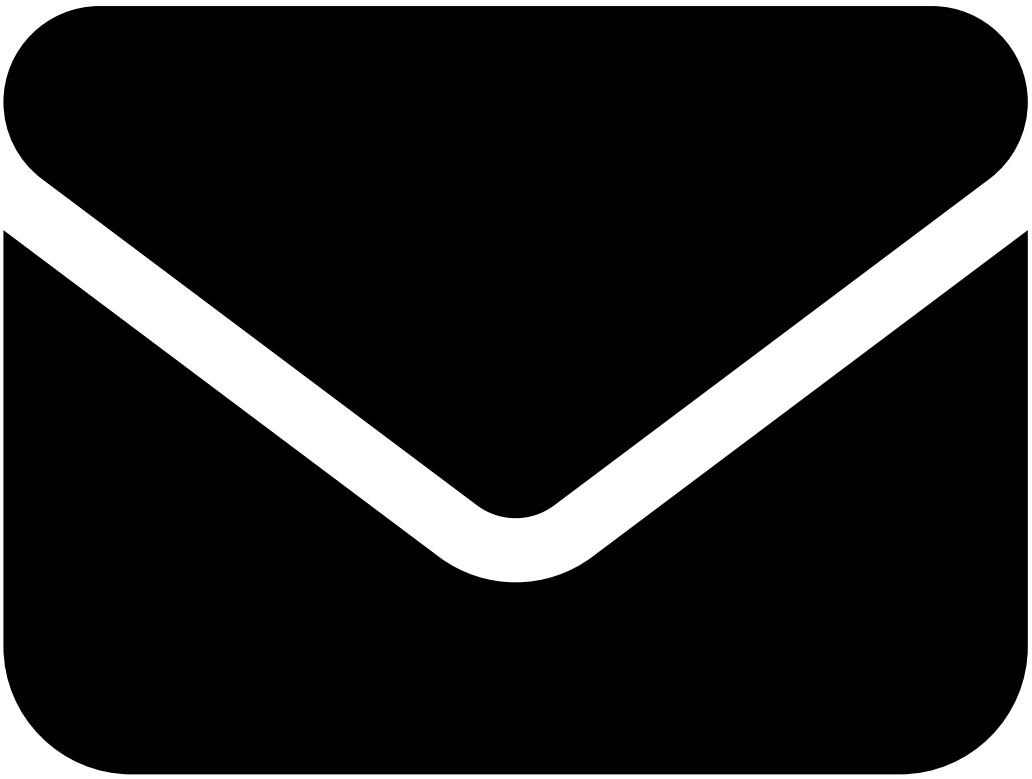
# 15 Weeknight Italian Meals: Easy Recipes in Under 45 Minutes

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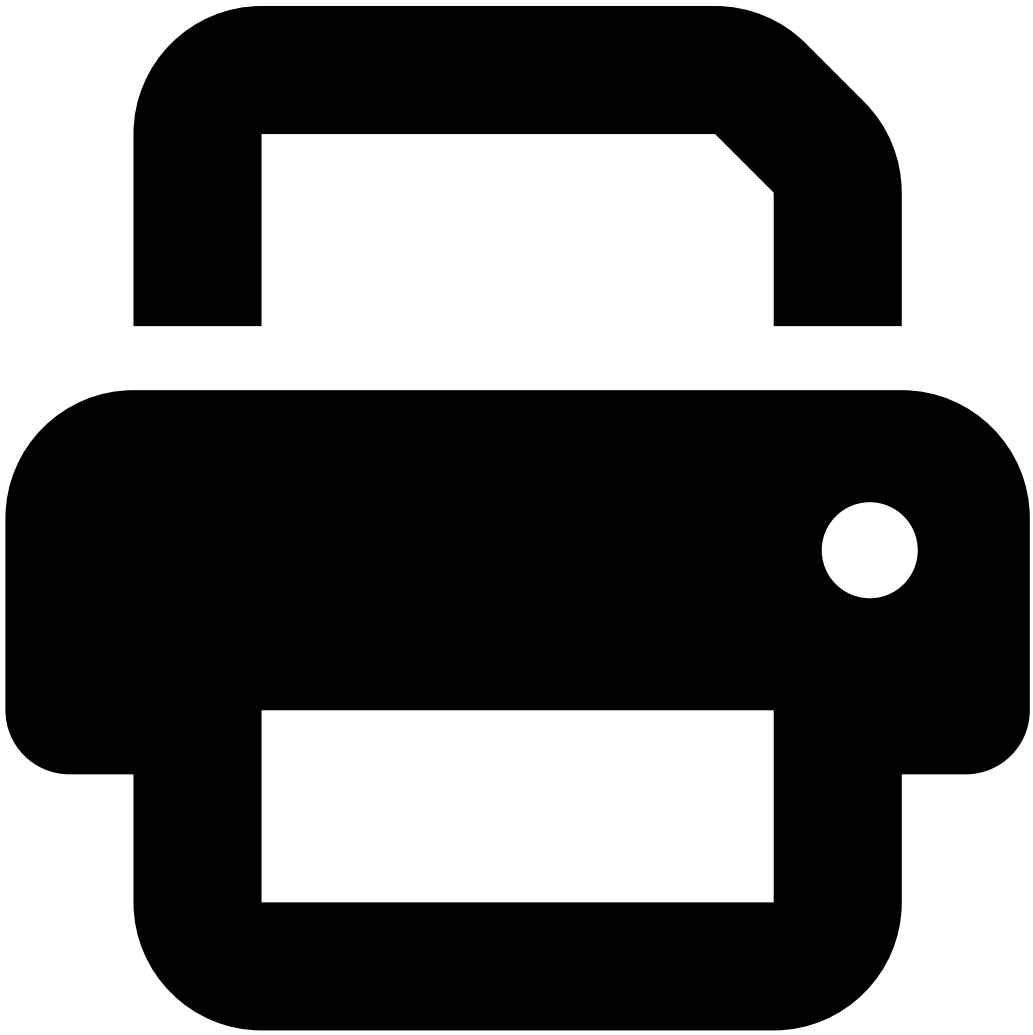
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Weeknight cooking doesn’t need to be complicated to be good. Some of the best Italian meals are built on simple ingredients, cooked well, and brought to the table without overthinking it.

This is the kind of food you make when you want something real—pasta that comes together in one pan, sauces that don’t take all day, and meals that feel comforting without being heavy. It’s not about perfection, it’s about flavor, timing, and knowing a few go-to recipes you can rely on.

Inside this 15 weeknight Italian meals guide, you’ll find a collection of easy weeknight Italian meals—from quick pastas and skillet dinners to cozy baked dishes and fresh, seasonal sides. Everything here is designed to work in real life, with recipes you can make in under 45 minutes and come back to again and again.

# Lemon Asparagus Ricciarelle Pasta

Light, fresh, and full of spring flavors! This **Lemon Asparagus Pasta** features tender sautéed asparagus, bright lemon sauce, and Parmesan, perfect for an easy weeknight dinner or elegant spring meal.
GO TO RECIPE

# One-Pot Creamy Zucchini Pasta (Pasta e Zucchini)

This one-pot creamy zucchini pasta is a traditional Italian recipe where pasta cooks directly with zucchini, onion, and olive oil, creating a naturally creamy sauce with Parmesan and pasta starch.GO TO RECIPE

# Spicy pasta Norcina  Spicy Italian sausage pasta

Spicy pasta alla norcina is an Italian pasta dish made with sausage in a creamy cheese sauce. There are different variations, some have mushrooms or different cured meats. The recipe is easy to make and takes about as much time to make as it takes the pasta to cookGO TO RECIPE

# Pesto tortellini pasta salad

If you’re looking for the perfect summer pasta salad,  this pesto tortellini pasta **Salad** is one of my favorites. Full of Mediterranean flavors and hearty enough to be a meal on its

own, it’s one of those dishes that always disappears quickly when ever I bring it  to potlucks, or Sunday lunches.GO TO RECIPE

## Authentic Italian Pasta e Fagioli

Authentic Pasta e fagioli is a humble, hearty and soul-warming Italian pasta dish that brings back vivid  childhood memories of the smell of simmering beans, tomatoes, and garlic. for many Italian families, pasta e fagioli was the meal that could feed everyone on a tight budget. It’s the ultimate ” cucina povera” dish- poor kitchen.GO TO RECIPE

## Air Fryer Parmesan chicken Spiedini

Air fryer parmesan chicken spiedini are Italy’s version of skewers or kabobs. In this spiedini recipe boneless, skinless chicken thighs are marinated in a blend of Italian spices, cooked in the air fryer, and basted with a delicious garlic, parmesan butter sauce.GO TO RECIPE

## Chicken Meatballs with marry me orzo

Tender chicken meatballs are always a hit at the dinner table, and when you pair them with creamy *Marry Me Orzo*, you’ve got the ultimate comfort meal. This dish brings together juicy baked chicken meatballs and orzo pasta simmered in a rich Parmesan and sun-dried tomato cream sauce. It’s the kind of meal that feels special enough for date night yet easy enough for a weeknight family dinner.GO TO RECIPE

## Pollo al Limone Italian lemon

# chicken

Lemons are in peak season right now, and there’s no better way to celebrate their bright, zesty flavor than with this Italian Lemon Chicken. Known as *Pollo al Limone*, this dish is simple, rustic, and full of Southern Italian charm. With a golden sear, a light pan sauce, and a fresh lemon-parsley drizzle, it’s the kind of meal that tastes like summer.GO TO RECIPE

# Best cod Francese Recipe- in 30 minutes

**Best Cod Francese Recipe – in 30 Minutes** is a lightly battered, pan-fried cod fillet in an elegant lemon, butter and  white wine sauce. It’s similar to chicken piccata—but without the capers and with a velvety, lemon-butter sauce that clings to the golden crust. Cod Francese is a classic restaurant-style dish that’s surprisingly simple to make at home. The hallmark is the light coating of flour and egg that gives the fish a delicate, crisp texture—perfect for soaking up that tangy, buttery sauce.GO TO RECIPE

# Shrimp spaghetti with basil tomato sauce

This Shrimp Spaghetti with Tomato Basil Sauce is a simple, fresh pasta dish made with sautéed shrimp, juicy summer tomatoes, garlic, and plenty of fragrant basil. The sauce is created right in the pan by combining the tomato juices with starchy pasta water and a generous handful of grated parmesan, giving you a light  flavorful coating that clings to the pasta.GO TO RECIPE https://lorianasheacooks.com/shrimp-tomato-basil-spaghetti/

# Authentic Italian shrimp oreganata

Crispy, garlicky, and straight out of an Italian kitchen.
This shrimp oreganata is all about simple ingredients—olive oil, lemon, breadcrumbs, and a heavy hand with oregano—baked until golden and perfect for scooping with bread.

It’s fast, it’s bold, and it tastes like something you’d order at your favorite spot… but better at home.

GO TO RECIPE

# Crispy pan fried chicken cutlets

These crispy breaded chicken cutlet recipe are pan fried and they were a staple in my  childhood growing up  and in many Italian kitchens. They ae  juicy, crispy delicious and so easy to make. Serve the cutlets along side a salad for a light lunch or dinner.GO TO RECIPE

# The Best Italian-Style Fried Calamari

Golden, crispy, and impossible to stop eating.
This Italian-style fried calamari is light, crunchy, and finished with lemon and a pinch of salt—just the way it should be. No heavy batter, no fuss—just fresh squid, a quick fry, and that perfect crisp.

