

Mushroom & Fontina Puff Pastry Tart

Mushroom & Fontina Puff Pastry Tart

This mushroom and fontina puff pastry tart is proof that simple ingredients can create something truly special. Earthy mushrooms, melty grated fontina, and flaky puff pastry come together in an elegant Italian-inspired appetizer that looks impressive but couldn't be easier to prepare. It's the kind of dish that belongs on a holiday table, yet is just as perfect for casual entertaining or a cozy night in.

Things to know about this Mushroom & Fontina Mushroom Puff Pastry Tart

- **Egg wash tip:** Brushing the border with beaten egg gives a glossy, golden finish without weighing down the tart.
- **Cheese balance:** Fontina melts beautifully, but feel free to mix with a small amount of Parmesan for extra flavor and a sharper bite.
- **Mushroom moisture:** Cook mushrooms thoroughly to avoid soggy pastry; draining excess liquid helps keep the tart crisp.
- **Serving temperature:** This tart is delicious warm or at room temperature, making it perfect for parties.
- **Prep ahead:** You can assemble the tart and refrigerate for up to an hour before baking. Brush with egg wash

right before it goes in the oven.

.Variations

1. **Cheese swap:** Use Gruyère, Fontina + Mozzarella, or a mix of Fontina and Parmesan for a richer flavor.
2. **Add herbs:** Fresh thyme, rosemary, or oregano folded into the mushrooms adds an aromatic punch.
3. **Vegetable twist:** Mix in caramelized onions, roasted red peppers, or spinach for extra layers of flavor.
4. **Mini tart version:** Cut puff pastry into squares or rounds for bite-sized appetizers.
5. **Nutty crunch:** Sprinkle toasted pine nuts or walnuts over the mushrooms before baking for added texture.
6. Love simple, elegant Italian appetizers? Explore more **crowd-pleasing recipes** on the blog, including **Italian Sausage Rolls**, Italian sausage **Stuffed Mushrooms**, and **Prosciutto wrapped chicken fingers**. Each recipe is easy to make, full of flavor, and perfect for entertaining any time of year.





Mushroom & Fontina Puff Pastry Tart (Recipe Card)

Servings

6–8 appetizer portions

Prep Time

15 minutes

Cook Time

20 minutes

Total Time

35 minutes

Ingredients

- 1 sheet puff pastry, thawed
- 8 oz mushrooms, cleaned and thinly sliced
- 1 cup grated fontina cheese
- 2 tbsp olive oil
- 1 clove garlic, minced
- salt and pepper to taste
- 1 tbsp fresh parsley, finely chopped
- 1 egg, beaten (for egg wash)

Instructions

1. Cook the mushrooms

Heat olive oil in a skillet over medium heat. Add mushrooms and cook until softened and lightly golden, about 6–8 minutes. Stir in garlic, salt, and pepper; cook 30 seconds more. Remove from heat.

2. Prepare the pastry

Preheat oven to **400°F (200°C)**. Place puff pastry on a parchment-lined baking sheet. Lightly score a 1-inch border around the edges, being careful not to cut all the way through.

3. Egg wash

Brush the scored border of the puff pastry with the beaten egg. This helps create a beautifully golden, glossy edge. **Optional sprinkle with sesame or everything**

bagel seeds. Use a fork to gently prick the center of the pastry—this helps prevent it from puffing up too much while baking.

4. **Assemble the tart**

Sprinkle grated fontina evenly inside the border. Spoon the mushroom mixture over the cheese.

5. **Bake**

Bake for **18–22 minutes**, until the pastry is puffed and deep golden and the cheese is melted and bubbly.

6. **Finish & serve**

Sprinkle with fresh parsley. Let cool slightly, then slice and serve warm or at room temperature

Prosciutto-Wrapped Chicken Fingers with Hot Honey

Prosciutto-Wrapped Chicken Fingers with Hot Honey

When it comes to Italian-style appetizers, simple ingredients done right always steal the show. These **prosciutto-wrapped chicken fingers with hot honey** are the perfect balance of savory, salty, and just a little sweet. Lightly seasoned chicken is wrapped in prosciutto, pan-seared until crisp, then finished in the oven and drizzled with hot honey for an irresistible bite. Elegant enough for New Year's Eve, yet easy enough to make any time you're entertaining.

