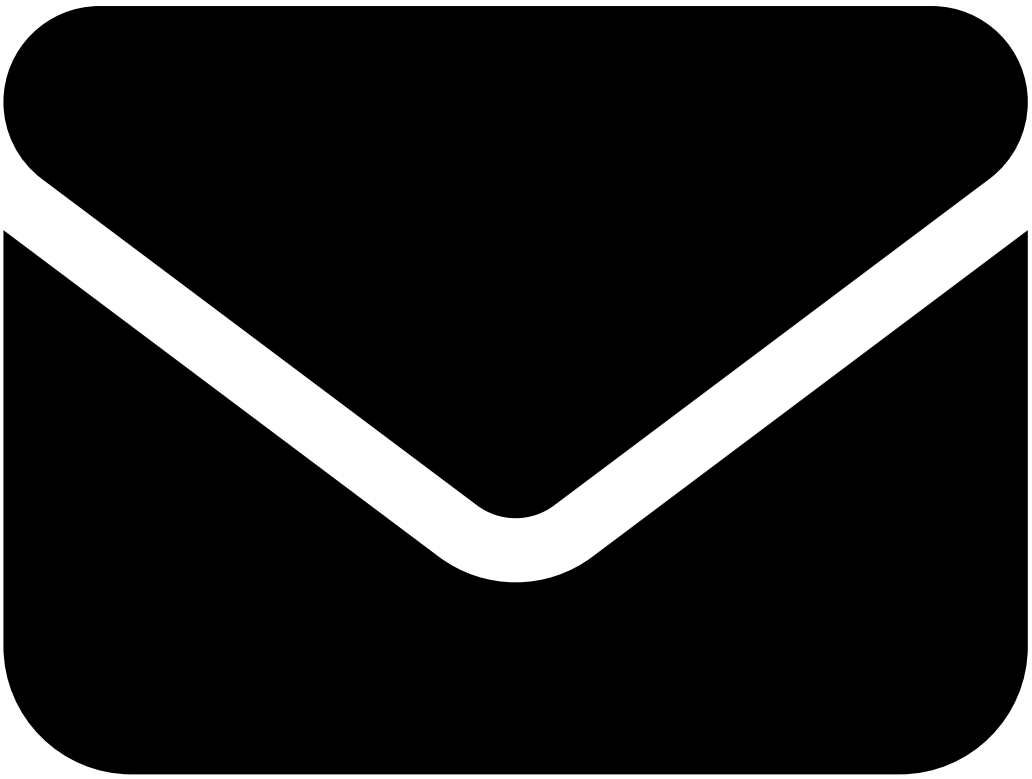
Italian Sausage Rolls with Puff Pastry (Easy Savory Appetizer)

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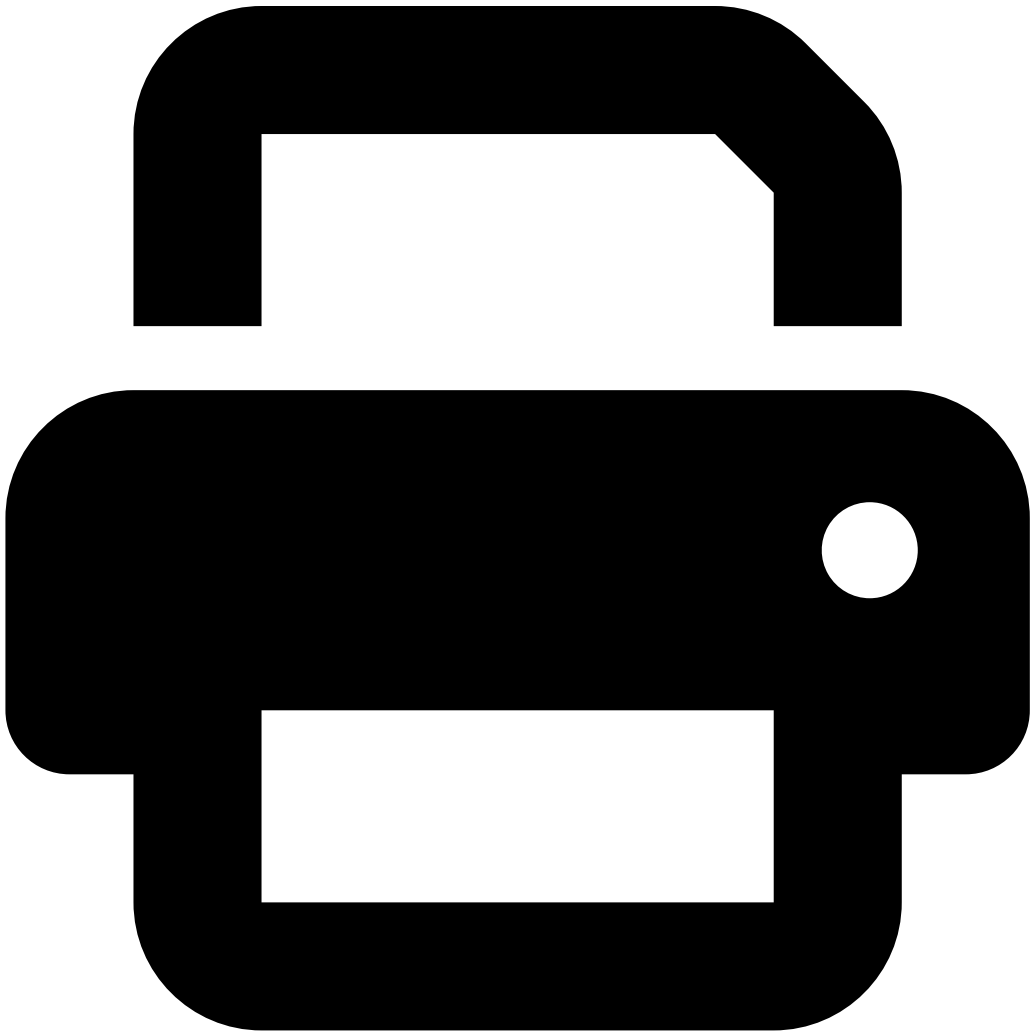
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SMS