Serve it hot with marinara or straight up with lemon… either way, it’s gone in minutes.

GO TO RECIPE

# Braised Fennel Oreganata with Pancetta

Braised fennel oreganata with pancetta is one of those simple Italian side dishes that feels both rustic and elegant – the kind of recipe that tastes like it came out of a cozy countryside kitchen. Fennel is one of my favorite seasonal ingredients to cook with this time of year. When it’s in season, it’s sweet, aromatic, and incredibly versatile, and I love finding ways to let its natural flavor shine.

GO TO RECIPE

# One pan orzo with summer vegetables

**Some meals just feel easy**—especially when they come together in one pan. This one-pan orzo with summer vegetables is one of those simple, feel-good recipes that checks all the boxes: quick to make, minimal cleanup, and full of fresh summer flavor.GO TO RECIPE

At the end of the day, weeknight cooking should feel manageable—not like a project. These are the kinds of Italian meals you can lean on when you want something good without spending hours in the kitchen. Simple ingredients, a few solid techniques, and recipes that actually work on a busy night.

Whether it’s a quick pasta, a one-pan skillet, or something baked and cozy, this is the kind of cooking that becomes part of your routine—the meals you make without thinking twice, and the ones everyone looks forward to.

Save this guide so you always have a go-to list of easy weeknight Italian meals.

Pick a recipe to try this week, and come back when you need something new. For more simple, flavorful Italian recipes, explore the blog and find your next favorite.

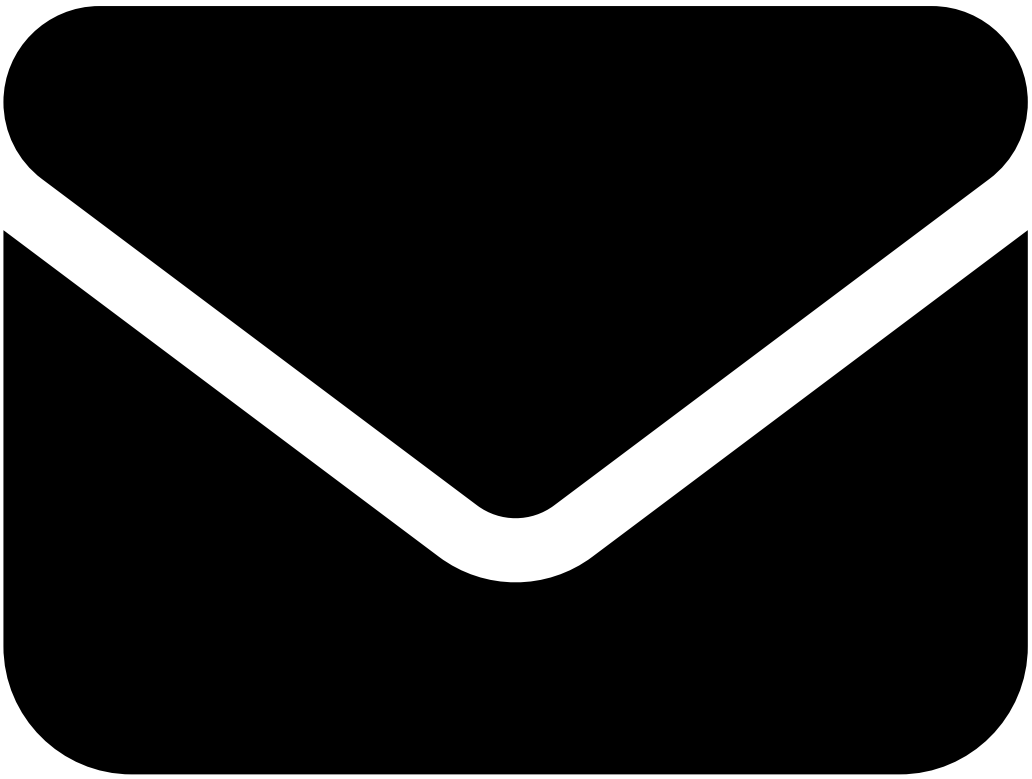
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# Lemon Asparagus Ricciarelle Pasta

# Lemon Asparagus Ricciarelle Pasta

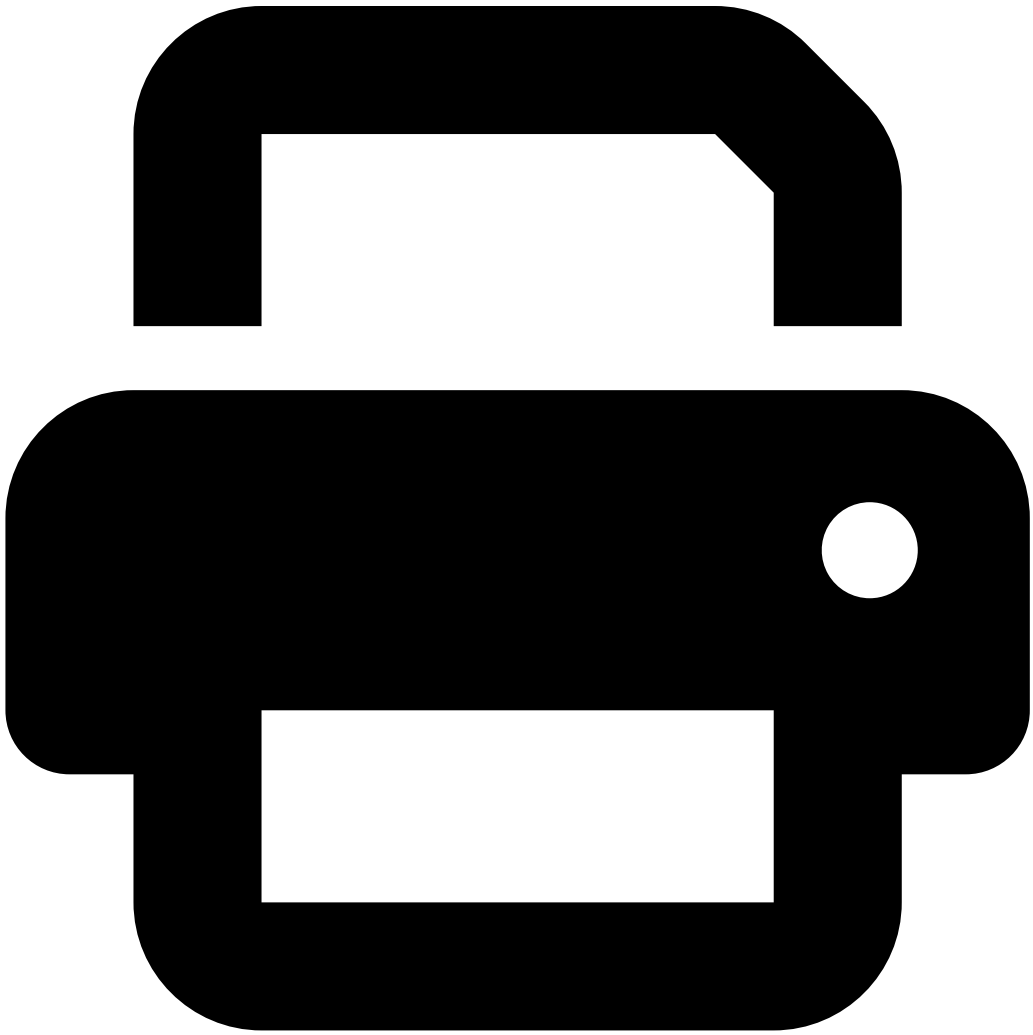
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Spring is all about fresh, vibrant flavors, and nothing says “springtime on a plate” quite like this **Lemon Asparagus Ricciarelle Pasta**. The curly, ribbon-like ricciarelle pasta holds onto every bit of the zesty lemon sauce, while the sautéed asparagus adds tender-crisp bites.

To elevate the dish, we puree **half of the asparagus** to create a silky sauce that clings to the pasta, giving each bite a luxurious texture without adding cream. It’s simple, bright, and elegant—perfect for a weeknight dinner or a light spring gathering.

Whether cooking for your family, hosting friends, or craving something fresh for yourself, this pasta is a seasonal star. Pair it with a crisp white wine or a simple green salad, and you’ve got a meal that feels indulgent yet effortless.

# Things to know about this Lemon Asparagus Ricciarelle Pasta

- **Pureeing half the asparagus:** This creates a silky, smooth sauce that coats the pasta while still giving you tender asparagus bites.
- **Cream optional:** Pureeing the asparagus gives a creamy texture naturally; cream is only needed if you want it extra rich.
- **Leftovers:** Store in an airtight container in the fridge for up to 2 days. Reheat gently with a splash of olive oil or water.
- **Pasta variations:** While ricciarelle is ideal for holding the sauce, you can experiment with other short, ridged, or twisted pasta like cavatelli, fusilli, or campanelle. Each shape will change how the sauce clings and the overall bite of the dish.
- **Flavor variations:** Add a pinch of red pepper flakes for heat, or mix in toasted pine nuts for crunch.

Love this recipe? Explore more **spring-inspired pasta dishes** on the blog! Try my Asparagus, pancetta and lemon lasagna for another light and vibrant spring time meal, or check out my one pot creamy zucchini pasta  for a delicious quick meal that uses few ingredients.

Sign up for my newsletter to get seasonal recipes, kitchen tips, and cooking inspiration delivered straight to your inbox!

# Lemon Asparagus Ricciarelle Pasta



Light, fresh, and full of spring flavors! This **Lemon Asparagus Ricciarelle Pasta** features tender sautéed asparagus, bright lemon sauce, and Parmesan, perfect for an easy weeknight dinner or elegant spring meal.

- 12 0z. Ricciarelle pasta (Use any shape pasta)
- 1 Lb. Asparagus (trimmed and cut into 2-inch pieces)
- 4 Tbsp. olive oil
- 2 gloves garlic (minced)
- 1 Tbsp. lemon rind
- 1/3 cup lemon juice (from 1 lemon)
- 1/2 cup **Parmesan cheese** (grated)
- 1 cup pasta water (reserve before draining, always same more than recipe calls for )
- 1/3 cup Italian parsley (chopped)
- salt and pepper (to taste)

1. **Cook the pasta:**Bring a large pot of salted water to a boil. Cook the ricciarelle pasta according to package instructions. Drain, reserving 2 cups of pasta water.
2. **Sauté the asparagus:** Heat olive oil in a large skillet over medium heat. Add asparagus and sauté for 4–5 minutes until tender-crisp. Add garlic during the last minute.
3. **Puree half the asparagus:** Transfer half of the sautéed asparagus to a blender or food processor and puree until smooth. Return the puree to the skillet with the remaining whole asparagus.

4. **Make the sauce:** Lower the heat, then add lemon zest, lemon juice, and Parmesan to the skillet. Stir in the cooked pasta. If using cream, add now. Toss everything together, adding reserved pasta water a little at a time until the sauce reaches your desired consistency.
5. **Season and serve:** Taste and season with salt and pepper. Serve immediately, garnished with fresh parsley and extra Parmesan if desired.

