

Italian Cauliflower al Forno

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I've always loved cauliflower – it's one of those vegetables that doesn't get nearly enough credit. Too often it's overlooked, but with a little Italian flair, it turns into something truly special. This **Cauliflower al Forno** is proof that simple ingredients can make magic. Roasted until golden, then baked in layers of rich marinara, creamy béchamel, and melted cheese, it's cozy, comforting, and completely irresistible. Whether you serve it as a side or a vegetarian main, this dish will make anyone rethink how delicious cauliflower can be.

Things to know about this Italian Cauliflower al Forno

- **Make ahead:** You can roast the cauliflower and even assemble the dish a day in advance. Just cover and refrigerate, then bake when ready to serve.
- **Reheating:** Warm leftovers in the oven at 350°F until bubbly, or reheat individual portions in the air fryer for a crisp top.
- **Serving idea:** Pair it with a simple green salad, crusty bread, or even over a scoop of creamy polenta for a full meal.
- **Storage:** Keeps well up to 3 days in the fridge – the flavors get even better as they mingle.

• Variations

- **Add Italian sausage:** Brown mild or spicy Italian sausage and scatter it over the roasted cauliflower before baking for extra heartiness.
- **Use other veggies:** Try mixing in roasted zucchini, bell peppers, or mushrooms for more texture and flavor.
- **Make it spicy:** Add a pinch of red pepper flakes to your Easy Marinara Sauce for a little kick.
- **Go cheesy:** Add a layer of ricotta or burrata before topping with mozzarella for an extra creamy version.
- **Lighter option:** Skip the béchamel and just use Easy Marinara Sauce – it's still delicious and a bit lighter.
- If you love this comforting Italian-style cauliflower bake, be sure to try my **Homemade Béchamel Sauce** and **Easy Marinara Sauce** – both add incredible depth and flavor to any baked pasta or veggie dish.
Craving more cozy Italian comfort food? Check out my **Mushroom Sausage Sauce Polenta** or **Creamy Italian Sausage Risotto** next!





. Italian Cauliflower al Forno

Servings: 4-6

Cook Time: 45 minutes

Prep Time: 15 minutes

Ingredients

- 1 medium cauliflower, cut into florets
- 2 tbsp olive oil
- Salt and pepper, to taste
- 1 tsp dried oregano
- 1 tsp dried thyme or rosemary (optional)
- 2 cups **Easy Marinara Sauce** – use your homemade or store-bought favorite
- 1 cup shredded mozzarella cheese
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup grated Parmesan cheese
- 1 cup **Homemade Béchamel Sauce**
- Fresh basil or parsley for garnish

- **Béchamel Sauce**
 - 2 tbsp butter
 - 2 tbsp all-purpose flour
 - $1\frac{1}{2}$ cups milk
 - Pinch of nutmeg
 - Salt and pepper, to taste

Instructions

1. **Preheat the oven:** 400°F (200°C).

2. Roast the cauliflower:

- Toss cauliflower florets with olive oil, salt, pepper, oregano, and thyme.
- Spread on a baking sheet and roast for 20 minutes until slightly golden.

3. Make the béchamel sauce

- In a small saucepan, melt butter over medium heat.
- Stir in flour and cook 1–2 minutes until lightly golden.
- Gradually whisk in milk, stirring constantly until thickened.
- Season with salt, pepper, and a pinch of nutmeg.

4. Assemble the dish:

- In a baking dish, spread a thin layer of tomato sauce.
- Arrange roasted cauliflower on top.
- Drizzle with béchamel sauce
- Pour remaining tomato sauce over the cauliflower.
- Sprinkle mozzarella and Parmesan evenly on top.

5. **Bake:** 20–25 minutes until bubbly and golden on top.

6. **Garnish and serve:** Sprinkle with fresh basil or parsley before serving.

Italian Sausage and Potatoes (Stovetop Pan Recipe)

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This Italian Sausage and Potatoes stovetop recipe is the kind of hearty, rustic meal that never goes out of style. Juicy sausage links, tender golden potatoes, sweet peppers, and onions all cook together in one pan, creating incredible flavor with minimal effort. It's perfect for busy weeknights when you crave something comforting, homey, and truly satisfying.

Things to know about this Italian Sausage and Potatoes (Stovetop Pan Recipe)

- **Quality matters:** Use good-quality Italian sausage – sweet, mild, or hot. The sausage you choose sets the tone for the whole dish. If you can find butcher-fresh or locally made sausage, even better.
- **Don't rush the browning:** Let the sausage get a deep golden crust before removing it from the pan. Those browned bits (fond) are what give the peppers and potatoes their rich, savory flavor once deglazed.
- **Deglaze smart:** A splash of **white wine** adds a subtle acidity that brightens everything up, while **chicken broth** keeps it mild and comforting. Either works beautifully.