Things to know about this Prosciutto-Wrapped Chicken Fingers with Hot Honey recipe

- **Prosciutto does the work:** Its saltiness adds flavor and helps keep the chicken juicy.
- **Pan-sear first:** This step crisps the prosciutto and adds depth before finishing in the oven.
- **Drain excess fat:** If needed, blot lightly before baking so the prosciutto stays crisp.
- **Hot honey at the end:** Drizzle just before serving to keep the coating glossy and fresh.
- **Perfect for parties:** Skewers or toothpicks make these easy, mess-free appetizers.
- If you love easy Italian-inspired appetizers, be sure to explore more crowd-pleasing recipes on the blog. From savory **Italian sausage rolls** to **vegetarian stuffed mushrooms** and elegant **puff pastry twists**, you'll find simple, flavorful ideas perfect for entertaining, holidays, or casual gatherings any time of year.





Prosciutto-Wrapped Chicken Fingers with Hot Honey

Prep Time

10 minutes

Cook Time

15–18 minutes

Ingredients

- 1 lb boneless, skinless chicken breasts, cut into finger-size strips

- 3 Tbsp olive oil
- 2 tsp garlic powder
- 2 tsp Italian seasoning
- salt and pepper to taste
- 8–10 thin slices prosciutto, cut in half lengthwise if needed
- 1–2 tbsp olive oil or cooking spray
- 2–3 tbsp hot honey, for drizzling

▪ Instructions

▪ Season the chicken

Place the chicken strips in a bowl. Season with salt, black pepper, garlic powder, and Italian seasoning.

▪ Wrap with prosciutto

Wrap each chicken strip tightly with prosciutto. Thread onto skewers if desired.

▪ Pan-fry

Heat olive oil or in a large oven proof skillet over medium heat. Cook the chicken, turning, until the prosciutto is lightly crisped, about **5–6 minutes**.

▪ Finish in the oven

Transfer to a pre heated **375°F** until cooked through, **8–10 minutes**.

▪ Drizzle & serve

Drizzle with hot honey just before serving and serve warm.

Italian Sausage Rolls with Puff Pastry (Easy Savory Appetizer)

Italian Sausage Rolls with Puff Pastry (Easy Savory Appetizer)

Golden, flaky, and packed with classic Italian flavor, **Italian Sausage Rolls** are the kind of appetizer that disappears the moment they hit the table. Think buttery puff pastry wrapped around seasoned Italian sausage, kissed with garlic, herbs, and cheese—simple to make, impressive to serve, and endlessly versatile.

Whether you're hosting a holiday gathering, planning a New Year's Eve spread, or just want an easy savory bite with big flavor, these sausage rolls deliver every time.

Things to know about these Italian Sausage Rolls with Puff Pastry (Easy Savory Appetizer)

- **Easy but elegant** – store-bought puff pastry does the heavy lifting
- **Classic Italian flavors** – fennel, garlic, herbs, and Parmigiano Reggiano

- **Make-ahead friendly** – assemble and refrigerate or freeze
- **Perfect for parties** – slice small for appetizers or larger for lunch

• **Serving Ideas**

- Serve warm with **marinara sauce** for dipping
- Pair with **spicy Calabrian chili oil** for heat lovers
- Add to an Italian antipasto platter with olives, cheeses, and roasted peppers

Make-Ahead & Freezing Tips

- **Make ahead:** Assemble rolls, cover, and refrigerate up to 24 hours before baking.
 - **Freeze unbaked:** Slice, freeze solid, then transfer to freezer bags. Bake straight from frozen, adding 5–7 minutes to baking time.
-

Italian Variations

- **Sausage & Peppers:** Add finely chopped sautéed red peppers to the filling
- **Cheesy Mozzarella:** Add small cubes of low-moisture mozzarella
- **Spinach & Sausage:** Fold in sautéed, well-drained spinach

• **A Little Italian Inspiration**

Sausage wrapped in dough has long been part of Italian home cooking—from rustic breads stuffed with salsiccia to bakery-style savory pastries. These sausage rolls are a modern, party-friendly nod to those traditions, using puff pastry for ease without sacrificing flavor.