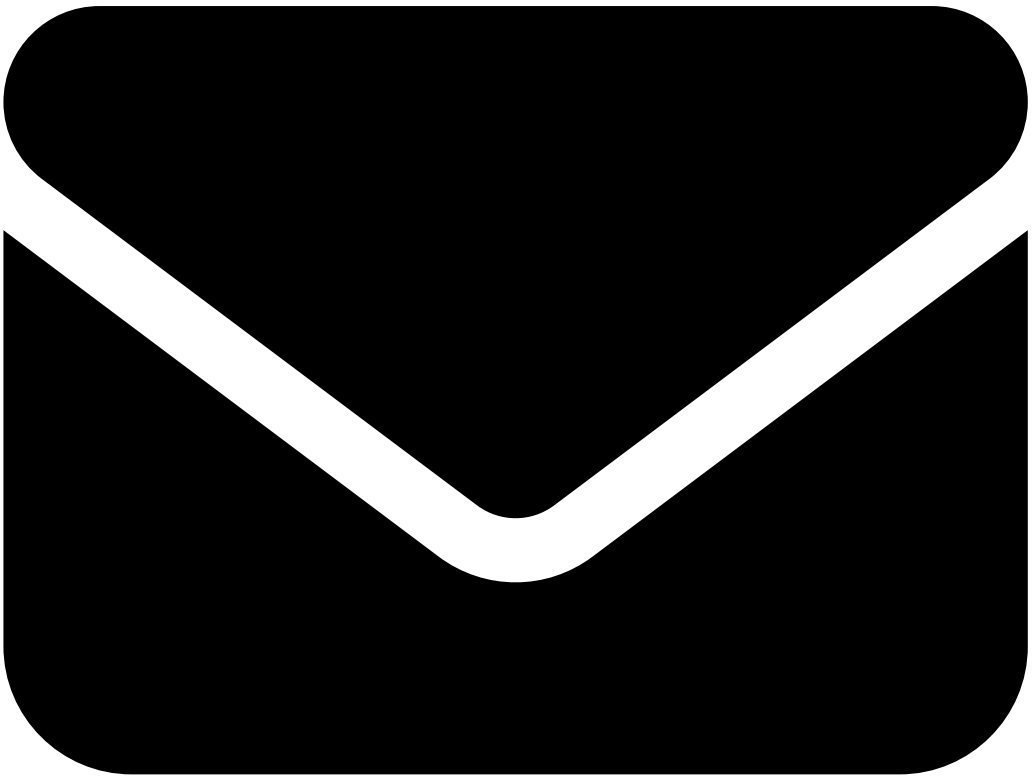
Main Course
Italian
Asparagus Italian, pasta

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# Italian Kale and Potatoes

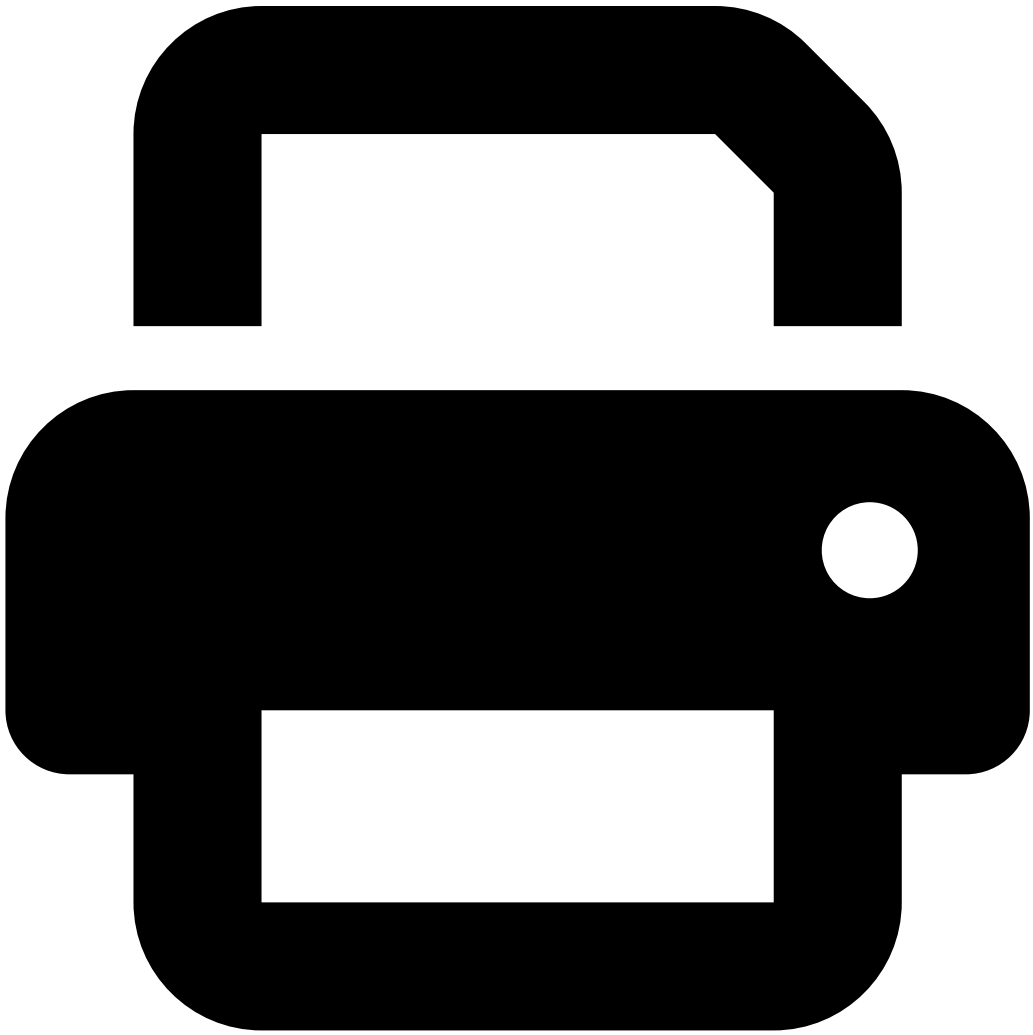
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Tuscan Kale and Potatoes is one of those dishes that reminds us how beautiful simple food can be. In Tuscany, cooking has always been about making the most of what’s growing in the garden and what’s in the pantry. Hearty greens like Tuscan kale — often called lacinato or dinosaur kale — have been a staple in the region for centuries, especially in rustic, peasant-style cooking known as *cucina povera*.

Potatoes, introduced to Italy in the 16th century, eventually became a beloved part of country cooking because they were filling, affordable, and easy to grow. Pair them with sturdy kale, good olive oil, and garlic, and you have the foundation of countless traditional Tuscan dishes — simple, nourishing, and deeply satisfying.

This version adds blistered cherry tomatoes for a little sweetness and brightness, but the heart of the dish stays true to its roots: humble ingredients treated with care. It’s the

kind of food that feels like it belongs on a farmhouse table, served family-style with warm bread and good conversation.

## Things to know about this Italian kale and potatoes

- **Don’t skip parboiling** – it ensures the potatoes are creamy inside and golden when sautéed.
- Tuscan kale (also called lacinato or dinosaur kale) holds its texture beautifully in this dish.
- Want to make it heartier? Add white beans or top with a fried egg.
- This dish reheats beautifully the next day.

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## Serving Ideas

This pairs beautifully with:

- Grilled chicken
- Italian sausage
- Pan-seared fish
- Or simply warm crusty bread and good olive oil

It’s also delicious served at room temperature, making it perfect for gatherings.

## Storage

Store leftovers in an airtight container in the refrigerator for up to 3 days. Reheat gently in a skillet with a drizzle of olive oil.

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# Final Thoughts

This is the kind of rustic Italian cooking that proves you don’t need complicated ingredients to create something deeply satisfying. Just good olive oil, fresh vegetables, and a little care.

If you make this Tuscan Kale and Potatoes, let me know in the comments — and don’t forget to share it with someone who loves simple Italian cooking 

# Bring Rustic Italian Cooking Home

If you loved this Tuscan Kale and Potatoes, you’re going to enjoy some of my other simple, rustic Italian dishes that celebrate humble ingredients and big flavor.

For another cozy vegetable-forward dish, try my **Italian Spaghetti Frittata** — it’s a beautiful way to transform simple ingredients into something special.

If you’re looking to make this a complete meal, serve it alongside my **Italian Meatloaf with Potatoes** for a hearty Sunday-style dinner.

Or keep things classic with my **cod Francese**

And if you love traditional pasta shapes, don’t miss my **Southern Italian Cavatelli** – perfect for pairing with greens and olive oil-based sauces.

Simple ingredients. Timeless recipes. Real Italian flavor.

If you make this dish, leave a comment below and let me know how you served it – I love seeing how these recipes come to life in your kitchen 

# Italian Kale and Potatoes



Golden potatoes, tender Tuscan kale, and juicy blistered cherry tomatoes tossed with garlic and a little heat . Simple ingredients, big Italian flavor.

- 1 1/2 lbs. potatoes (cubed)
- 1 large bunch Tuscan kale
- 3 Tbsp extra virgin olive oil
- 1 cup cherry tomatoes
- 1 Tbsp. garlic (minced)
- 1 tsp. red pepper flakes

- 1 cup white wine
- salt and pepper to taste

1. ## Parboil the Potatoes

   Bring a large pot of salted water to a boil. Add the cubed potatoes and cook for about 8–10 minutes, just until fork-tender but not falling apart. Add the kale and cook 5 minutes longer Drain and set aside.

2. ## Blister the Tomatoes

   In a large skillet over medium heat, add 1 tablespoon olive oil. Add the cherry tomatoes and cook undisturbed for 3–4 minutes until they begin to blister and burst.

3. ## Sauté the Garlic and Kale

   In the same skillet, add the remaining olive oil. Add the sliced garlic and red pepper flakes, cooking for about 30 seconds until fragrant.

   Add the chopped Tuscan kale and a pinch of salt. Sauté for 4–5 minutes until wilted and tender. deglaze the pan with the white wine

4. ## Bring It Together

   Add the drained potatoes back to the skillet. Gently toss everything together and cook for another 3–5 minutes to allow the flavors to meld.

   Fold in the blistered cherry tomatoes. Season with salt and black pepper to taste.

   Finish with freshly grated Pecorino Romano if desired.