- **Make it spicy:** Add more crushed red pepper flakes or use **hot Italian sausage** for an extra kick.
- **Add a tomato twist:** Stir in a few spoonful's of **crushed tomatoes or tomato paste** when you deglaze for a more saucy, southern Italian-style version.
- **Try different potatoes:** Yukon golds stay creamy inside and crisp outside, while red potatoes hold their shape nicely. Even small baby potatoes (halved) work great.
- **Vegetable boost:** Toss in zucchini slices, cherry tomatoes, or baby spinach at the end for a colorful, veggie-packed twist.
- **Meal prep tip:** This dish reheats beautifully – store leftovers in an airtight container and rewarm them in a skillet for that freshly cooked flavor.

▪ **Craving More Rustic Italian Comfort?**

If you loved this **Italian Sausage and Potatoes (Stovetop Pan Recipe)**, try a few more of my classic Italian comfort dishes:

- Italian Sausage and Mushroom Risotto – creamy, cozy, and full of flavor.
- Roasted butternut squash soup – a seasonal one-pot favorite.
- creamy Italian pan chicken and potatoes – Easy, quick and delicious
- Creamy Sausage Tortellini Soup – rich, comforting, and perfect for colder days.

Don't forget to **leave a comment** below if you make this recipe – I'd love to hear how it turned out in your kitchen!





Italian Sausage and Potatoes (Stovetop Pan Recipe)

Serves: 4

Prep Time: 10 minutes

Cook Time: 20 minutes

Total Time: 30 minutes

Ingredients

- 4 Italian sausage links (sweet, mild, or hot)
- 4-5 potatoes (Yukon gold or russet), cut into circles
- 2 bell peppers (red, yellow, or green), cut into dice
- 1 large onion, sliced
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 4 tablespoons olive oil, divided
- 1 teaspoon dried oregano
- 1 teaspoon crushed red pepper flakes (optional)
- Salt and black pepper, to taste
- Fresh chopped Italian parsley, (for garnish)

Instructions

1. Brown the sausage:

Heat 2 tablespoons of olive oil in a large deep skillet over medium heat. Add the sausage links and cook until browned on all sides and mostly cooked through, about 8–10 minutes. Remove from the pan and set aside to cool slightly.

2. Slice the sausage:

Once cool enough to handle, slice the sausage into 1-inch pieces and set aside.

3. Cook the vegetables:

In the same pan (don't wipe it out – those brown bits add flavor!), add the remaining 2 tablespoons of olive oil. Add the onions, bell peppers, and potatoes. Season with salt and pepper, and cook over medium heat until

the potatoes start to soften and everything begins to caramelize, about 10–12 minutes. Add the garlic and cook for another 30 seconds.

4. Deglaze the pan:

Pour in the chicken broth or white wine, scraping up any browned bits from the bottom. Let it simmer for 1–2 minutes.

5. Combine everything:

Return the sliced sausage to the skillet. Sprinkle in the oregano, basil, and crushed red pepper flakes. Stir well to combine, cover partially, and cook for another 5–5 minutes, until the potatoes are tender, the sausage is fully cooked and everything is infused with flavor.

6. Finish and serve:

Taste and adjust seasoning with more salt and pepper if needed. Garnish with fresh Italian chopped parsley and serve hot. ENJOY!!!

Italian Roasted Delicata Squash for Salads

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Fall flavors don't get much better than this: golden roasted delicata squash paired with peppery arugula, crunchy pumpkin seeds, and nutty shaved Parmesan. Tossed in a creamy Sicilian-

inspired dressing, this salad is simple, rustic, and full of cozy Italian charm. Best of all? You don't need to peel the squash – the tender skin adds color, texture, and flavor that makes every bite irresistible. Whether you're serving it as a side or a light meal, it's the perfect way to celebrate seasonal produce with a touch of Italian flair.