- If you loved these **Italian Sausage Rolls**, be sure to try my other favorite Italian appetizers like **Easy Savory Puff Pastry Twists**, **Italian Stuffed Mushrooms**, and **Shrimp Oreganata**—all simple, classic recipes that are perfect for entertaining. Don't forget to bookmark this recipe and follow along for more Italian comfort food made easy.





- **Italian Sausage Rolls with Puff Pastry (Easy Savory Appetizer)**
- **Servings:** 24 bite-size sausage rolls
- **Prep Time:** 20 minutes
- **Chill Time:** 20–30 minutes
- **Cook Time:** 22–25 minutes
- **Total Time:** About 1 hour

Ingredients

- 1 pound Italian sausage (sweet or hot), casings removed
- 2 sheets puff pastry, thawed
- 1/2 cup grated Parmigiano Reggiano
- 1 tablespoon Dijon or spicy brown mustard
- 1 clove garlic, finely minced
- 1 tablespoon chopped fresh parsley

- 1/2 teaspoon fennel seeds, lightly crushed (optional)
- Freshly ground black pepper, to taste
- 1 egg, beaten (for egg wash)
- Sesame seeds or flaky salt (optional, for topping)

Instructions

1. Prepare the Filling

In a bowl, combine the Italian sausage, Parmigiano Reggiano, mustard, garlic, parsley, fennel seeds, and black pepper. Mix gently until just combined—don't overwork the sausage.

2. Roll Out the Pastry

On a lightly floured surface, roll each sheet of puff pastry slightly to smooth seams and create an even rectangle. Cut each sheet lengthwise into two long strips.

3. Fill and Roll

Spoon a line of sausage filling down the center of each strip. Brush one long edge with egg wash, then roll the pastry over the filling, seam-side down.

4. Chill for Clean Cuts

Place the rolls on a parchment-lined baking sheet and refrigerate for 20–30 minutes. This helps the pastry firm up and makes slicing easier.

5. Slice and Bake

Cut each roll into 1½–2-inch pieces. Brush tops with egg wash and sprinkle with sesame seeds or flaky salt if desired. Bake at **400°F (200°C)** for 22–25 minutes, or until puffed and deeply golden.

Mama's Homemade Egg & Parmesan Croutons

Mama's Homemade Egg & Parmesan Croutons

There are some recipes that never had a real name in our house – they were simply “*what Mama made.*” These baked egg and Parmesan croutons are one of those childhood treasures. I grew up eating them tucked into soups, tossed into salads, or sneaking them warm right off the baking pan, but I never actually knew what they were called... and maybe they didn't have a name at all.

They were just Mama's croutons – simple, humble, and made with the handful of ingredients she always had on hand. Today I'm sharing them with you, not because they're fancy or complicated, but because they've been part of my family for as long as I can remember. Sometimes the most unforgettable recipes are the ones that never needed a title.

Things to know about Mama's Homemade Egg & Parmesan Croutons

- **Make Ahead:** You can bake the croutons a day or two in advance and store them in an airtight container. They'll stay crisp and golden until you're ready to enjoy them.
- **Size Matters:** Cut them into small, bite-sized squares for soups or slightly larger pieces for salads and

snacking.

- **Flavor Boost:** For a little extra depth, try sprinkling a pinch of garlic powder or smoked paprika into the batter before baking.

These croutons are the perfect companion to any warm holiday soup. If you're looking for inspiration, check out my [Holiday Soup Recipes](#) – they pair beautifully with Mama's croutons. And don't forget to explore my full collection of [10 Italian Christmas cookies](#) you must make for more family favorites and festive treats!





Mama's Homemade Egg & Parmesan Croutons (Baked)

Servings: About 4 cups of croutons

Prep Time: 10 minutes

Bake Time: 20–25 minutes

Total Time: 30–35 minutes

Ingredients

- 6 large eggs
- 1 cup freshly grated Parmesan cheese
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup all-purpose flour
- $\frac{1}{3}$ cup finely chopped Italian parsley
- 1 teaspoon baking powder
- Salt, to taste
- Freshly ground black pepper, to taste
- Olive oil or olive oil spray, for greasing

▪ Instructions

▪ Preheat the oven

Preheat your oven to **375°F (190°C)**. Line a 9 x13 baking sheet with parchment paper and lightly grease or spray it with olive oil.