Main Course
Italian
Italian, Tuscan, Kale

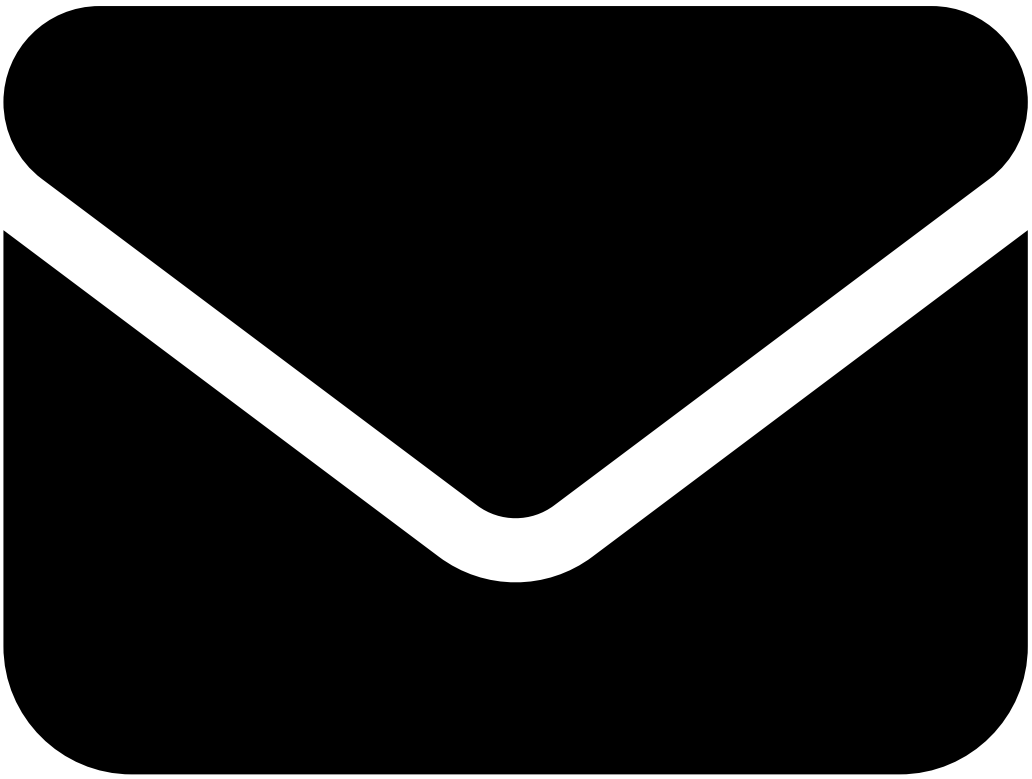
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# Persimmon Carpaccio Salad (Italian Style)

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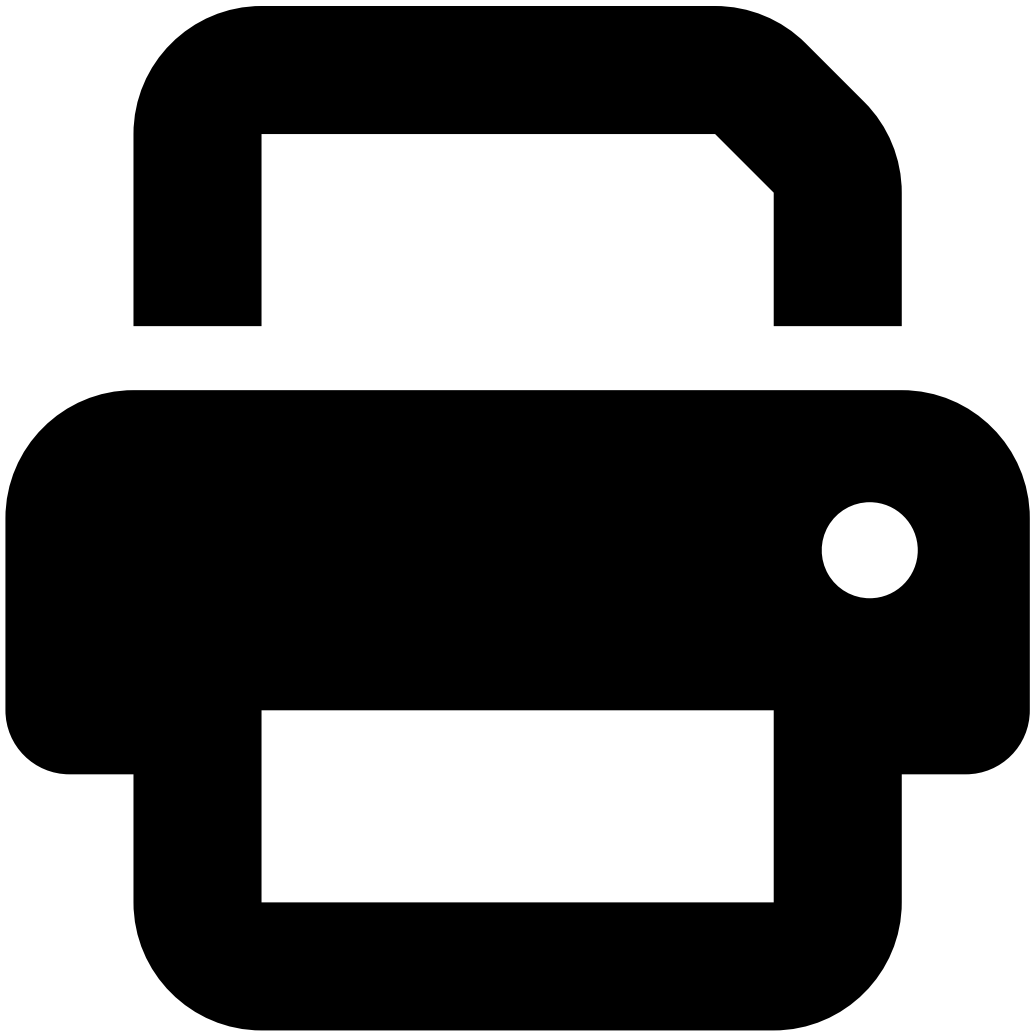
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This elegant **Persimmon Carpaccio Salad** is a simple yet stunning Italian-inspired winter dish. If you love seasonal produce and beautiful plating, this recipe is going to be a favorite. Thinly shaved Fuyu persimmons create a vibrant, sweet base that pairs perfectly with peppery arugula, crisp shaved fennel, toasted walnuts, and salty Parmigiano. It’s light, fresh, and absolutely perfect for holiday gatherings, dinner parties, or as a bright starter to any Italian meal.

In Italy, carpaccio-style dishes are all about showcasing the beauty of the ingredients with minimal dressing—and persimmons shine beautifully prepared this way.

## Things to know about this Persimmon

# Carpaccio Salad (Italian Style)

- **Use Fuyu persimmons**, not Hachiya—Fuyus are firm and perfect for shaving paper-thin.
- A **mandoline** gives the most even slices, but a very sharp knife works too.
- This dish is best served **immediately after dressing** so the persimmons stay crisp.

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# Variations

- **Honey drizzle:** Add a touch of honey if you prefer a sweeter profile.
- **With prosciutto:** Lay thin prosciutto slices over the persimmons for a sweet–salty bite.
- **Citrus version:** Add orange zest or a few citrus segments.
- **Add burrata:** For a creamier dish, serve with small pieces of burrata.

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# Storage

This salad is best enjoyed fresh.
If prepping ahead:

- Shave the persimmons up to **2 hours in advance** and store covered in the refrigerator.

- Shave fennel and store in ice water for crispness. Dress only when ready to serve.

## Looking for More Seasonal Recipes?

Browse some of my winter favorites:

- Orecchiette with **Italian Sausage and broccoli rabe**
- **Creamy Italian Sausage Risotto**
- Braised cabbage wedges with pancetta

Cozy, comforting, and full of Italian flavor.

# Persimmon Carpaccio Salad (Italian Style)



This Italian Persimmon Carpaccio Salad is a beautiful fall and winter dish that lets sweet, ripe persimmons shine. Thinly sliced persimmons are layered carpaccio-style and finished with peppery arugula, shaved Parmesan, toasted nuts, and a simple lemon vinaigrette. Fresh, elegant, and bursting with seasonal flavor, it's perfect as a light appetizer or alongside roasted meats and holiday meals.

- 3 **ripe Fuyu persimmons**, peeled and thinly shaved into rounds

- 1 cup **arugula**
- ½ **small fennel bulb**, shaved very thin
- 2 tbsp **toasted walnuts**, roughly chopped
- ¼ cup **shaved Parmigiano-Reggiano**
- 1 – 2 tbsp **extra virgin olive oil**
- 1 tbsp **fresh lemon juice** *or* a splash of white balsamic vinegar
- **Sea salt**, to taste
- **Fresh cracked black pepper**, to taste
- **Fennel fronds**, for garnish
- *Optional:* a sprinkle of pomegranate arils for color

1. **Lay out the carpaccio**

   Arrange the thinly shaved persimmon slices in a beautiful overlapping layer on a large round platter.

2. **Add the vegetables**

   Scatter shaved fennel on top. Add a small handful of arugula for freshness and contrast.

3. **Dress the salad**

   Drizzle evenly with extra virgin olive oil and fresh lemon juice or white balsamic.

4. **Season**

   Sprinkle lightly with sea salt and freshly cracked pepper.

5. **Finish**

   Add toasted walnuts, shaved Parmigiano, and fennel fronds. Serve immediately.

Salad
Italian
Italian persimmon salad, persimmon carpaccio, fall salad

recipe

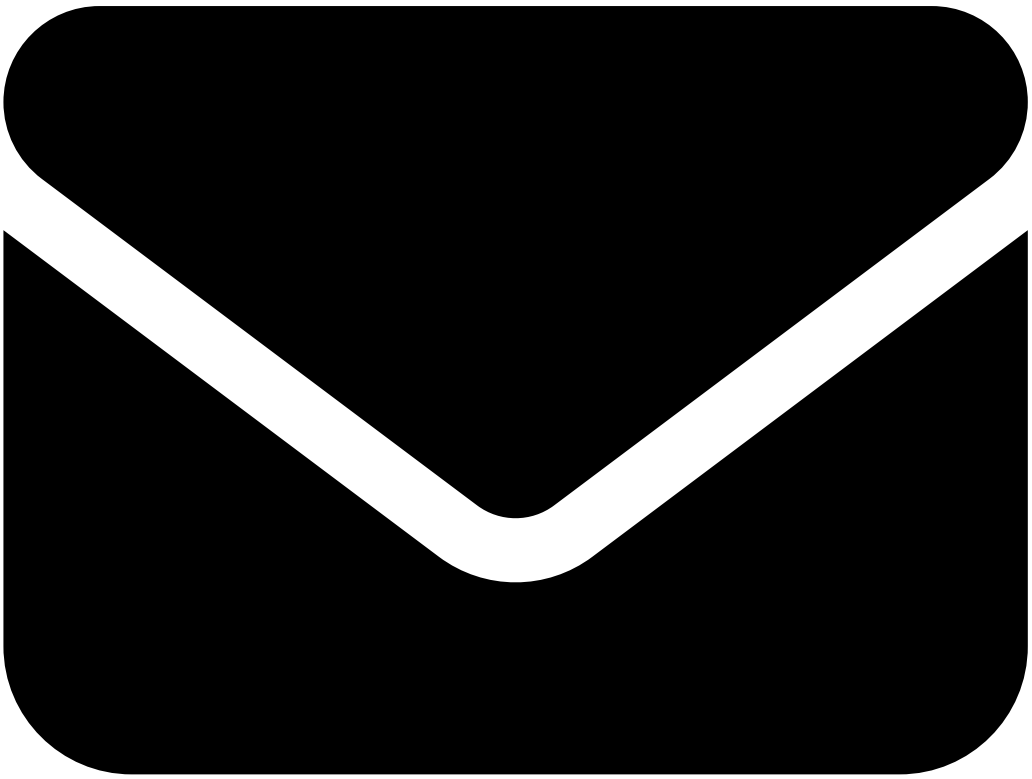
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# Cabbage & Apple Holiday Slaw