Things to know about this Italian Roasted Delicata Squash for Salads

- **No Peeling Needed:** The skin of delicata squash is thin and tender when roasted, so it's completely edible and adds lovely texture.
- **Roasting Brings Out Natural Sweetness:** Roasting caramelizes the edges of the squash, enhancing its nutty, sweet flavor – perfect for balancing the peppery arugula and savory Parmesan.
- **Flexible Salad Base:** This roasted squash works beautifully in salads, grain bowls, or even as a side dish for Italian mains like chicken or sausage.
- **Pumpkin Seeds Add Crunch:** Toasted pumpkin seeds (pepitas) provide a satisfying crunch and a subtle nutty flavor that complements the roasted squash.
- **Creamy Sicilian Dressing:** The dressing is tangy, garlicky, and creamy – it ties the salad together while keeping it light and fresh.
- **Make Ahead:** You can roast the squash a day ahead – just toss it with the dressing right before serving so the arugula stays crisp.
- **Seasonal & Healthy:** This salad is packed with seasonal fall flavors, making it a nutritious, colorful, and Italian-inspired dish for any table.

- Try this roasted delicata squash salad today and bring a touch of Italian autumn to your table! For more cozy Italian-inspired fall recipes, check out my [Roasted Butternut Squash lasagna](#) or [creamy roasted butternut squash soup](#).



Italian Roasted Delicata Squash Salad with Creamy Sicilian Dressing

Servings: 2–4

Cook Time: 25–30 minutes

Ingredients for Roasting the Delicata Squash:

- 1 delicata squash, scrubbed and sliced into $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch half-moons (skin on)
- 2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
- $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon sea salt
- $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
- $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon garlic powder (optional)
- 1 teaspoon fresh thyme or sage, chopped (optional)

Salad Ingredients:

- 4 cups arugula
- 2 tablespoons toasted pumpkin seeds (pepitas)
- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup shaved Parmesan

• Creamy Sicilian Dressing Ingredients:

- 3 tablespoons mayonnaise or Greek yogurt
- 1 cup extra virgin olive oil
- $\frac{1}{3}$ cup red wine vinegar
- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup lemon juice

- 1 garlic clove, minced
- 2 teaspoon oregano
- Salt and pepper to taste

Instructions

1. Preheat the Oven:

Preheat your oven to 425°F (220°C). Line a baking sheet with parchment paper.

2. Roast the Squash:

Toss the sliced delicata squash with olive oil, salt, pepper, garlic powder, and herbs. Spread in a single layer on the baking sheet. Roast for 20–25 minutes, flipping halfway through, until tender and golden at the edges.

3. Make the Dressing:

In a small bowl, whisk together mayonnaise (or Greek yogurt), olive oil, red wine vinegar, lemon juice, minced garlic, oregano, salt, and pepper until smooth and creamy.

4. Assemble the Salad:

In a large bowl, place the arugula and roasted delicata squash. Drizzle with the creamy Sicilian dressing and toss gently. Sprinkle with toasted pumpkin seeds and shaved Parmesan.

5. Serve:

Serve immediately as a warm salad or let the squash cool slightly for a room-temperature version. Perfect as a side dish or a light Italian-inspired meal.

Roasted Butternut Squash Soup

Roasted Butternut Squash Soup

There's nothing quite like a warm bowl of roasted butternut squash soup on a chilly day. This version roasts everything together – butternut squash, onions, garlic, sweet peppers, and carrots – for deep, caramelized flavor. Once roasted, everything is blended into a silky, naturally creamy soup that's comforting, wholesome, and full of fall goodness. It's a simple, rustic dish that tastes like something you'd get at a cozy café, yet it's easy to make right at home.

Things to know about this Roasted Butternut Squash Soup

- **Roasting Builds Flavor:** Roasting the squash, onion, garlic, peppers, and carrots together gives this soup a naturally sweet, caramelized depth you can't get from boiling.
- **Easy to Blend:** Once roasted, everything purees beautifully for a smooth, creamy texture – no need for added cream unless you want extra richness.
- **Customizable Broth:** Use vegetable broth for a vegetarian version or chicken broth for a heartier flavor.
- **Freezer-Friendly:** This soup freezes well for up to 3 months. Reheat gently on the stove and refresh with a splash of broth.

- **Perfect Make-Ahead Meal:** Roast the vegetables a day in advance, then blend and warm when ready to serve for a quick, cozy meal.
 - **Italian Flavor Twist:** Add a drizzle of olive oil infused with rosemary, a sprinkle of Parmesan cheese, or a touch of crushed red pepper for that warm Italian flair.