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)



These Italian Sausage Rolls with Puff Pastry are a simple yet irresistible appetizer made with flaky, buttery puff pastry wrapped around seasoned Italian sausage and baked until golden brown. Crispy on the outside and juicy on the inside, they're perfect for holiday parties, game day, brunch, or as a delicious snack. Serve them with marinara, spicy mustard, or your favorite dipping sauce for an easy crowd-pleasing appetizer everyone will love.

- 1 pound Italian sausage (sweet or hot), casings removed
- 2 sheets puff pastry, thawed
- ½ cup grated Parmigiano Reggiano
- 1 tbsp Dijon or spicy brown mustard
- 1 clove garlic, finely minced
- 1 tbsp chopped fresh parsley
- ½ tsp 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)

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.

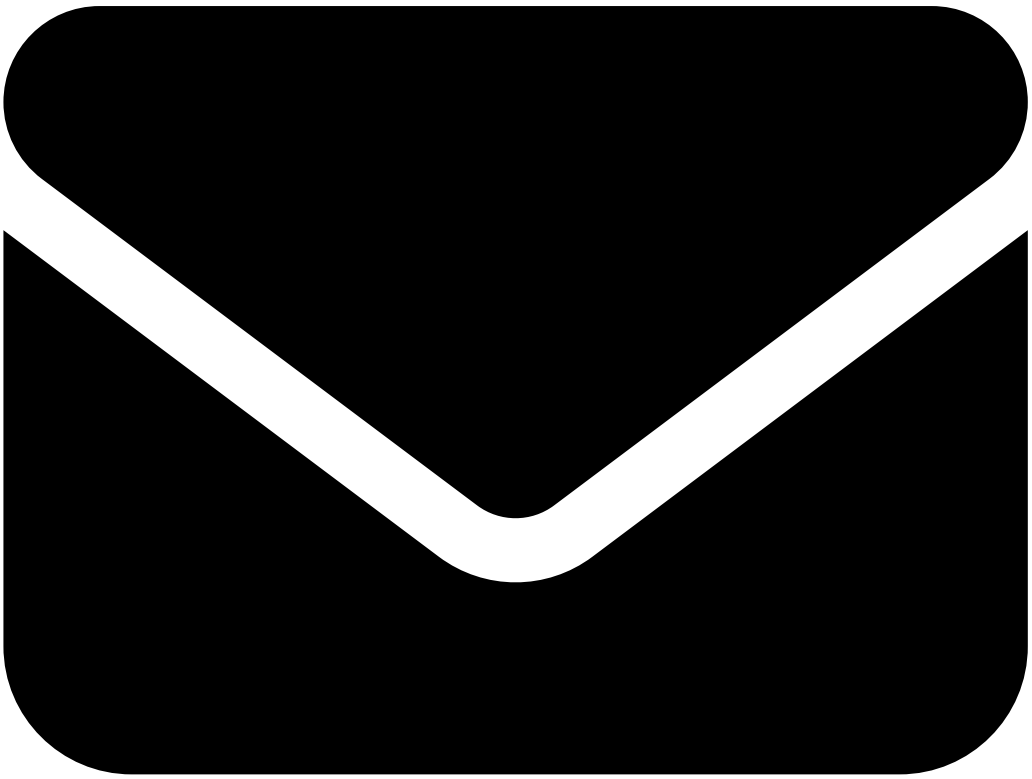
Appetizer
Italian
puff pastry Italian sausage rolls

