts of each ingredient if you want to add the tomatoes) Optional: 5 plum tomatoes

Instructions

This is traditional Pugliese recipe, a bit modified at home by my granny. 1. Start by making the sauce. In a skillet, pour 4 tablespoons of extravirgin olive oil, add one clove of garlic, speared with a toothpick so that you will be able to locate it easily afterwards. Cook for about one minute, than add three cups of tomato sauce. Simmer the sauce for about 15 minutes, than turn off the heat and retireve the garlic. 2. Mince finely a handful of basil leaves or parsley leaves or a mixture of both with another garlic clove. Mix the breadcrumbs with the same amount of thinly grated Parmigiano Reggiano and the herb + garlic mixture. (I make extra bread mixture for stuffing the tomatoes.) 3. Blanch the pasta in lots of lightly salted hot water (here is about 600 grams of pasta, or 1 1/3 pounds) for about 5 minutes. Use the largest pan you own and top it with water to avoid pasta from sticking. Don't add any poil to the water. Drain the pasta and transfer it in a bowl. Garnish it with half of the tomato sauce and half of the bread mixture. 4. Pour a tablespoon of extravirgin olive oil in a pan, distribute in the pan half of the pasta, add half of the leftover some tomato sauce and half of the leftover (unless you made extra for the tomatoes) bread mixture. Add the rest of the pasta, the rest of the sauce and the

rest of the bread mixture. Drizzle with some more oil and bake for 30 minutes, until the top is golden and crispy. Serve hot or warm. 5. For the tomatoes, grab some nice, round plum tomatoes, remove the tops and the innards (you can add them to the tomato sauce), sprinkle some salt inside the tomatoes, then place them top-down for an hour, so that the excessive moisture drains off. Fill the tomatoes with the bread mixture, drizzle them with some oil and place them on top of the pasta before baking.