▪ Make the batter

In a large bowl, whisk the eggs until smooth. Add the Parmesan cheese, flour, parsley, baking powder, salt, and black pepper. Mix until a thick, uniform batter forms.

▪ Spread the mixture

Pour the batter onto the prepared 9 x13 baking sheet and spread it into an even layer, about $\frac{1}{2}$ **inch thick**. Use a spatula to smooth the top.

- **Bake**

Bake for **20–25 minutes**, or until the top is firm, lightly golden, and set in the center.

- **Cut into croutons**

Remove from the oven and let cool for 5 minutes. Transfer to a cutting board and cut into small cubes or “little bites,” depending on how your mama made them.

- **Optional crisping**

For extra crisp croutons, return the cut pieces to the baking sheet and bake for **5–7 more minutes**.

- **Serve**

Enjoy in soups, salads, or straight from the tray – classic, simple, and comforting.

The Best Italian-Style Fried Calamari

The best Italian style fried calamari

Growing up, fried calamari was a true family affair. My mama always bought whole squid and cleaned every single one by hand – separating the tentacles, pulling out the quill, and rinsing everything until it was spotless. I can still see her at the sink, humming while she worked, making sure each ring would fry up perfectly tender.

These days, we're lucky. Most grocery stores and fish markets sell **calamari already cleaned** – tubes and tentacles prepped and ready to slice. And while nothing beats the love and tradition of doing it the old-school way, I'll be the first to admit that buying it cleaned makes this recipe come together in minutes instead of an hour.

Fried calamari has also always been a cherished part of our **Feast of the Seven Fishes** celebration – that beloved Italian Christmas Eve tradition where the table overflows with seafood. Whether you make this dish once a year for the feast or all year long for your family, this recipe brings that same crisp, golden bite we all grew up loving.

Whether you're using ready-to-cook calamari or honoring the way our mamas did it, this classic Italian fried calamari delivers that same crisp, golden bite we all grew up loving.

Things to know about this Best Italian-Style Fried Calamari

- **Dry calamari = crisp calamari.**

Pat the rings and tentacles *really* well with paper towels. Any moisture will make the coating soggy and cause the oil to splatter.

- **The flour mix matters.**

A 50/50 blend of all-purpose flour and semolina gives that classic Italian trattoria crunch. Semolina helps the coating stay light instead of heavy or bready.

- **Keep the oil hot.**

The magic temperature is **350–365°F**. If the oil drops too low, the calamari absorbs oil and turns greasy. Fry in small batches to keep the heat consistent.

- **Fast frying keeps it tender.**

Calamari only needs **1½–2 minutes** in the oil. Any longer

and it becomes chewy. Pull it out the moment it turns light golden.

- **Season immediately.**

Sprinkle with a little salt right after frying – it sticks better while the calamari is still hot.

- **Serve right away.**

Fried calamari is best eaten fresh from the fryer. It doesn't stay crisp long, so have your lemon wedges and marinara ready before you start cooking.

- If you love this crispy Italian fried calamari, don't miss my other seafood favorites!

Try my **Shrimp Oreganata**, , and **Shrimp Stuffed Calamari Steaks** for more Italian coastal flavors. And if you make this recipe, tag me on Instagram—I love seeing your kitchen creations!





The best Italian style Fried Calamari

Ingredients (Serves 4)

- 1½ pounds calamari, cleaned, rings + tentacles
- 1 cup all-purpose flour
- 1 cup semolina flour
- 1 teaspoon kosher salt, plus more for finishing
- 1 teaspoon black pepper
- ½ teaspoon paprika (optional, for color)
- 1 teaspoon garlic powder
- Oil for frying (peanut or light olive oil)
- Lemon wedges, for serving
- Marinara, for dipping

Instructions

1. Prep the calamari

Slice tubes into ½-inch rings. Pat rings and tentacles completely dry with paper towels.
(Drying is key for crispness!)

2. Make the coating

In a shallow bowl, whisk together: 1 cup all-purpose flour, 1 cup semolina flour, Salt, pepper, paprika, and garlic powder

3. Heat the oil

Pour oil into a heavy pot or deep skillet about 2 inches

deep.

Heat to **350–365°F**.

4. Coat the calamari

Toss the rings and tentacles in the flour–semolina mixture until lightly coated.