Mama’s Homemade Egg & Parmesan Croutons

Mama’s Homemade Egg & Parmesan Croutons

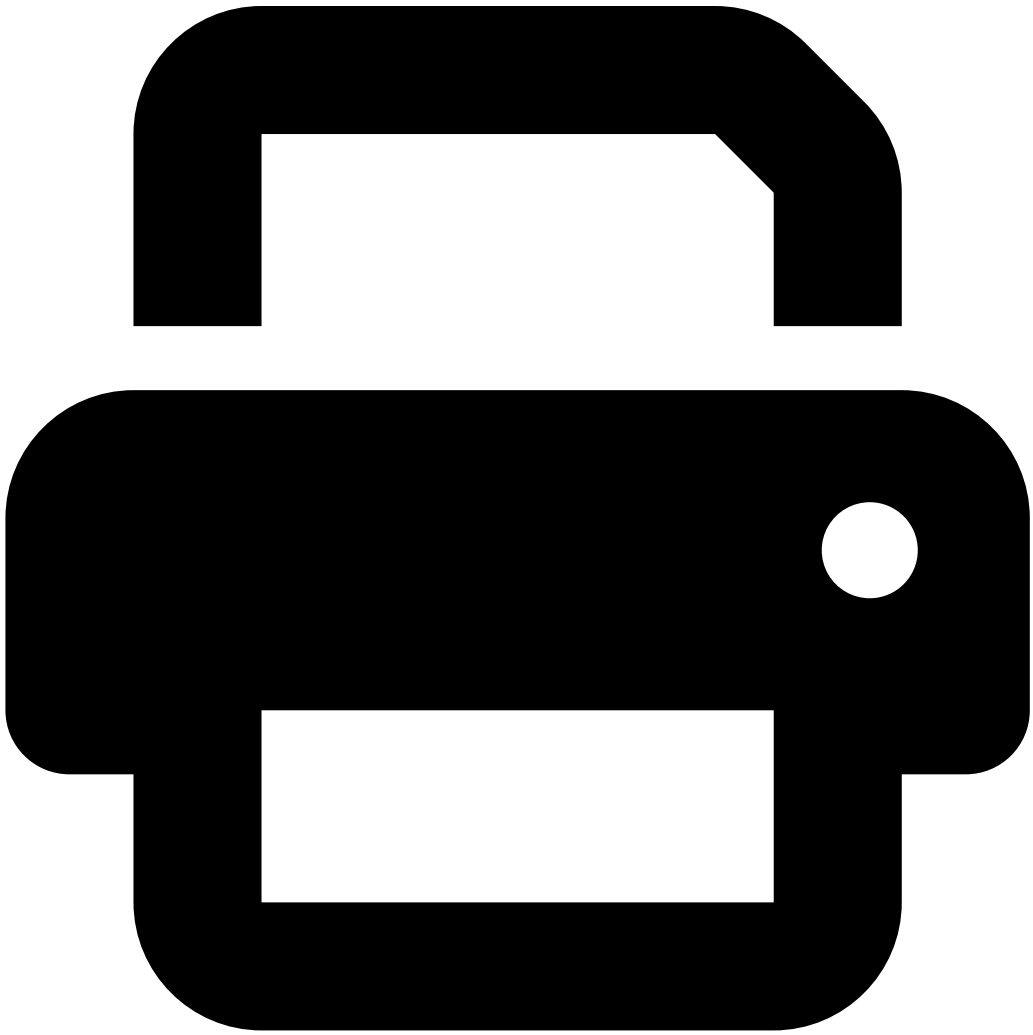
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SMS



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)



These baked Egg & Parmesan Croutons are a simple, rustic Italian-inspired recipe made with beaten egg, olive oil, Parmesan cheese, garlic, and herbs, then baked until golden and crisp. The result is crunchy, savory croutons with a rich, cheesy coating and a light eggy finish that makes them perfect for soups, salads, or snacking straight from the tray. A true “mama-style” recipe that transforms day-old bread into something comforting and delicious.

- 6 large eggs
- 1 cup freshly grated Parmesan cheese
- ½ cup all-purpose flour
- ⅓ cup finely chopped Italian parsley
- 1 tsp baking powder
- Salt, to taste
- Freshly ground black pepper, to taste
- 2 Tbsp. Olive oil or olive oil spray, for greasing

1. **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.

2. **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.

3. **Spread the mixture**

   Pour the batter onto the prepared 9 x13 baking sheet and spread it into an even layer, about **½ inch thick**. Use a spatula to smooth the top.

4. **Bake**

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

5. **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.