If you love this cozy soup, you might also enjoy:

- Italian wedding soup
- Italian Escarole and Beans with Sausage
- Zuppa Toscana with Italian Sausage
- Vegetarian Mushroom Soup with an Italian Twist



Roasted Butternut Squash Soup

Servings: 4–6

Cook Time: 1 hour (15 min prep, 45 min roast)

Ingredients

- 1 large butternut squash, halved and seeds removed
- 1 medium onion, roughly chopped
- 4 cloves garlic, unpeeled
- 1–2 small sweet peppers (or bell pepper), chopped
- 2 medium carrots, peeled and chopped
- 2–3 tablespoons olive oil
- Salt and black pepper, to taste
- 4 cups vegetable or chicken broth (as preferred)
- Optional: $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon smoked paprika or pinch of chili flakes for depth
- Optional toppings: a drizzle of cream, toasted pumpkin seeds, or crispy sage

Instructions

1. **Preheat oven:** to 400°F (200°C).
2. **Prepare vegetables:** Place the cleaned, halved butternut squash on a baking sheet, cut side up. Fill each cavity with chopped onion, garlic cloves (still in skin), and peppers. Scatter the carrots around the pan.
3. **Season and roast:** Drizzle everything with olive oil and season with salt and pepper. Roast for about 45–50

minutes, or until the squash is tender and caramelized.

4. **Scoop and blend:** Once cooled slightly, scoop the flesh from the squash and squeeze out the roasted garlic. Add all roasted vegetables to a blender with 3 cups of broth. Blend until smooth, adding more broth to reach your desired consistency.
 5. **Simmer:** Pour the soup into a pot and warm over medium heat for 5–10 minutes. Adjust seasoning as needed.
 6. **Serve:** Ladle into bowls and top with a drizzle of cream or olive oil and your favorite garnishes.
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5 Cozy Italian-Inspired Fall Soups

5 Cozy Italian-Inspired Fall Soups

When the air turns crisp and the leaves start to fall, nothing warms the soul like a steaming bowl of soup. Over my years in Italian kitchens and running my restaurants, I've crafted many comforting soups that bring warmth and flavor to chilly days. These five cozy Italian-inspired fall soups are my absolute favorites – perfect for family dinners, casual weeknights, or when you just need a little comfort in a bowl.

Each one is packed with flavor and nostalgia, and I've linked each recipe so you can make them right at home. Plus, these

soups aren't just for fall – they'll keep you cozy all through the cold weather season!



1. Classic Italian Wedding Soup

Comforting, hearty, and filled with mini meatballs, greens, and pasta. Italian Wedding Soup Perfect for chilly nights, this traditional Italian favorite brings nostalgia and warmth in every spoonful.



2. Creamy Italian Sausage Zuppa Toscana

Creamy and savory with sausage and greens – tastes like fall in a bowl. Zuppa Toscana with Italian Sausage This restaurant-style soup is rich, comforting, and made easily at home.



3. Potato Leek Soup with Pancetta

- A restaurant classic – simple, silky, and full of flavor. Potato Leek Soup with Pancetta One of the most popular soups from my restaurant days, it's rustic yet elegant, and perfect for cozying up on a fall evening.



4. Split Pea Soup with Ham

- A hearty and rustic soup that feels like home cooking at its best. Split Pea Soup with Ham A longtime favorite from my restaurant menu, this one delivers rich, smoky comfort with every bite.



5. Escarole and Bean Soup with Italian Sausage

- A true Italian classic that's nourishing and full of flavor. Escarole and Beans with Italian Sausage Simple, healthy, and satisfying – this soup has all the soul of Italian home cooking.

Things to know about these 5 Italian inspired Fall soups

- **Use quality ingredients.** A great soup starts with a good base – use a rich homemade or low-sodium broth, fresh herbs, and real Parmigiano-Reggiano for authentic Italian flavor.
- **Layer your flavors.** Sautéing onions, garlic, and vegetables first helps develop deep, rich flavor before adding liquids.
- **Don't rush the simmer.** Many soups taste even better the next day as the flavors meld – perfect for meal prepping or easy leftovers.
- **Add pasta last.** For soups like Italian Wedding or Zuppa

Toscana, cook the pasta separately or just until al dente in the soup to avoid overcooking.

- **Freeze-friendly favorites.** Split Pea Soup, Escarole and Bean, and even the Italian Wedding Soup freeze beautifully – perfect for cozy nights when you don't feel like cooking.
 - **Garnish matters.** A drizzle of good olive oil, fresh herbs, or a sprinkle of cheese can turn a simple bowl into something restaurant-worthy.
 - **Pair with crusty bread.** No Italian soup night is complete without a loaf of warm, crusty bread or homemade baguette for dipping.
 - Try one and tag me on Instagram @ Lorianasheacooks – I love seeing your cozy soup
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Squash Varieties + Easy Cooking Ideas

Squash Varieties + Easy Cooking Ideas

Every fall, I look forward to squash season. Growing up, it was a staple at the market, and even now I can't resist filling my basket with all the different shapes and colors. Each variety has its own personality—some sweet and creamy, others nutty and hearty—and they all find their way into comforting dishes in my kitchen. From soups and pastas to

stuffed squash dinners, these vegetables bring warmth to the table.