Shake off excess.

5. Fry in batches

Add calamari in small batches so the oil temperature stays stable.

Fry **1½–2 minutes**—just until pale golden.

(Over-frying = chewy.)

6. Drain & season

Transfer to a paper towel–lined tray and sprinkle immediately with a pinch of salt.

Serve

Enjoy hot with lemon wedges and marinara.

Braised Fennel Oreganata with Pancetta

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.

In this dish, the fennel softens into buttery tenderness as it braises, soaking up the richness of pancetta and white wine. Then it gets finished with a crisp, garlicky oreganata topping that adds the perfect contrast of texture. It's hearty enough for chilly winter dinners, yet light enough to pair with almost anything – roasted chicken, fish, or even a simple bowl of polenta.

Seasonal cooking always inspires me to slow down and appreciate ingredients at their best, and this fennel oreganata is exactly that kind of recipe: unfussy, comforting, and deeply flavorful.

Things to know about this Braised Fennel Oreganata with Pancetta

- **Make-Ahead Friendly:** You can braise the fennel up to a day in advance. Just keep the topping separate and broil right before serving for maximum crispiness.
- **Storage:** Store leftovers in an airtight container in the fridge for up to 3 days. Reheat gently on the stovetop or in the oven.
- **Variations:**

- Add a few slices of orange zest to the broth for a bright, citrusy twist.
 - Swap the pancetta for prosciutto or smoked bacon if you prefer.
 - Make it vegetarian by omitting pancetta and using vegetable broth.
- **Serving Tip:** Pair with roasted meats, fish, or a simple grain like creamy polenta to make it a complete meal
- If you loved this **Braised Fennel Oreganata with Pancetta**, you'll also enjoy:
- Italian Escarole & Beans with Sausage – a hearty, cozy winter side
 - Spinach Ricotta gnudi– perfect as an appetizer or snack
 - Creamy Sausage Tortellini Soup – comforting and easy for chilly weekends

Try one (or all!) of these recipes to keep your seasonal Italian cooking going strong





Braised Fennel Oreganata with Pancetta

Servings: 4

Prep Time: 10 minutes

Cook Time: 30 minutes

Total Time: 40 minutes

Ingredients

• For the Fennel

- 3 large fennel bulbs, trimmed and cut into wedges
- 4 ounces pancetta, diced
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 1 tablespoon butter
- 3 garlic cloves, sliced
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup dry white wine
- 1 cup vegetable or chicken broth
- Salt and black pepper, to taste

• For the Oreganata Topping

- 1 cup Italian-style breadcrumbs (or panko)
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup grated Parmesan cheese

- 2 teaspoon dried oregano
- 1 Tbsp. chopped fresh parsley
- 1 Tbsp. lemon zest
- 2 Tbsp. olive oil
- Pinch of salt
- Pinch of black pepper

• **To Finish**

- Fresh lemon juice
- Reserved fennel fronds

Instructions

1. **Prep the fennel**

Trim the stalks, reserve some fronds for garnish, remove any tough outer layers, and cut each fennel bulb into wedges.

2. **Cook the pancetta**

Heat a large skillet over medium heat. Add the diced pancetta and cook for 3–4 minutes, until it renders its fat and begins to crisp. Remove half the pancetta pieces with a spoon and set aside for garnishing later, leaving the rest and the fat in the pan.

3. **Sear the fennel**

Add the olive oil and butter to the pancetta fat. Once melted, add the fennel wedges in a single layer. Sear for 3–4 minutes per side until lightly golden. Season with salt and pepper.

4. **Add garlic + deglaze**

Stir in the sliced garlic and cook for 30 seconds. Pour in the white wine and let it reduce by half.

5. **Braise the fennel**

Add the broth, cover the skillet, reduce heat to medium-low, and simmer for 10–12 minutes, or until the fennel is tender.

6. **Make the oreganata topping**

In a bowl, mix the breadcrumbs, Parmesan, oregano, parsley, lemon zest, olive oil, salt, and pepper. The mixture should be moistened but crumbly.

7. **Broil**

Preheat the broiler. Transfer the fennel and its cooking juices to a baking dish (or leave in an oven-safe pan). Sprinkle the oreganata topping evenly over the fennel. Broil for 2–3 minutes, or until golden and crisp.