6. **Optional crisping**

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

7. **Serve**

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

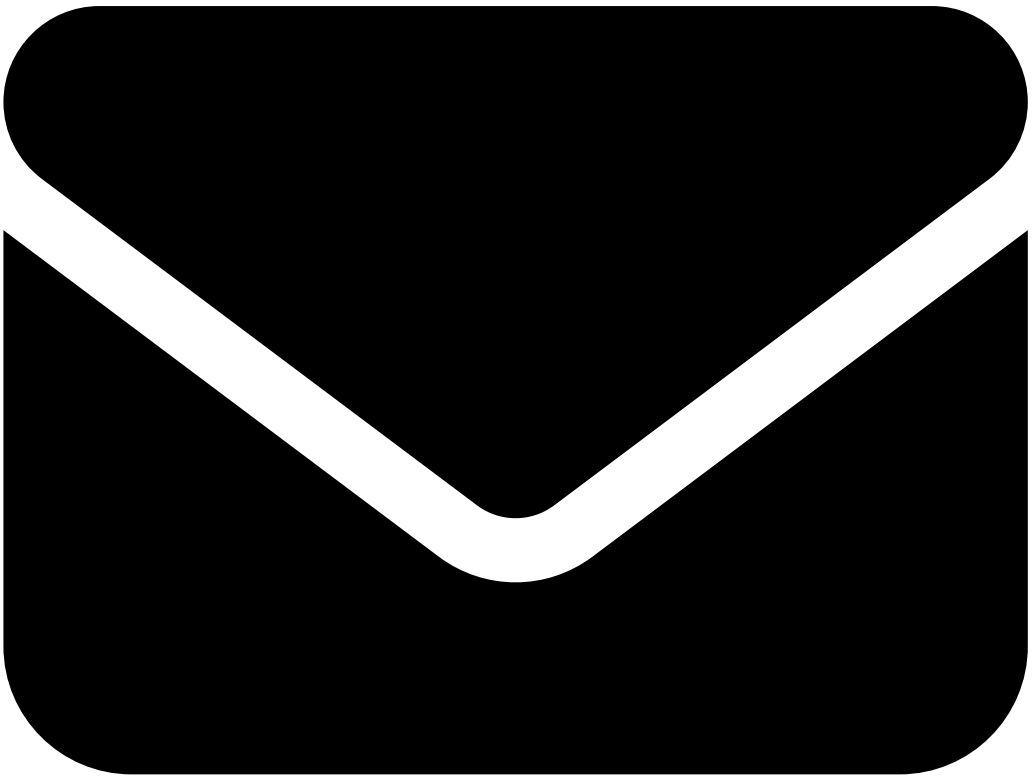
Use freshly grated pecorino Romano for the best flavor and a little extra parsley for freshness. Spread the egg mixture into small, even portions on your baking sheet so they bake evenly. Allow them to cool completely before adding to soups or salads for a delicious touch of Mama's homemade goodness.
Appetizer
Italian
Italian egg crouton recipe

The Best Italian-Style Fried Calamari

The best Italian style fried calamari

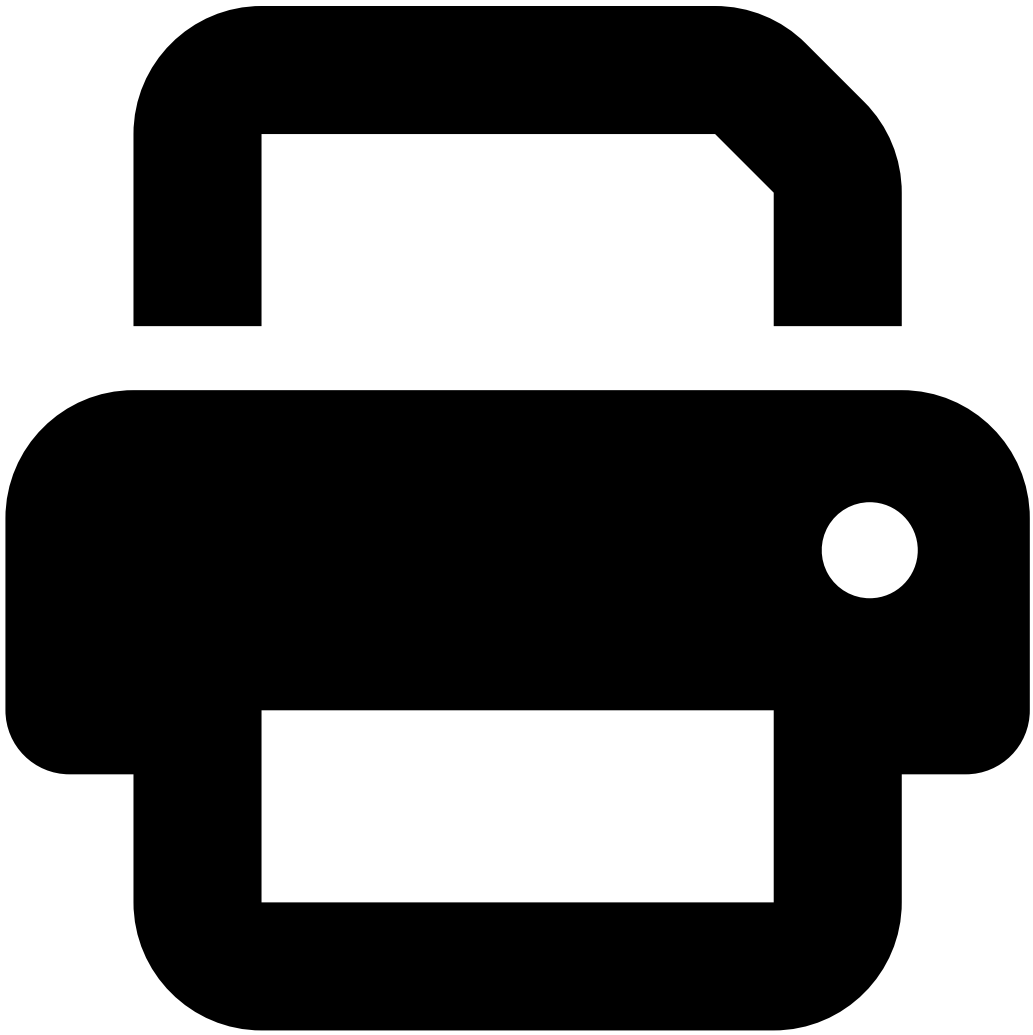
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Growing up, fried calamari was a true family affair. My mama always bought whole squid and cleaned every single one by hand — separating the tentacles, pulling out the quill, and rinsing everything until it was spotless. I can still see her at the 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



This crispy fried calamari recipe delivers tender squid with a light, golden coating that's perfectly seasoned and irresistibly crunchy. Served with fresh lemon wedges and marinara sauce, it's an easy Italian seafood appetizer that's perfect for entertaining, holidays, or a restaurant-quality meal at home.