Why Squash is So Special

Squash is more than just pretty on the counter—it's wholesome, versatile, and naturally comforting. Packed with fiber, vitamins, and antioxidants, it's a vegetable that feels indulgent while being nourishing. And I love how it works in both savory dishes (like roasted squash with herbs or creamy risottos) and sweet recipes (cakes, muffins, even cookies).

Things to know about Squash Varieties + Easy Cooking Ideas

Common Types of Squash

- **Butternut Squash**

Sweet, creamy, and one of the most popular varieties. Perfect for soups, roasting, or blending into a pasta sauce.

- **Acorn Squash**

Mild and nutty with a tender texture. Its natural "bowl" shape makes it perfect for stuffing with sausage, rice, or grains.

- **Delicata Squash**

Quick-cooking with edible skin, slightly sweet flavor, and beautiful striped skin. Great roasted in slices or tossed into salads.

- **Spaghetti Squash**

Once baked, its flesh turns into golden strands that mimic pasta. A fun and lighter way to serve saucy dishes.

• Easy Ways to Cook Squash

- Roast with olive oil, garlic, and fresh herbs.
- Stuff with sausage, rice, or seasonal vegetables.
- Puree into soups, sauces, or risottos.
- Toss into pasta or gnocchi.
- Bake into breads, muffins, or cakes.
- **How to pick:** Look for squash that feels heavy for its size, with firm skin and no soft spots.
- **Storage:** Whole squash keeps well on the counter for 1–2 months. Once cut, store in the fridge and use within a week. Cooked squash can be frozen for up to 3 months.
- **Peeling tip:** Microwave a whole squash for 2–3 minutes before peeling—it softens the skin and makes it easier to handle.

• A Cozy Recipe to Try: Creamy Butternut Squash Pasta with Italian Sausage

Now that we've explored the different types of squash and how versatile they can be, I wanted to share one of my favorite ways to enjoy butternut squash in the fall. It turns into the creamiest pasta sauce, and when paired with Italian sausage, it becomes the kind of hearty, comforting meal everyone loves.

- If you're ready to start cooking with squash, I've got a few more cozy recipes to get you inspired. My Italian sausage & spinach butternut squash

stuffed Roasted Butternut Squash Gnocch

Creamy Butternut Squash Pasta with Italian sausage

Ingredients

- 1 medium butternut squash (about 2 $\frac{1}{2}$ –3 lbs), peeled, seeded, and cubed
- 3 tbsp olive oil, divided
- Salt and black pepper, to taste
- $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp crushed red pepper flakes (optional)
- 1 lb Italian sausage (mild or spicy), casings removed
- 1 small onion, finely chopped
- 3 garlic cloves, minced
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup chicken broth (or vegetable broth)
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup heavy cream
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup grated Parmesan cheese
- 12 oz short pasta (rigatoni, penne, or orecchiette work well)
- Fresh sage or parsley, for garnish

Instructions

1. **Roast the Squash:** Preheat oven to 400°F (200°C). Toss cubed butternut squash with 2 tbsp olive oil, salt, pepper, and crushed red pepper flakes.

Spread on a baking sheet and roast for 25–30 minutes, until tender and caramelized.

2. **Cook the Pasta:** While the squash roasts, bring a large pot of salted water to a boil. Cook pasta according to package directions until al dente. Reserve 1 cup pasta water, then drain.
3. **Cook the Sausage:** In a large skillet, heat 1 tbsp olive oil over medium heat. Add Italian sausage, breaking it apart with a spoon, and cook until browned and cooked through. Remove sausage from the pan and set aside.
4. **Make the Sauce:** In the same skillet, add onion and sauté until softened, about 5 minutes. Stir in garlic and cook 1 minute more. Add roasted squash and broth. Simmer for 3–4 minutes, then blend (with an immersion blender or carefully in a regular blender) until smooth and creamy. Stir in the heavy cream and Parmesan.
5. **Combine Everything:** Return the sausage to the skillet. Add cooked pasta and toss, adding reserved pasta water as needed for a silky sauce.
6. **Serve:** Garnish with fresh sage or parsley, extra Parmesan, and a drizzle of good olive oil. Serve warm.

Storage

Leftovers keep well in the fridge for 3 days. Reheat gently with a splash of broth or cream to loosen the sauce.