8. **Serve**

Top with the reserved crispy pancetta, a squeeze of fresh lemon juice, and fennel fronds.

Serving Suggestions

- Perfect alongside roasted chicken, baked cod, turkey cutlets, or pork chops
 - Add to a winter antipasto spread
 - Serve over creamy polenta
-

Persimmon Carpaccio Salad (Italian Style)

Persimmon Carpaccio Salad (Italian Style)

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.

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.

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)

Servings: 4

Prep Time: 10 minutes

Total Time: 10 minutes

Ingredients

- **3 ripe Fuyu persimmons**, peeled and thinly shaved into rounds
- **1 cup arugula**
- **$\frac{1}{2}$ small fennel bulb**, shaved very thin
- **2 tablespoons toasted walnuts**, roughly chopped
- **$\frac{1}{4}$ cup shaved Parmigiano-Reggiano**
- **1–2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil**
- **1 tablespoon 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

Instructions

- 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.
-

Braised Cabbage Wedges with Pancetta

Braised Cabbage Wedges with Pancetta

I think cabbage is underrated – and if you saw my last recipe, you know I'm on a mission to prove how delicious it can be. This dish takes humble cabbage to a whole new level. These braised cabbage wedges are seared until golden, then cooked gently until tender, topped with crispy pancetta, caramelized onions, and finished with a silky white wine cream sauce.

It's rustic, cozy, and full of rich Italian flavors. The cabbage becomes buttery-soft inside but still holds its shape, making it a beautiful holiday or winter side dish. Serve it with roasted meats, chicken, or even your favorite pasta. This is the kind of simple comfort food that surprises everyone.

Things to know about this Braised Cabbage Wedges with Pancetta

This dish reheats beautifully, and the flavors deepen even more the next day. You can make the pancetta-onion mixture ahead of time and simply sear and braise the cabbage when you're ready. If you prefer a thicker sauce, simmer it uncovered for a few extra minutes before adding the cabbage back in.

Variations

- **Smoky Version:** Use smoked pancetta or add a pinch of smoked paprika.
- **Cheese Swap:** Try Pecorino Romano for a sharper bite.
- **Add Mushrooms:** Sauté sliced mushrooms with the onions for extra richness.
- **Lighter Option:** Swap heavy cream for half-and-half (sauce will be thinner).

This dish reheats beautifully, and the flavors deepen even more the next day. You can make the pancetta-onion mixture ahead of time and simply sear and braise the cabbage when you're ready. If you prefer a thicker sauce, simmer it uncovered for a few extra minutes before adding the cabbage back in.

If you love cozy Italian comfort food, you might also enjoy:

- **Cabbage & Apple Holiday Slaw**
- **Italian Escarole & Beans with Sausage**

▪ Creamy Italian Sausage Risotto





Braised Cabbage Wedges with Pancetta

- **Servings:** 6
- **Prep Time:** 10 minutes
- **Cook Time:** 35 minutes
- **Total Time:** 45 minutes
- **Ingredients**

▪ **For the Cabbage**

- 1 medium green cabbage, cut into 6 wedges
- Olive oil
- Salt and black pepper

Pancetta & Onion Mixture

- 4 ounces diced pancetta
- 1 medium yellow onion, thinly sliced

Creamy White Wine Sauce

- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup white wine
- 1 cup heavy cream
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup grated Parmesan
- 1 teaspoon Dijon mustard
- Fresh thyme or parsley (optional)

Instructions

1. **Prep the cabbage:** Cut the cabbage into 6 wedges, keeping the core intact so each wedge stays together. Season with salt and pepper.
2. **Sear the wedges:** Heat olive oil in a large skillet over medium-high heat. Add the cabbage wedges, cut side down, and sear until golden brown, about 3–4 minutes per side. Remove from the skillet and set aside.
3. **Cook pancetta and onions:** In the same skillet, add the pancetta. Cook until crisp, then add the sliced onions. Sauté until the onions are soft and caramelized, about 8–10 minutes.
4. **Deglaze with wine:** Pour in the $\frac{1}{2}$ cup white wine and scrape up any browned bits from the bottom of the skillet. Let the wine simmer for 1–2 minutes to reduce slightly.
5. **Make the cream sauce:** Add the heavy cream, Parmesan, and Dijon. Stir until the sauce is smooth and gently bubbling.
6. **Return the cabbage:** Nestle the seared cabbage wedges back into the pan. Spoon some sauce over the top.
7. **Braise:** Reduce the heat to low, cover, and cook for 15–18 minutes, or until the cabbage is tender but still holds its shape.
8. **Serve:** Spoon extra sauce over the cabbage and top with fresh herbs if desired.