- 1½ pounds **calamari**, cleaned, **rings + tentacles**
- 1 cup **all-purpose flour**
- 1 cup **semolina flour**
- 1 tsp **kosher salt**, plus more for finishing
- 1 tsp **black pepper**
- ½ tsp **paprika** (optional, for color)
- 1 tsp **garlic powder**

- **Oil for frying** (peanut or light olive oil)
- **Lemon wedges**, for serving
- **Marinara**, for dipping

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.

7. **Serve**

   Enjoy hot with lemon wedges and marinara.

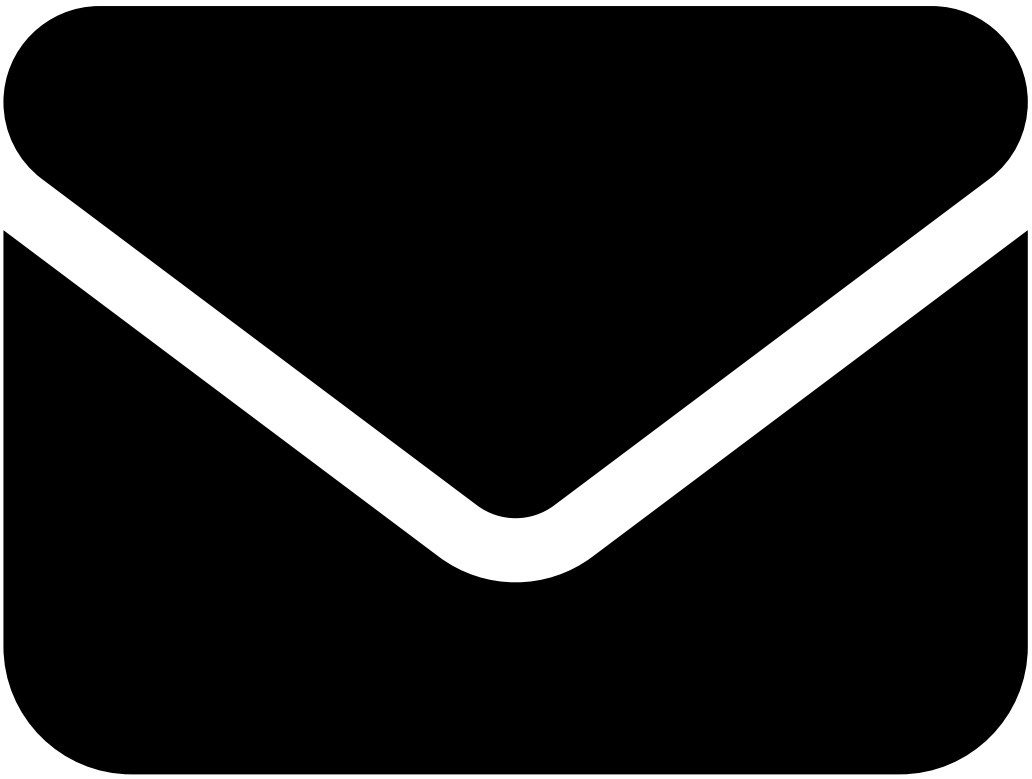
Appetizer
Italian
Best Fried Calamari Recipe