# Cabbage & Apple Holiday Slaw

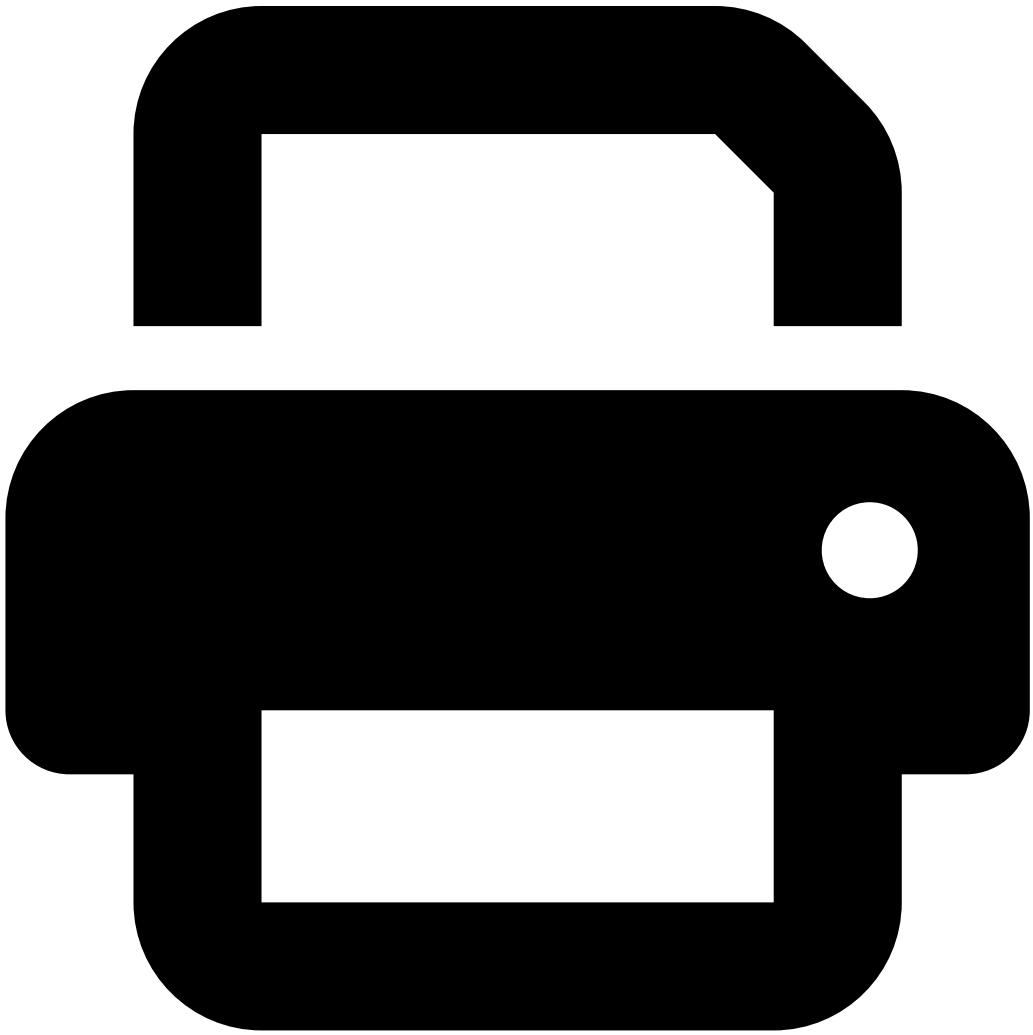
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**I think cabbage is underrated.** It’s one of those ingredients we often overlook, yet it brings so much crunch, sweetness, and freshness to a holiday spread. While everyone gravitates toward the heavier, richer dishes this time of year, I always find myself craving something bright that cuts through all that indulgence. That’s where this Cabbage & Apple Holiday Slaw comes in.

It’s crisp, colorful, and so refreshing—shredded cabbage and carrots tossed with thin slices of sweet apple, toasted pecans for warmth, and just enough shaved Parmesan to give it that savory Italian touch. Then everything gets coated in a creamy apple-cider vinaigrette that ties it all together. It’s the kind of side dish that not only balances your table but also surprises people with how simple and delicious it is. I make it every year, and there are never leftovers.

# Things to know about this Cabbage & Apple Holiday Slaw

This slaw is incredibly make-ahead friendly, which makes it perfect for busy holiday cooking. You can shred the cabbage and carrots, slice the apples, and even mix the dressing a day in advance—just keep everything separate until you're ready to serve. The salad stays crisp for hours after dressing thanks to the sturdiness of the cabbage. You can also swap pecans for walnuts, add dried cranberries for a sweeter touch, or use Asiago instead of Parmesan for a sharper flavor. It's a flexible, crowd-pleasing side dish that fits into any Christmas or holiday menu.

# Variations

- **Cranberry Twist:** Add dried cranberries or pomegranate seeds for color and sweetness.
- **Walnut & Blue Cheese:** Use toasted walnuts and crumbled gorgonzola for a bold flavor.
- **Maple Dijon:** Swap honey for maple syrup and add extra Dijon mustard.
- **Creamy Italian:** Add Greek yogurt or sour cream to the dressing and include shaved fennel.
- **Apple & Pear:** Use a mix of thinly sliced apples and pears.
- **Nut-Free:** Replace nuts with pumpkin seeds or sunflower seeds.
- **Savory Version:** Skip the honey and apple. Add red onion, extra vinegar, and red pepper flakes.

If you love fresh and festive holiday sides, pair this slaw

with:

- **Italian Holiday Chicken Soup**
- **Savory Sausage & Mushroom**
- **The Ultimate Thanksgiving dinner Guide**

# Cabbage & Apple Holiday Slaw



This Cabbage & Apple Holiday Slaw is a crisp, colorful side dish that's perfect for holiday gatherings and everyday meals alike. Fresh cabbage, sweet apples, and a bright, tangy dressing come together for a refreshing salad with the perfect balance of sweet and savory flavors. It's easy to prepare, can be made ahead, and pairs beautifully with roasted turkey, ham, pork, or grilled meats.

## For the slaw

- 4 cups shredded green cabbage
- 1 cup shredded carrots
- 2 large crisp apple, thinly sliced (Honeycrisp or Pink Lady)
- 1 cup toasted pecans
- 1 tbsp fresh or dried thyme
- ½ cup shaved Parmesan (or Asiago)

## Creamy Apple-Cider Vinaigrette

- 1 cup plain Greek yogurt or mayonnaise
- ⅓ cup olive oil
- ⅓ cup apple cider vinegar
- 1 tbsp honey
- 1 tbsp Dijon mustard
- 1 small garlic clove, grated
- Salt and black pepper to taste

1. In a large mixing bowl, combine the shredded cabbage, shredded carrots, apple slices, toasted pecans, shaved Parmesan, and thyme.
2. In a separate small bowl, whisk together the mayo, olive oil, apple cider vinegar, honey, Dijon, grated garlic, salt, and pepper until smooth.
3. Pour the dressing over the slaw and toss gently to evenly coat.
4. Chill for at least 20 minutes before serving to let the flavors meld.
5. Garnish with extra pecans and thyme before serving.

Salad
Italian

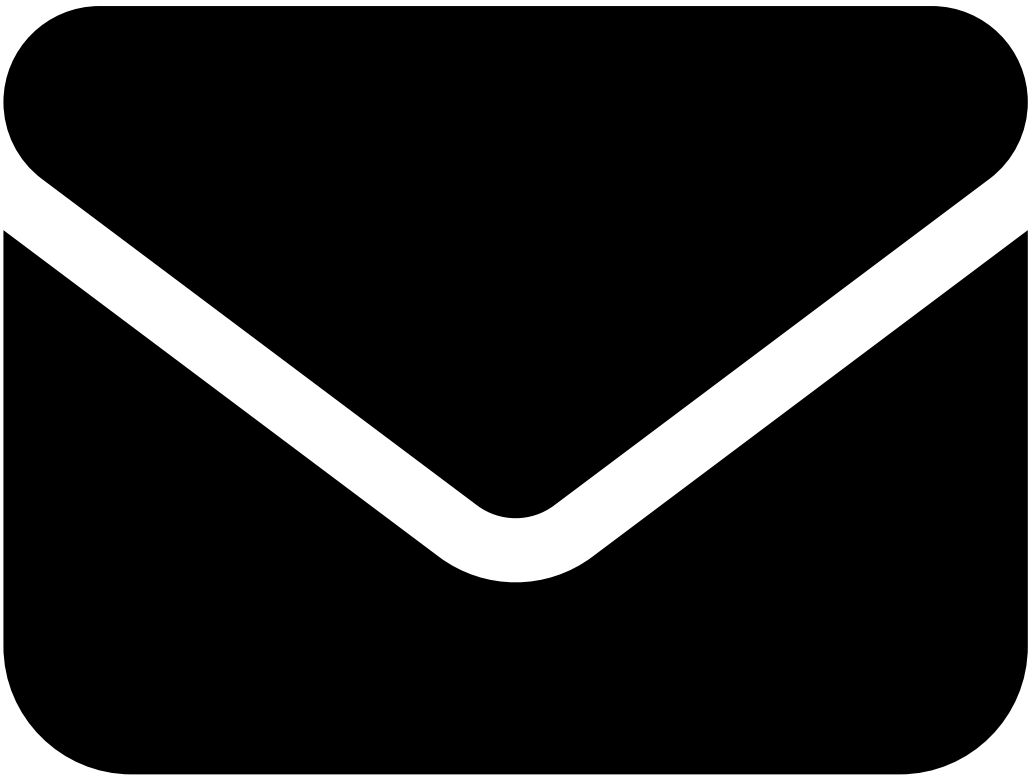
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# Creamy Broccoli Cheddar Soup

# Creamy Broccoli Cheddar Soup

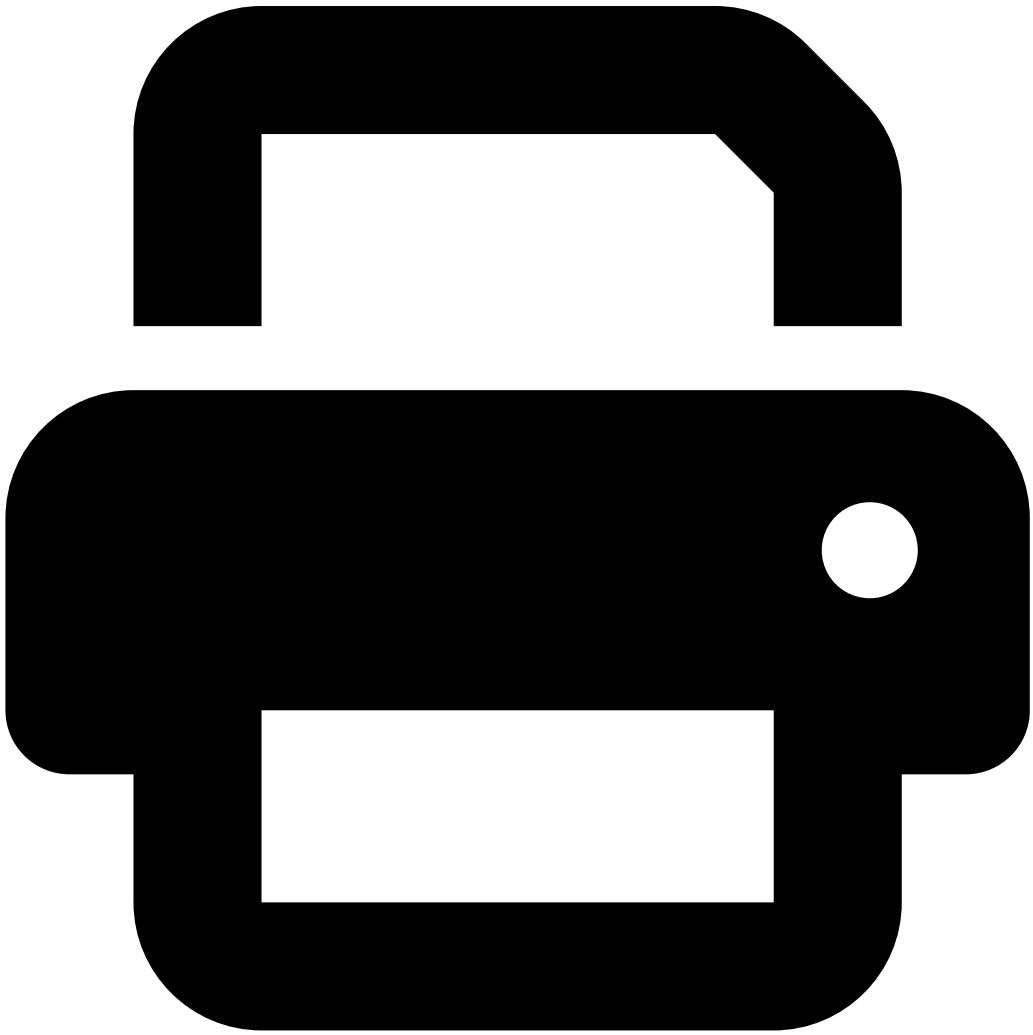
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In our diners – we had two of them over the years – soup was always a big part of the menu. No matter the season, our customers loved starting their meal with something warm and homemade. We made fresh soup every morning, and this **creamy broccoli cheddar soup** was one of the favorites. The smell of onions, garlic, and melted cheddar filled the kitchen, and before lunchtime, we'd already have regulars asking, *"Is the broccoli soup ready yet?"* It's the kind of cozy, comforting bowl that takes me right back to those busy diner days.