Cabbage & Apple Holiday Slaw

Cabbage & Apple Holiday Slaw

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

- **Servings:** 6
- **Prep Time:** 15 minutes
- **Chill Time:** 20 minutes (optional but recommended)

Ingredients

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

1/2 cup shaved Parmesan (or Asiago)

Creamy Apple-Cider Vinaigrette:

1 cup plain Greek yogurt or mayonnaise

1/3 cup olive oil

1/3 cup apple cider vinegar

1 Tbsp. honey

1 Tbsp. Dijon mustard

1 small garlic clove, grated

Salt and black pepper to taste

Instructions

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.
-

The Ultimate Thanksgiving Dinner Guide

The Ultimate Thanksgiving Dinner Guide

We don't celebrate Thanksgiving in Italy – at least, not in the traditional American sense. But we *do* celebrate the same spirit behind it: gathering with family, sharing food made from the heart, and being grateful for the simple joys of life. In Italy, that feeling comes alive during big Sunday lunches or holiday feasts – long meals that stretch into the afternoon, filled with laughter, stories, and too many delicious dishes to count.

When I moved to America, I instantly fell in love with Thanksgiving. It reminded me so much of those Italian family gatherings – the warmth, the noise, the joy of being together around a table overflowing with food. Over the years, I've blended a little bit of both worlds into my celebration:

classic Thanksgiving dishes with touches of Italian flavor and comfort.

Whether you're hosting for the first time or a seasoned cook looking to freshen up your holiday menu, this guide brings together my favorite recipes from the blog – from a perfectly roasted **holiday turkey** and cozy **Italian-style soup**, to flavorful **side dishes** that make the meal unforgettable. My goal is to help you create a Thanksgiving dinner that feels joyful, comforting, and wonderfully stress-free – the kind that leaves you with time to savor every bite and every moment.

Thanksgiving Planning 101

A stress-free Thanksgiving starts with a little planning. The secret? Do as much as you can ahead of time. I like to make my shopping list a week before and start prepping small things early – chopping herbs, mixing pie dough, or even setting the table the night before.

Here's a simple plan to follow:

- **1 Week Before:** Finalize your menu and grocery list.
- **3 Days Before:** If using a frozen turkey, set in the fridge to thaw. Prep vegetables, bake desserts, and make cranberry sauce.
- **1 Day Before:** Brine or season the turkey, assemble casseroles, and set the table.
- **Thanksgiving Day:** Roast the turkey, warm the sides, and savor every moment.
 - *Tip:* Use large sheet pans or trays to organize ingredients for each dish – it keeps your prep area tidy and makes cooking so much smoother.

. Defrosting Turkey

How to Defrost a Turkey

If you're using a frozen turkey, be sure to give yourself plenty of time to thaw it safely in the refrigerator. The rule of thumb is **24 hours of thawing for every 4–5 pounds of turkey**. Place the wrapped turkey on a rimmed baking sheet to catch any drips, and let it slowly defrost in the coldest part of your fridge. A large bird can take several days, so plan ahead – starting the thaw early is one of the biggest stress-savers of Thanksgiving week.

The Star of the Show – The Turkey



Every Thanksgiving table begins with the turkey, and my **Best Holiday Turkey** recipe is one I look forward to making each year. Roasted with garlic, herbs, and plenty of butter, it's juicy, tender, and full of flavor.

Even though turkey isn't something we often cooked in Italy, I've come to appreciate how it brings everyone together in the same way a big Italian roast might. The aroma fills the kitchen, the golden skin crackles as it roasts, and everyone hovers around waiting for that first slice.

• **Turkey Roasting Time and Temperature Guide**

Oven Temperature:

- Roast at **325°F (165°C)** – the perfect balance for even cooking and a juicy bird.