Braised Fennel Oreganata with Pancetta

Braised Fennel Oreganata with Pancetta

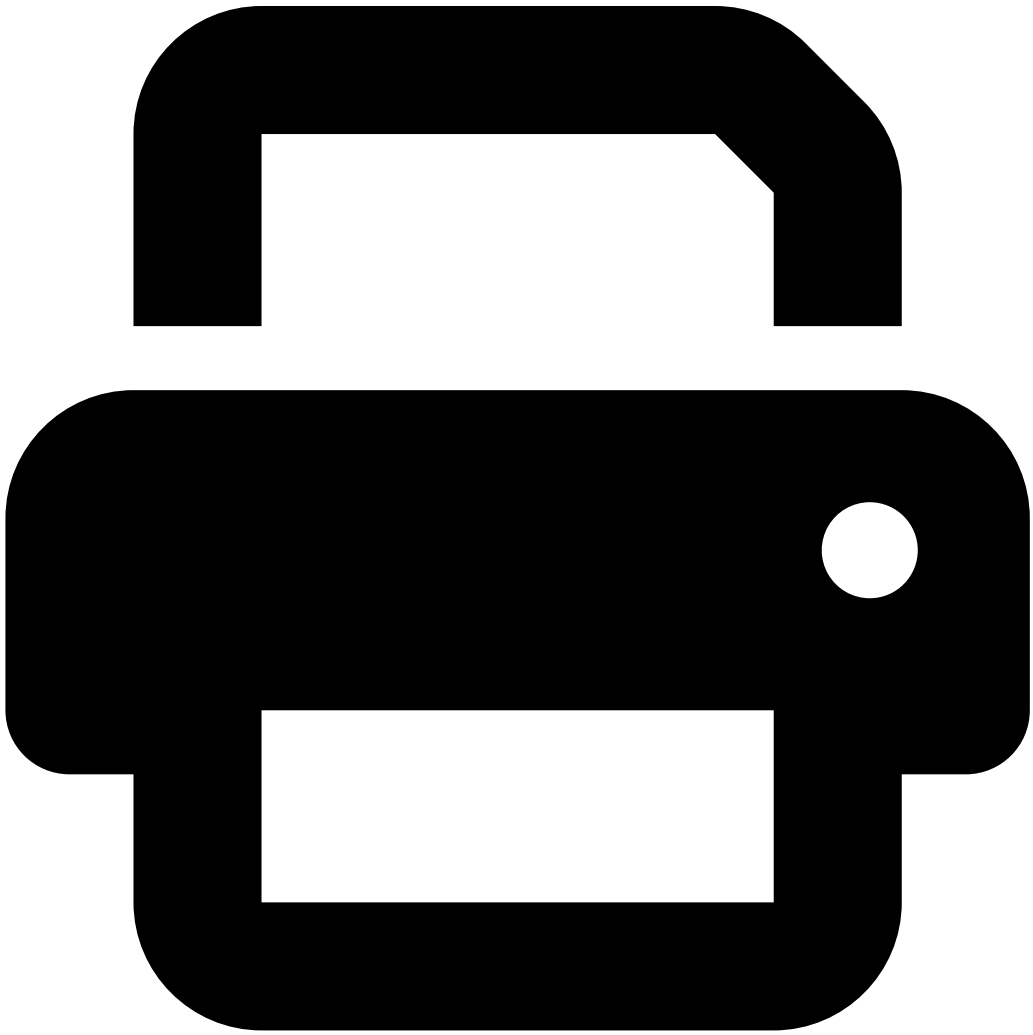
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Braised fennel oreganata with pancetta is one of those simple Italian side dishes that feels both rustic and elegant — the kind of recipe that tastes like it came out of a cozy countryside kitchen. Fennel is one of my favorite seasonal ingredients 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



This Braised Fennel Oreganato with Pancetta transforms humble fennel into a rich, flavorful Italian side dish. The fennel is gently braised until tender, then topped with crispy pancetta and a golden oregano-Parmesan breadcrumb topping for the perfect combination of savory, crispy, and melt-in-your-mouth textures. It's an elegant accompaniment to roasted meats, grilled chicken, or seafood.

For the Fennel

- 3 large fennel bulbs, trimmed and cut into wedges
- 4 ounces pancetta, diced
- 1 tbsp olive oil
- 1 tbsp butter
- 3 garlic cloves, sliced
- ½ 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
- ½ cup grated Parmesan cheese
- 2 tsp 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

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.

9. # Serving Suggestions

   Perfect alongside roasted chicken, baked cod, turkey cutlets, or pork chops

   Add to a winter antipasto spread

   Serve over creamy polenta

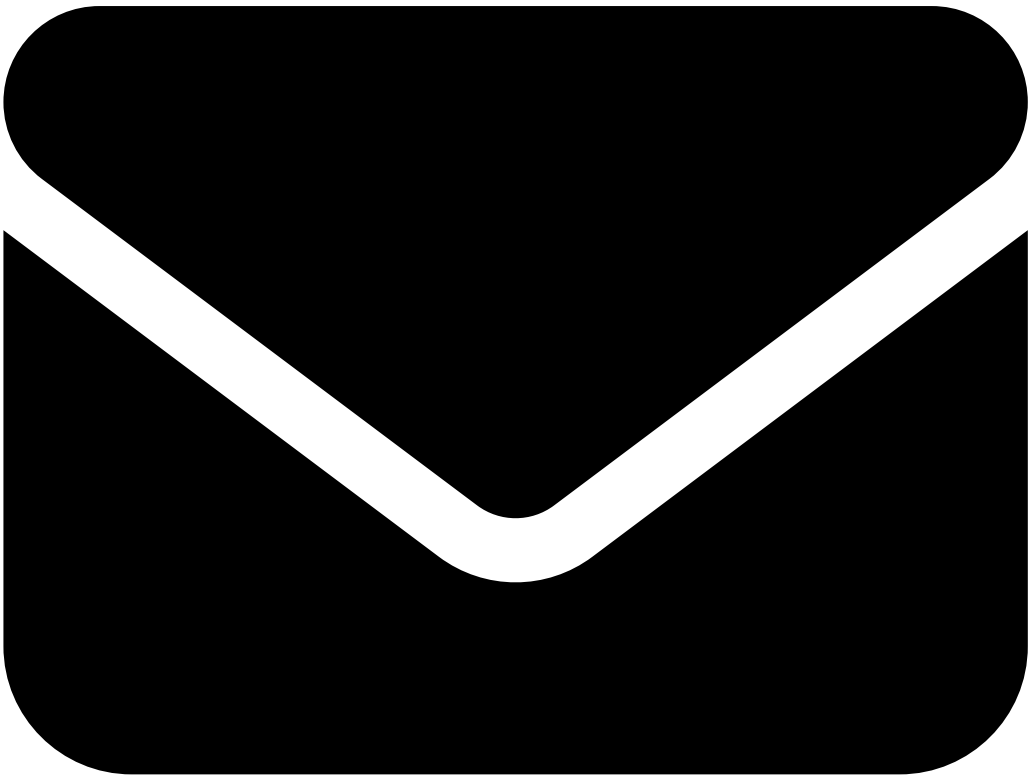
Side Dish
Italian
Italian fennel recipe,