## Things to know about Creamy Broccoli Cheddar Soup

This creamy broccoli cheddar soup is not only comforting but also incredibly easy to make – it's ready in just **30 minutes**! You can make it ahead of time and simply reheat it for a quick lunch or dinner. It's also **freezer-friendly**, so you can store leftovers for later without losing any of that cheesy, creamy

goodness.

For some tasty variations:

- **Add protein:** Stir in cooked chicken or crispy bacon for a heartier meal.
- **Make it spicy:** Sprinkle in extra red pepper flakes or a dash of cayenne for a little kick.
- **Veggie twist:** Swap some of the broccoli with cauliflower or carrots for a slightly different flavor and color.
- **Cheese upgrade:** Try mixing in Gruyère or smoked cheddar for a richer, deeper flavor.

This soup is versatile, quick, and perfect for busy weeknights or cozy weekends.

If you love this **creamy broccoli cheddar soup**, be sure to check out some of our other cozy favorites on the blog: try our **creamy potato leek soup** or **Italian sausage gnocchi soup** for more quick and comforting meals. Don’t forget to **browse all our soup recipes** for even more easy weeknight ideas! Just type in SOUP in the search bar. ENJOY!!!

# Creamy Broccoli Cheddar Soup



This Creamy Broccoli Cheddar Soup is a cozy, comforting classic made with tender broccoli, a rich cheese-filled broth, and the perfect balance of savory flavors. Smooth, creamy, and satisfying, this homemade soup is a family favorite for chilly days and makes a delicious lunch or easy dinner served with crusty bread. It’s a restaurant-style soup you can easily recreate at home.

- 3 tbsp butter (or olive oil)
- 1 cup grated onion
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 cup shredded carrots
- 4 cups chopped broccoli florets
- 2 tbsp all-purpose flour
- 3 cups chicken or vegetable stock
- 1 cup heavy cream
- 2 cups shredded sharp cheddar cheese
- 1 tsp red pepper flakes (optional, for a little heat)
- Salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste

1. **Sauté aromatics**

   In a large pot, or Dutch oven melt the butter over medium heat. Add the grated onion and garlic, and cook for 2–3 minutes until fragrant and soft.

2. **Add vegetables**

   Stir in the shredded carrots and chopped broccoli. Sauté for 3–4 minutes, just until the broccoli begins to soften.

3. **Make a light roux**

   Sprinkle in the flour and stir to coat the vegetables evenly. Cook for about 1 minute to remove the raw flour taste.

4. **Add stock**

   Gradually whisk in the chicken or vegetable stock, stirring constantly until smooth. Bring to a gentle simmer and cook for 10–12 minutes, or until the broccoli is tender.

5. **Add cream and cheese**

   Lower the heat and stir in the heavy cream, followed by the shredded sharp cheddar. Stir until melted and creamy. Season with salt, pepper, and red pepper flakes.

6. **Serve**

   Ladle into bowls and serve hot with extra cheddar on top and crusty bread on the side.

Soup
American

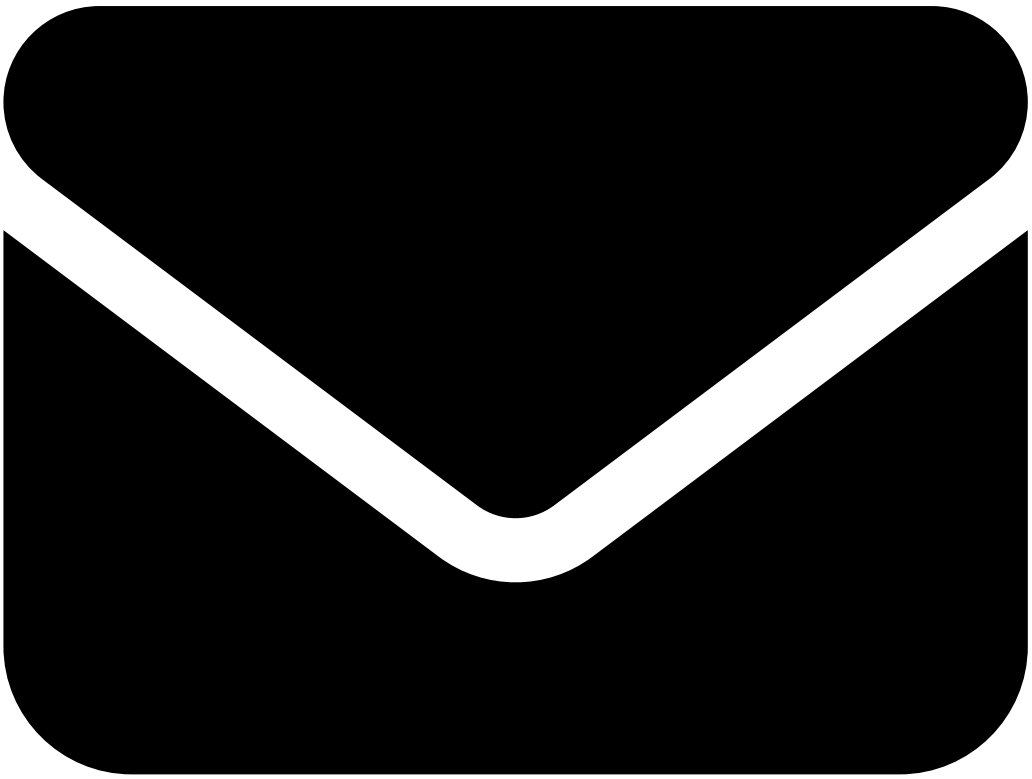
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# Baked Spaghetti Squash with Tomato Sauce and Cheese

# Baked Spaghetti Squash with Tomato Sauce and Cheese

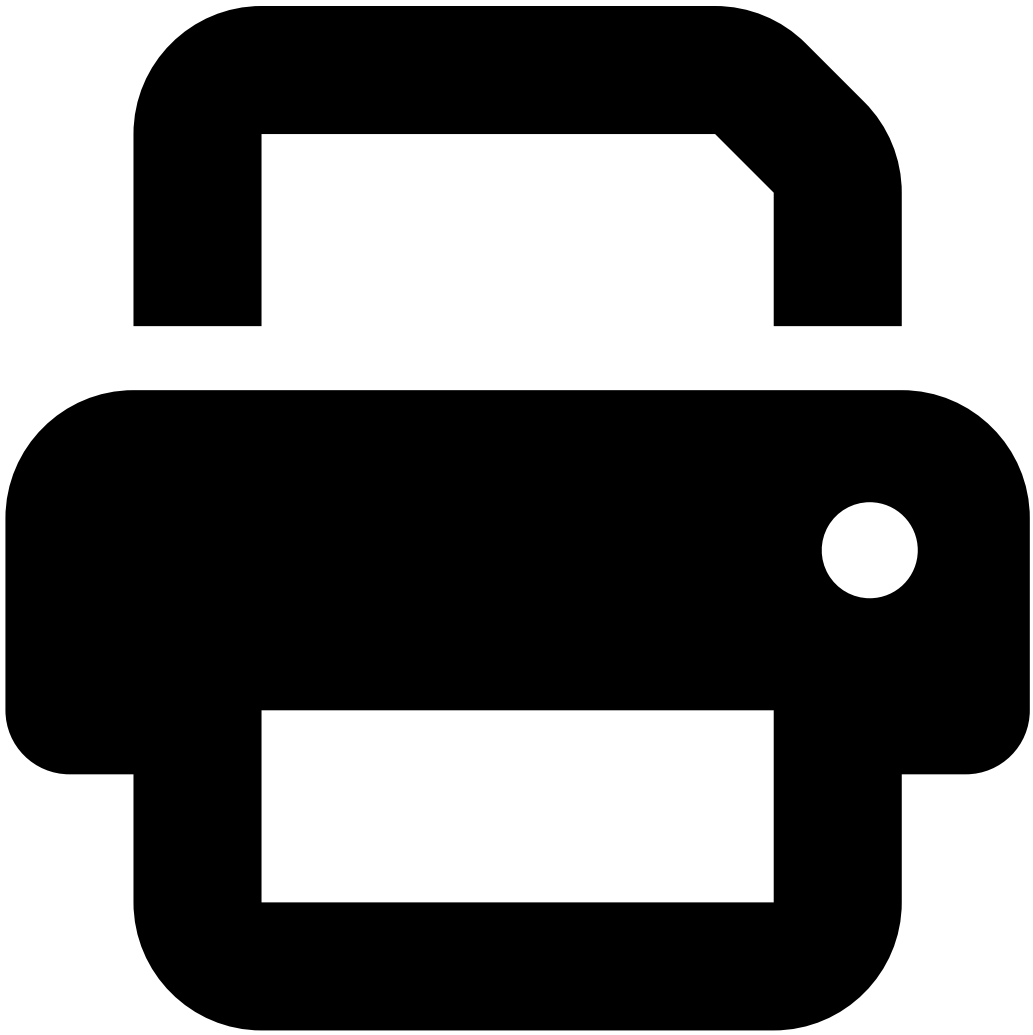
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SMS



When you’re craving something cozy yet light, this baked spaghetti squash hits the spot. The squash is roasted until tender, then topped with a rich tomato sauce, shredded mozzarella, and grated parmesan before being baked again until bubbly and golden. It’s a beautiful Italian-inspired dish that’s simple enough for a weeknight but feels special enough for Sunday dinner.

## Things to know about this Baked Spaghetti Squash with Tomato Sauce and Cheese

- **Avoid watery squash:** After roasting, let the squash sit cut side up for a few minutes to release steam before adding sauce. This helps prevent extra moisture.
- **Shortcut tip:** You can microwave the squash for 10–12

minutes if you’re short on time — it won’t be as caramelized, but it still works beautifully.

- **Make-ahead friendly:** Roast the squash and prepare the sauce a day ahead. When ready to serve, assemble, top with cheese, and rebake until hot and bubbly.

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## Variations

- **Add protein:** Mix in cooked Italian sausage, ground turkey, or chicken for a heartier version.
- **Creamy twist:** Add a few spoonfuls of ricotta cheese before re baking for a creamy, lasagna-style flavor.
- **Pesto lovers:** Drizzle with homemade basil pesto before serving for an herby burst of freshness.
- **Spicy kick:** Add a pinch of red pepper flakes to the sauce for a little heat.
- Craving more Italian-inspired comfort food?
  Check out my **Gnocchi Lasagna Soup** or **Creamy Mushroom Chicken** next!