Italian Sausage Stuffed Portobello Mushrooms

Italian Sausage Stuffed Portobello Mushrooms

When it comes to cozy Italian cooking, stuffed vegetables are always a favorite – from peppers to zucchini to eggplant. These **Italian Stuffed Portobello Mushrooms** bring that same rustic charm to the table, with hearty mushroom caps overflowing with savory sausage, herbs, spinach, and gooey melted cheese. They're comforting yet elegant, perfect as an appetizer for entertaining or a light main dish with a simple salad on the side. What I love most is how the mushrooms act like little "bowls," soaking up all the garlic, olive oil, and cheesy goodness. This same filling works wonderfully for stuffing smaller white or cremini mushrooms.

Things to know about these Italian sausage Stuffed Portobello Mushrooms

- **Picking the right mushrooms:** Choose large, firm portobello caps with deep gills. They'll hold up better when stuffed and baked.
- **Drain excess moisture:** Mushrooms release water as they cook. To avoid sogginess, brush them with olive oil and pre-bake for 5–7 minutes before adding the filling if

you like them firmer.

- **Cheese options:** Mozzarella gives you that melty stretch, but you can also use provolone for a sharper bite or fontina for a creamier texture.
- **Breadcrumbs matter:** Italian-style breadcrumbs add great flavor, but panko makes the topping extra crispy.
- **Make it vegetarian:** Skip the sausage and add extra spinach, sun-dried tomatoes, and ricotta or cannellini beans for a protein boost.
- **Meal ideas:** Serve two stuffed portobellos per person with a side of roasted potatoes or a crisp Italian salad for a full dinner. They also work beautifully as a starter for a fall dinner party.
- **Mini version:** This same filling works wonderfully for stuffing smaller white or cremini mushrooms. Perfect for party appetizers or holiday platters. Follow the same instructions, and lower the cooking time by 5 -7 minutes.
- If you enjoyed these **Italian Stuffed Portobello Mushrooms**, be sure to try some of my other cozy Italian favorites:

- **Classic Orecchiette with Italian Sausage and Broccoli Rabe**
- **Creamy Sausage Tortellini Soup**
- **Italian Green Beans and Potato Salad**

They're all simple, full of flavor, and perfect for weeknight dinners or entertaining.

Italian sausage Stuffed Portobello Mushrooms

Servings: 4

Cook Time: 30- 40 minutes

- 4 large portobello mushrooms, stems and gills removed
- 2 tbsp olive oil
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 cup Italian breadcrumbs
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup grated parmesan cheese
- 1 cup finely chopped spinach
- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup fresh parsley, chopped
- 2 tsp Italian herbs
- 1 cup shredded mozzarella
- Salt and black pepper, to taste
- My easy marinara sauce for serving

Instructions

1. **Prep the mushrooms:** Preheat oven to 375°F (190°C). Clean the portobellos by gently wiping them with a damp cloth. Remove stems and scrape out the gills with a spoon. Brush both sides with olive oil and place on a parchment-lined baking sheet or oven proof casserole dish.
2. **Make the filling:** In a bowl, combine breadcrumbs, parmesan, garlic, parsley, thyme, salt, and pepper.

Drizzle in 1 tbsp olive oil and mix until crumbly.

3. **Stuff the mushrooms:** Divide filling evenly among the mushrooms, pressing lightly to pack. Top with shredded mozzarella or provolone if using.
 4. **Bake:** Bake for 20–25 minutes, until the mushrooms are tender and the tops are golden brown.
 5. Serve with my easy marinara sauce
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Creamy Italian Zuppa Toscana Soup

Creamy Italian Zuppa Toscana Soup

Whenever the weather turns chilly, I can't resist making a big pot of soup. Over the years, I've made so many different kinds, both at home and in my restaurants, but this Zuppa Toscana has always been a favorite. Back when we were running our kitchens, soup was something I loved to feature because it brought people together – simple, comforting, and always changing with the season.

This version is one I make often for my family now. The smoky pancetta adds incredible depth, the sausage gives it that classic Italian heartiness, and the mix of kale and spinach reminds me of the rustic soups I grew up with. It's the kind of recipe that feels familiar yet special every time I serve it. And just like in the restaurant days, I can never resist

pairing it with a warm loaf of crusty bread for dipping – because for me, that’s where the comfort really begins.