Persimmon Carpaccio Salad (Italian Style)

Persimmon Carpaccio Salad (Italian Style)

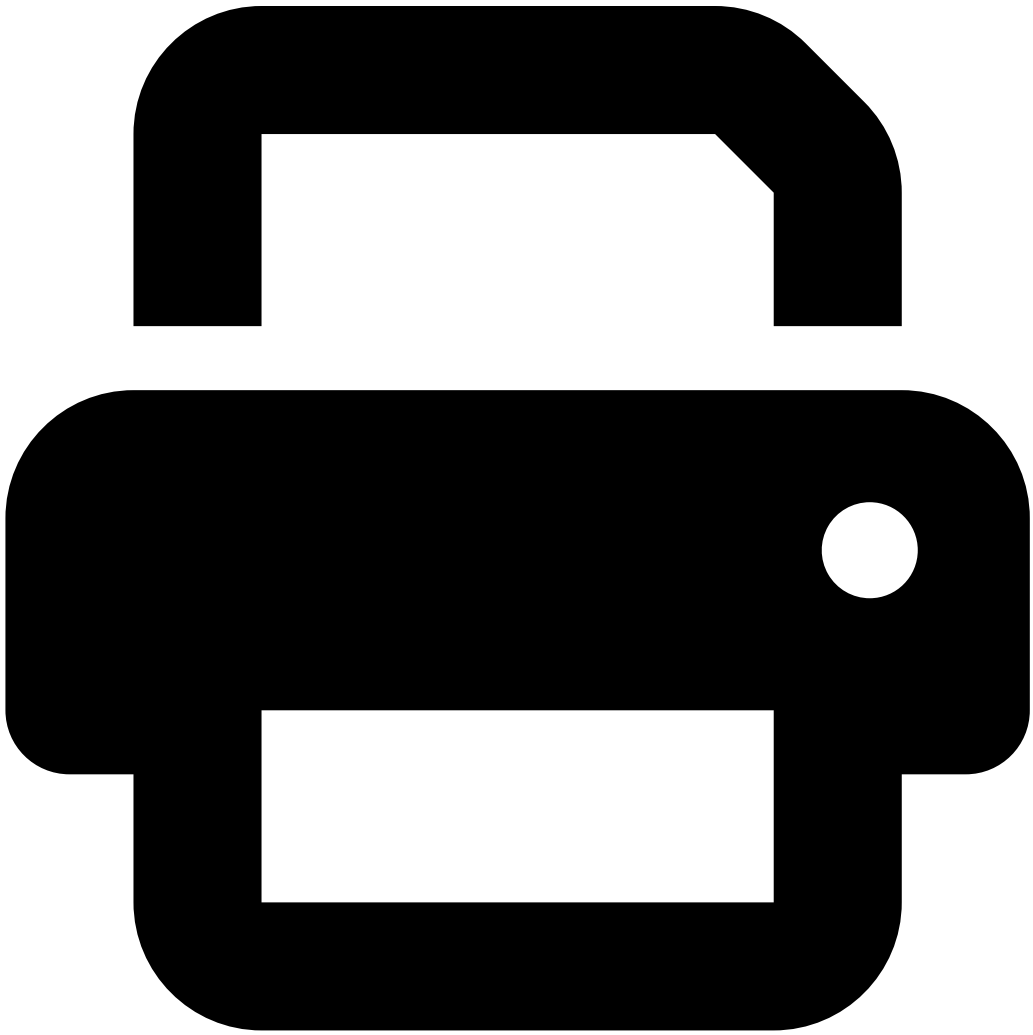
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SMS



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)