Cook Time per Pound (Unstuffed Turkey):

- **15–17 minutes per pound** at 325°F

Cook Time per Pound (Stuffed Turkey):

- **16–18 minutes per pound** at 325°F

Example:

- 12-lb unstuffed turkey → about **3 to 3.5 hours**
- 16-lb unstuffed turkey → about **4 to 4.5 hours**

Pro Tips:

- Let the turkey rest for at least 30 minutes before carving.
- Always use a meat thermometer (165°F for the breast, 175°F for the thigh).
- Save the carcass – it makes the most comforting broth for soup the next day.

Holiday Soup to Start the Meal . . .

- . . . Before the main feast begins, I love starting with something warm and cozy. My **Italian Holiday Chicken Soup** is light but flavorful , . . .

It reminds me of the simple soups my mother used to make in Italy before a big meal – meant to prepare your appetite and warm your heart. The best part? It can be made a day in advance and reheated just before serving, so it's one less thing to worry about on Thanksgiving Day. . .

- . . . *Get the recipe:* . . . [Italian Holiday Chicken Soup](#) → . . .

Favorite Thanksgiving Side Dishes

No Thanksgiving table is complete without an array of sides – and in my kitchen, they often take center stage. I like mixing **traditional favorites** with **Italian-**

inspired twists that bring a little Mediterranean flair to the holiday table.

Try some of these delicious sides from the blog:

- **Savory Sausage and Mushroom Stuffing** – hearty, rich, and full of flavor.
- **chicken apple stuffing** – sweet, savory and full of



fall flavors.

- **Easy Savory Mushroom Gravy** – the perfect topping for turkey or mashed potatoes.



- **Balsamic glazed Brussel sprouts** quick, easy, and irresistible stovetop side dish that comes together in just minutes.



- Easy homemade cranberry sauce You won't believe how quick this Easy Cranberry Sauce comes together. It takes just minutes to make, and taste better than store bought.



- Parmesan scallop mashed potatoes There is something about mashed potatoes that just says Thanksgiving. And when you take that classic and add parmesan cheese it's Italian!!

• **Sweet Endings – Desserts**

After the feast, dessert is where the celebration continues. Whether you're a pumpkin pie traditionalist or love something a little different, these desserts bring warmth and a touch of sweetness to end the meal.

Favorite desserts from my kitchen:

- Crostata Italian jam tart– a beautiful twist on the classic pie with a rich, moist crumb

delicious and ideal for sharing.



- **Italian crescent Amaretti Cookies** – crisp on the outside, chewy in the center – a holiday favorite. Serve with espresso or a small glass of dessert wine for the perfect Italian-style finish.



- Caffè Affogato with chocolate a delicious dessert coffee drink.



Hosting Tips & Timeline

A smooth Thanksgiving is all about timing and ambiance. I like to set my table the night before – candles, linens, serving pieces all ready – so I can focus on cooking and enjoying the day.

Hosting checklist:

- Create a serving plan (decide which dish goes in which pan or bowl). serving bowls
- Warm your plates before serving set in the oven after removing the turkey and turning the oven off. – it keeps the food hotter longer.
- Set out appetizers and drinks early so guests can mingle while you finish cooking.
- Keep a small pot of simmering citrus and herbs on the stove – it fills the house with the most wonderful scent.

Leftovers Reinvented

If you ask me, the day after Thanksgiving might be even better than the holiday itself. Leftovers turn into comforting meals that carry the celebration into the weekend.

Try these ideas:

- **Leftover Turkey Soup** – simmer the turkey carcass for a rich, golden



broth.

- **Turkey Croquettes or Patties** – the linked recipe is using chicken use mashed potatoes and bits of leftover turkey instead. . .



- **Left over turkey cranberry and brie**

panini – add leftover cranberry sauce and brie to your favorite artisan bread and grill



□ *Tip:* Store leftovers in clear containers so you can easily see what you have. It helps reduce waste and makes meal planning simple.

- Thanksgiving might not be an Italian tradition, but its heart – gathering together in gratitude – feels beautifully familiar. It reminds me of home, of family tables overflowing with love, laughter, and food made with care.

Whether your meal is big or small, traditional or a little Italian-inspired, I hope this guide helps you create a holiday that's full of warmth, flavor, and joyful memories.