Things to know about this Creamy Italian Zuppa Toscana Soup

- **Greens:** I like to use both kale and spinach – the kale holds up beautifully in the simmering broth, and the spinach adds a touch of delicate freshness. If you only have one on hand, either works fine.
- **Sausage:** Mild or spicy Italian sausage is your choice. In the restaurants, we always used a mix to balance flavors.
- **Pancetta:** Don’t skip it! The little bites of pancetta add that smoky, salty depth that makes this soup taste like it’s been simmering for hours.
- **Potatoes:** Thinly sliced potatoes cook quickly, but diced potatoes are great if you prefer chunkier bites.
- **Cream:** For a lighter version, I sometimes swap the heavy cream for half-and-half. It still gives that rich, cozy texture without feeling too heavy.
- **Serving suggestion:** Always serve with a warm slice of crusty bread or focaccia – it’s how we did it in the restaurant, and it makes all the difference at home too.

Variation ideas:

- Add a pinch of crushed red pepper for a little heat.
- Swap some of the potatoes for cannellini beans for extra protein.
- For a dairy-free option, use coconut milk instead of

cream – it adds a subtle sweetness that pairs beautifully with the sausage.

- If you love this cozy Tuscan soup, try it alongside my creamy sausage tortellini soup or my classic Italian sausage risotto – both are perfect for a comforting meal any night of the week!”

Creamy Italian Zuppa Toscana Soup

Cook Time & Servings

- **Prep Time:** 10 minutes
- **Cook Time:** 30 minutes
- **Total Time:** 40 minutes
- **Servings:** 6

Ingredients

- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 4 oz pancetta, diced
- 1 lb. Italian sausage (mild or spicy, casings removed)
- 1 medium onion, finely chopped
- 3 cloves garlic, minced
- 4 medium russet potatoes, thinly sliced or diced
- 6 cups chicken broth
- 1 teaspoon crushed red pepper flakes (optional)
- Salt & freshly ground black pepper, to taste

- 3 cups chopped kale (stems removed)
 - 2 cups baby spinach
 - 1 cup heavy cream (or half-and-half for lighter)
 - Freshly grated Parmesan, for serving
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Instructions

1. Cook pancetta & sausage:

In a large soup pot, heat olive oil over medium heat. Add pancetta and cook until golden and crisp. Add sausage, breaking it apart with a spoon, and cook until browned.

2. Sauté aromatics:

Stir in onion and cook until softened, about 5 minutes. Add garlic and cook 1 minute more.

3. Simmer potatoes:

Add potatoes, chicken broth, red pepper flakes, salt, and pepper. Bring to a boil, then reduce heat and simmer 15–20 minutes, or until potatoes are tender.

4. Add greens:

Stir in kale and spinach; cook 3–4 minutes until wilted.

5. Finish with cream:

Lower heat, stir in heavy cream, and warm through without boiling. Adjust seasoning as needed.

6. Serve:

Ladle into bowls, sprinkle with Parmesan, and serve with crusty bread.

Italian Green Beans and Potato Salad

Italian Green Beans and Potato Salad

There's something about the combination of fresh green beans and tender potatoes that always takes me back to family gatherings and summer cookouts. This Italian-style salad is a dish I grew up eating, especially when green beans were plentiful in the garden and new potatoes were just dug up. Unlike creamy American-style potato salad, this version is light, bright, and dressed simply with olive oil, vinegar, garlic, and herbs. It's rustic, refreshing, and full of flavor – the kind of dish that tastes even better after it sits for a little while and the flavors have had a chance to mingle.

What I love most about this salad is its versatility. It's not just for summer picnics – it's perfect anytime of the year. In warmer months, it shines as a light side dish for grilled meats or seafood, while in cooler months, it pairs beautifully with roasted chicken, baked fish, or even a cozy Sunday roast.

Things to know about this Italian Green Beans and Potato Salad

This salad tastes even better after a few hours in the fridge. The potatoes soak up the garlicky vinaigrette, and the green beans keep their crunch. Since it's made without mayo, it's perfect for picnics and potlucks, and it's just as welcome in

the middle of summer as it is on a chilly autumn or winter day.

Variations to Try:

- Add a handful of kalamata or green olives for a briny bite.
- Make it heartier with canned tuna or sliced hard-boiled eggs.
- Swap the parsley for fresh basil or mint.
- Use fresh lemon juice instead of vinegar for a brighter flavor.

Love this recipe? Be sure to check out my other Italian-inspired sides like **Italian crispy roasted potatoes** or Fuyu Persimmon Walnut Salad.