# Baked Spaghetti Squash with Tomato Sauce and Cheese



This Baked Spaghetti Squash with Tomato Sauce and Cheese is a simple, wholesome meal that's packed with Italian-inspired flavor. Tender roasted spaghetti squash is tossed with rich tomato sauce, topped with melty mozzarella and Parmesan cheese, then baked until bubbly and golden. It's an easy, comforting dinner that's naturally gluten-free and perfect for busy weeknights.

- 1 medium **spaghetti squash** (about 2 ½–3 pounds)
- 2 Tbsp. olive oil divided
- **Salt and freshly ground black pepper**, to taste
- 2 cups tomato **sauce**
- 2 cloves **garlic**, minced
- 1 tsp.  **dried oregano**
- ¼ cup **fresh basil**, chopped (plus extra for garnish)
- 1½ cups **shredded mozzarella cheese**
- ½ cup **grated parmesan cheese**

1. **Preheat the oven:**

   Preheat your oven to **400°F (200°C)**. Line a baking sheet with parchment paper.

2. **Prepare the squash:**

   Carefully cut the spaghetti squash in half crosswise and scoop out the seeds. Drizzle the inside with **1 tablespoon olive oil**, then season with **salt and pepper**. Place cut side down on the prepared baking sheet.

3. **Roast:**

   Bake for **35–40 minutes**, or until the flesh is tender and easily pulls into strands with a fork. Remove from the oven and let cool slightly.

4. **Make the sauce:**

   While the squash roasts, heat **1 tablespoon olive oil** in a medium size pan over medium heat. Add **garlic** and cook until fragrant, about **1 minute**. Stir in **tomato sauce**, **oregano**, and **basil**. Simmer for **10–15 minutes**, then season with salt and pepper to taste.

5. **Combine:**

   Once the squash is cool enough to handle, use a fork to shred the flesh into spaghetti-like strands. Leave the strands in the shell halves or transfer them to a baking dish. Spoon the **tomato sauce** evenly over the squash and toss gently to combine.

6. **Add cheese and rebake:**

   Top each half (or the baking dish) with **shredded mozzarella** and **grated parmesan**. Return to the oven and bake for **10–15 minutes**, until the cheese is melted and golden.

7. **Serve:**

   Garnish with fresh basil and an extra drizzle of olive oil. Serve hot, right from the shell for a rustic presentation or plated for a cozy Italian-inspired meal

Side Dish
Italian
baked spaghetti squash recipe

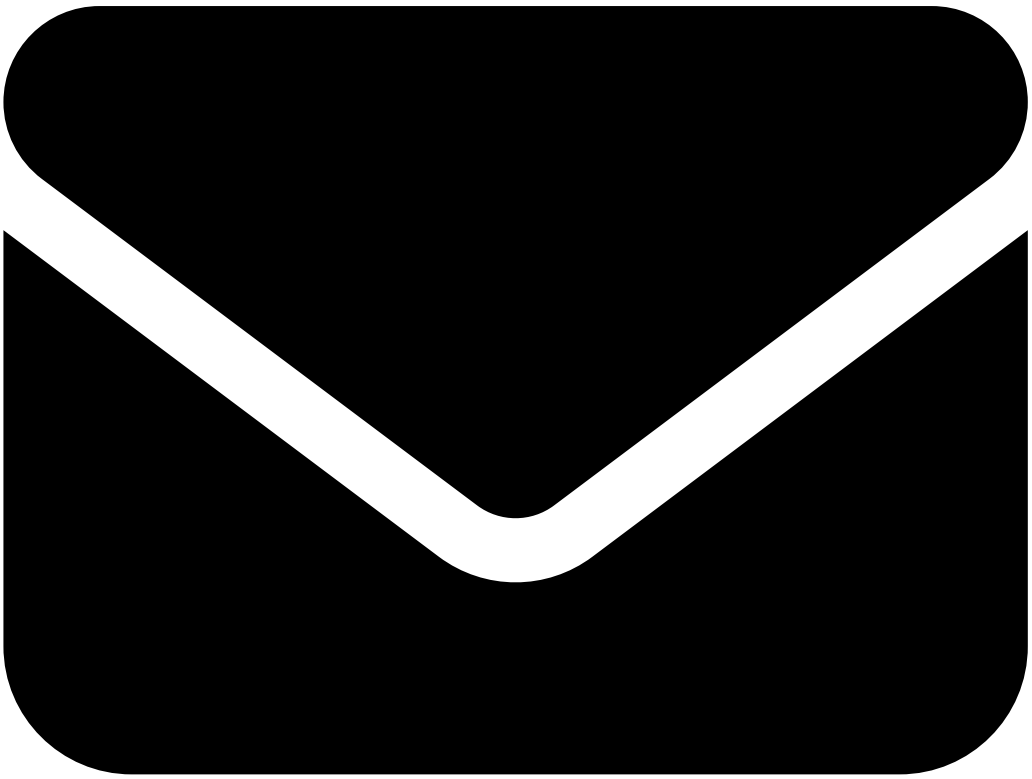
# Italian Cauliflower al Forno

# Italian Cauliflower al Forno

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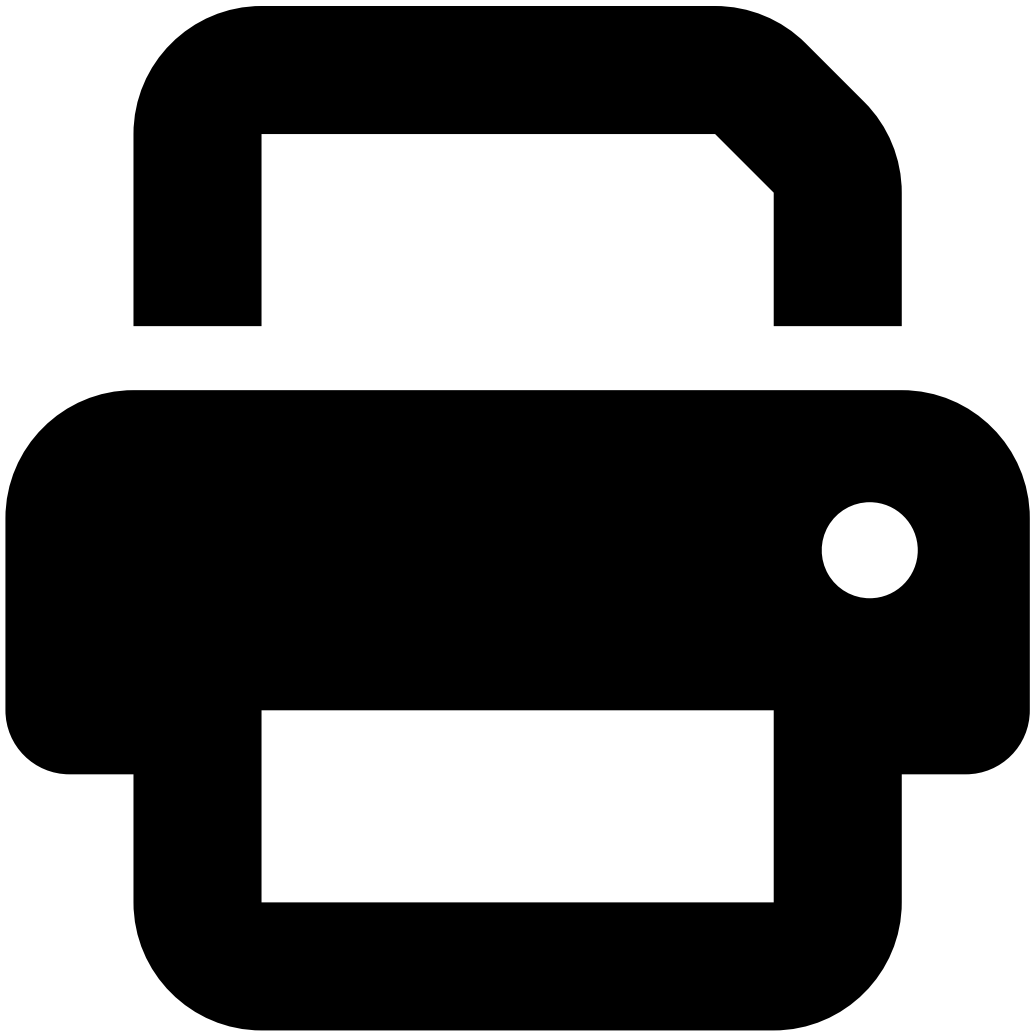









SMS



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



Italian Cauliflower al Forno is a simple, comforting side dish featuring tender roasted cauliflower topped with garlic, Italian herbs, Parmesan cheese, and crispy seasoned breadcrumbs. Roasted until golden and caramelized, this classic Italian-inspired recipe transforms everyday cauliflower into a flavorful dish that's perfect for weeknight dinners, holiday meals, or served alongside your favorite Italian entrées.

- 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
- ½ 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
- 1½ cups milk
- Pinch of nutmeg
- Salt and pepper, to taste

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.

Side Dish
Italian, Italian cauliflower al forno

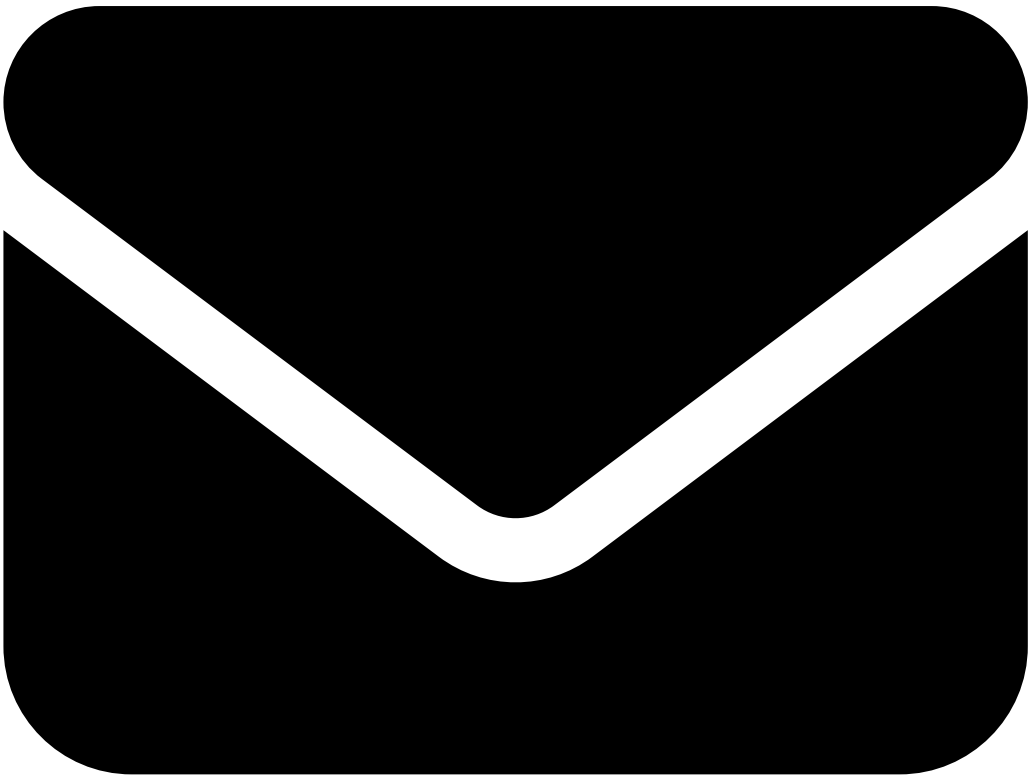
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# Italian Roasted Delicata Squash for Salads