Recipe: Italian Green Beans and Potato Salad

Servings: 6

Cook Time: 25 minutes

Ingredients

- 1 pound baby potatoes (red or Yukon gold), halved or quartered
- 1 pound fresh green beans, trimmed
- 1 small red onion, thinly sliced
- 2 garlic cloves, minced
- 1 cup extra virgin olive oil

- 1/3 tablespoons red wine vinegar (or white wine vinegar)
 - 1 teaspoon Dijon mustard (optional, for extra tang)
 - 1 teaspoon dried oregano
 - 1 teaspoon red pepper flakes (adjust to taste)
 - 2 tablespoons fresh parsley, chopped
 - Salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste
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Instructions

1. **Cook the potatoes:** Place the potatoes in a large pot of salted water. Bring to a boil and cook until just fork-tender, about 12–15 minutes. Using a slotted spoon, remove the potatoes and set aside, keeping the cooking water in the pot.
2. **Cook the green beans:** In the same pot of boiling water, add the trimmed green beans and cook for 3–4 minutes, until bright green and tender-crisp. Drain and plunge into a bowl of ice water to stop the cooking. Drain again.
3. **Make the dressing:** In a small bowl, whisk together the olive oil, vinegar, garlic, mustard (if using), oregano, salt, and pepper.
4. **Assemble the salad:** In a large serving bowl, combine the potatoes, green beans, and sliced red onion. Pour the dressing over the top and toss gently to coat.
5. **Finish & serve:** Sprinkle with chopped parsley and adjust seasoning with more salt, pepper, or vinegar to taste. Serve warm, at room temperature, or chilled.

Italian Beef and Farro Soup

Italian Beef and Farro Soup

When the air turns crisp and the leaves start to fall, there's nothing better than a warm, hearty soup to bring everyone to the table. This **Italian Beef and Farro Soup** was a favorite in our restaurant's fall menu—rich, rustic, and packed with flavor. Tender cubes of sirloin simmer alongside sweet carrots, celery, and aromatic herbs in a savory tomato and beef broth, while pearled farro adds a nutty, chewy texture that makes every bite satisfying. It's the kind of soup that warms both the kitchen and the heart, perfect for a cozy weeknight or a Sunday dinner with family.

Things to know about this Italian Beef and Farro Soup

- **What is farro?**

Farro is an ancient Italian grain with a nutty flavor and chewy texture. It's a staple in Tuscan cooking and makes soups hearty without feeling heavy.

- **Can I substitute farro?**

Yes! If you don't have farro, barley works beautifully. Rice or small pasta can be used too, but they'll change the texture.

- **Best cut of beef:**

Sirloin works wonderfully here because it stays tender in a shorter simmer. You can also use stew meat, chuck, or even leftover roast beef.

- **Make-ahead friendly:**

This soup tastes even better the next day as the flavors develop. Farro holds up better than pasta, so it won't turn mushy.

- **Freezer tip:**

Freeze in portions without adding the parsley and Parmesan. Add those fresh when reheating for the best flavor.

- **Serving suggestion:**

A drizzle of good olive oil, a sprinkle of Parmesan, and warm crusty bread make this a complete meal

- **Craving more comforting Italian dishes?**

Try these reader favorites:

- [Mama's best Italian Meatballs](#)
- [Classic Italian Wedding Soup](#)

Ingredients

- **Ingredients (serves 4–6)**

- 1 pound sirloin, cut into 1-inch cubes
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 1 medium onion, finely chopped
- 2 carrots, peeled and diced
- 2 celery stalks, diced

- 3 garlic cloves, minced
- 1 can (14.5 oz) diced tomatoes
- 6 cups beef broth
- 1 teaspoon fresh rosemary, chopped (or $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon dried)
- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup pearled farro
- Salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste
- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup fresh parsley, chopped
- Freshly grated Parmesan, for serving

Instructions

1. **Brown the beef:** Heat olive oil in a large pot over medium-high heat. Add sirloin cubes and sear on all sides until browned. Remove and set aside.
2. **Sauté vegetables:** In the same pot, add onion, carrots, and celery. Cook until softened, about 5–6 minutes. Add garlic and cook 1 more minute.
3. **Build the soup base:** Return the beef to the pot. Stir in diced tomatoes, beef broth, thyme, and rosemary. Bring to a boil, then reduce heat and simmer for 25–30 minutes until the beef is tender.
4. **Cook the farro:** Add the farro and simmer for another 20–25 minutes until the farro is tender but chewy. Stir occasionally and add a bit more broth or water if needed.
5. **Season and finish:** Taste and adjust salt and pepper. Stir in fresh parsley just before serving.

6. **Serve:** Ladle into bowls, sprinkle with Parmesan, and enjoy with crusty Italian bread.