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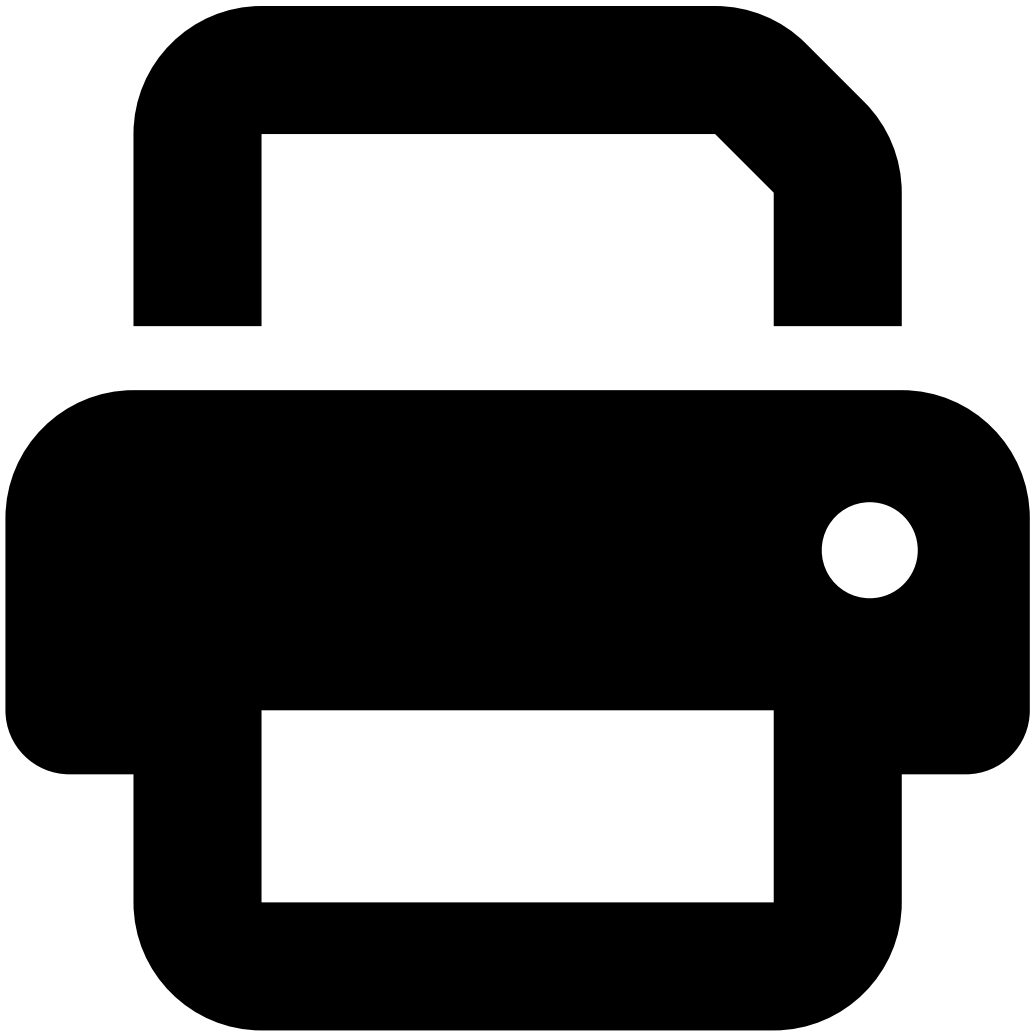
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SMS



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



## Roasting the Delicata Squash:

- 1 delicata squash, scrubbed and sliced into ½-inch half-moons (skin on)
- 2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
- ½ teaspoon sea salt
- ¼ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
- ¼ teaspoon garlic powder (optional)
- 1 teaspoon fresh thyme or sage, chopped (optional)

## Salad Ingredients:

- 4 cups arugula
- 2 tablespoons toasted pumpkin seeds (pepitas)
- ¼ cup shaved Parmesan

## Creamy Sicilian Dressing Ingredients:

- 3 tablespoons mayonnaise or Greek yogurt
- 1 cup extra virgin olive oil
- ⅓ cup red wine vinegar
- ¼ cup lemon juice
- 1 garlic clove, minced
- 2 teaspoon oregano
- Salt and pepper to taste

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.

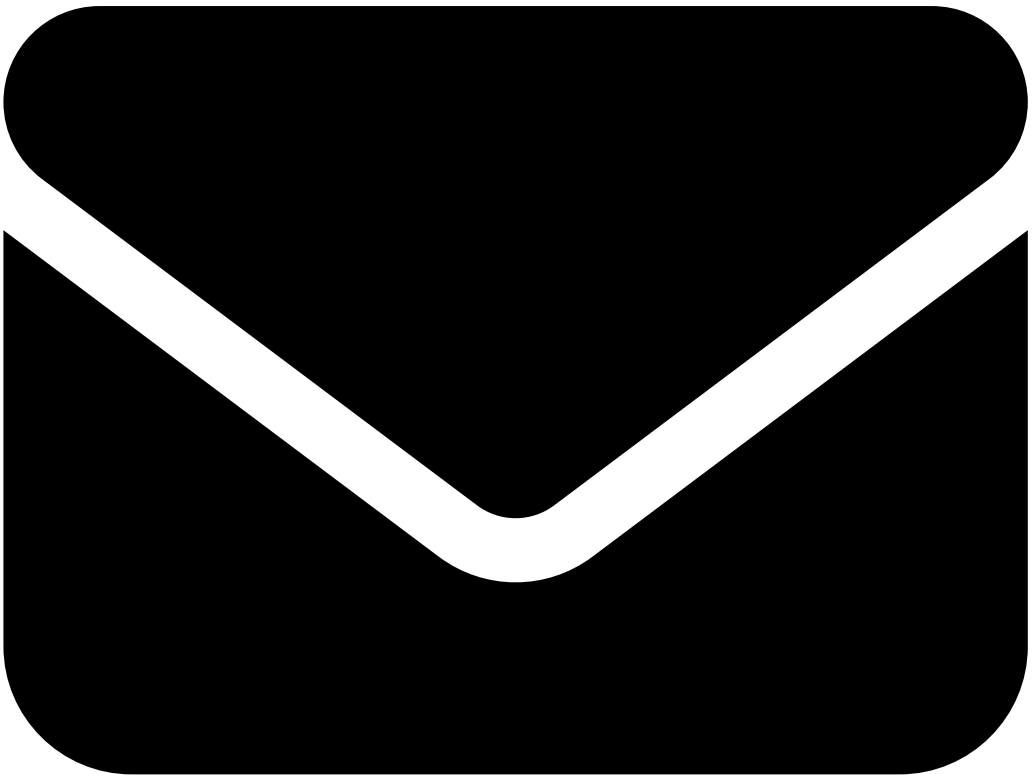
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# Roasted Butternut Squash Soup

# Roasted Butternut Squash Soup

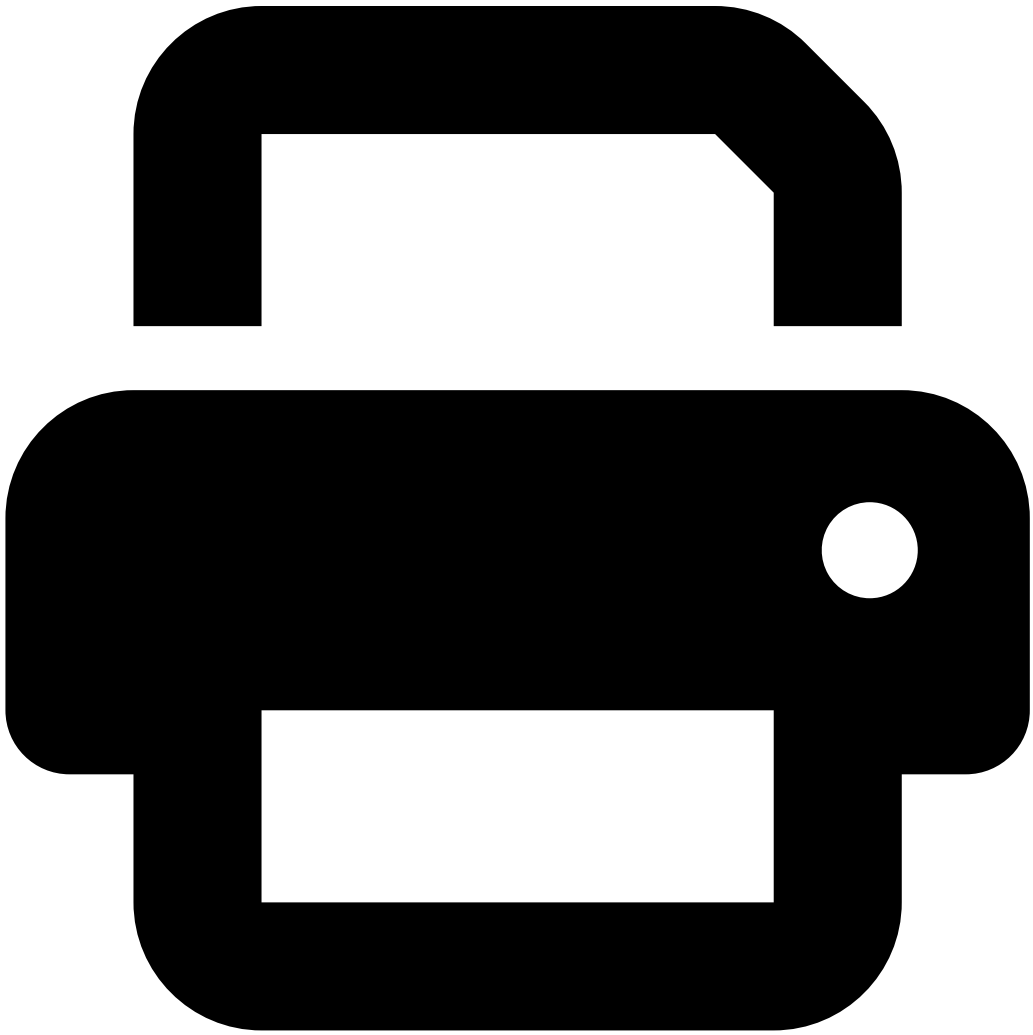
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SMS



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



This **Roasted Butternut Squash Soup** is a cozy, comforting recipe that highlights the natural sweetness of roasted squash. Roasting the butternut squash brings out a deep, caramelized flavor that pairs beautifully with onions, garlic, herbs, and warm spices. Blended until silky smooth and finished with a touch of cream, this soup is perfect for chilly fall days, holiday dinners, or an easy elegant first course.

- 1 large butternut squash, halved and seeds removed
- 1 medium onion, roughly chopped
- 4 cloves garlic, unpeeled
- 1-2 medium sweet peppers (or bell pepper), chopped
- 2 medium carrots, peeled and chopped
- 2-3 Tbsp. olive oil
- Salt and black pepper, to taste
- 4 cups vegetable or chicken broth (as preferred)
- 1 Tsp. smoked paprika or pinch of chili flakes for depth ((optional))
- a drizzle of cream, toasted pumpkin seeds, or crispy sage ((optional toppings))

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.

Soup
Mediterranean
roasted butternut squash soup