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

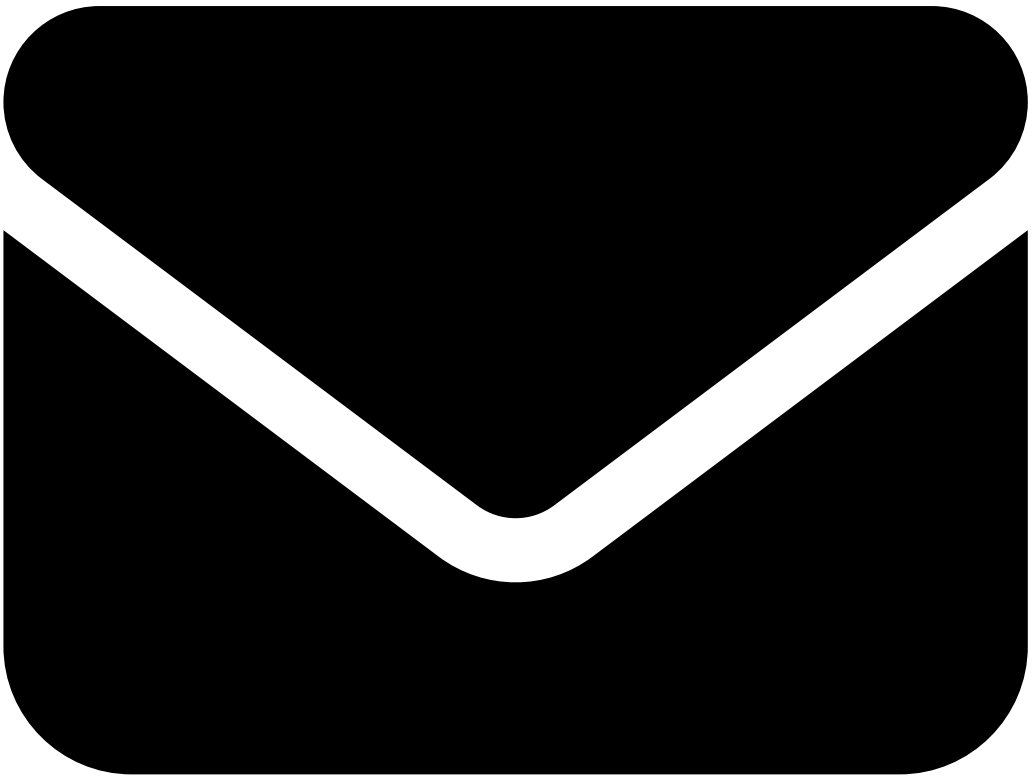
recipe

Braised Cabbage Wedges with Pancetta

Braised Cabbage Wedges with Pancetta

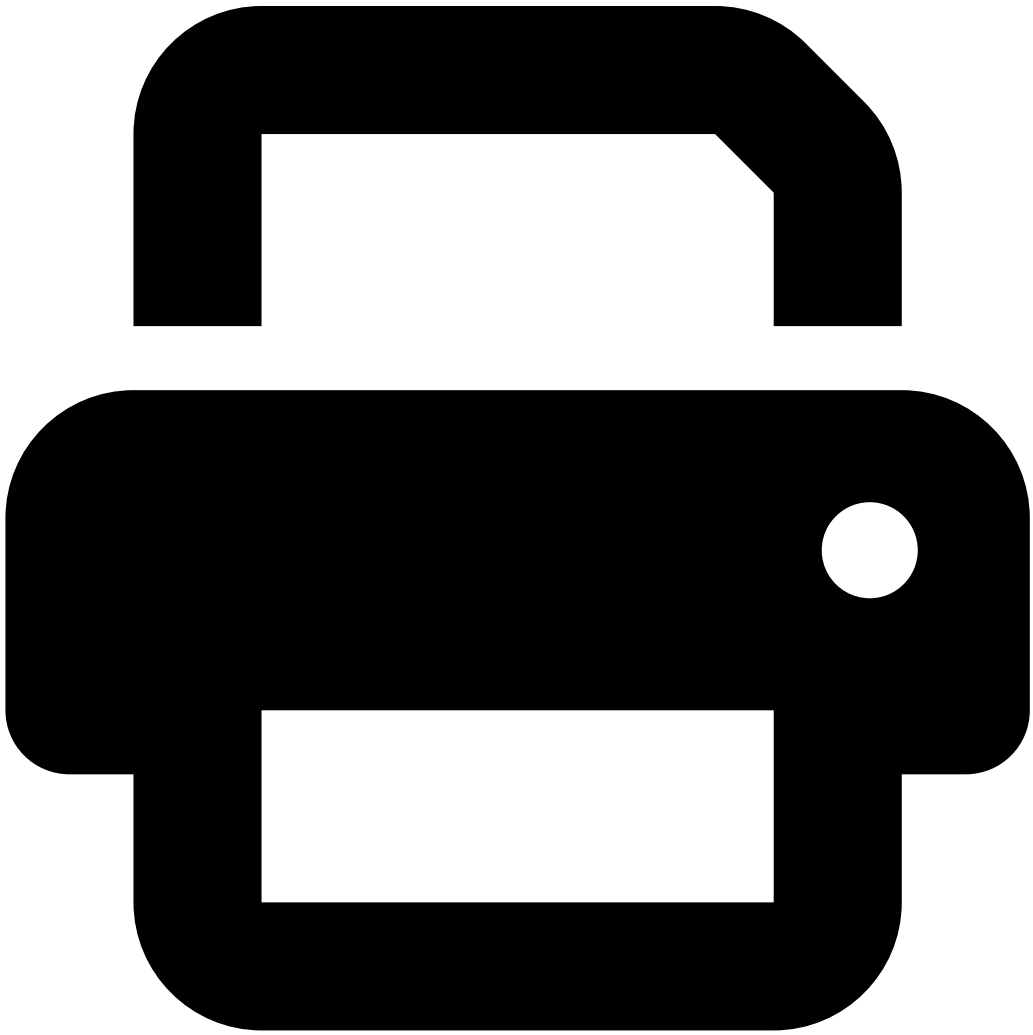
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I think cabbage is underrated — and if you saw my last recipe, you know I’m on a mission to prove how delicious it can be. This dish takes humble cabbage to a whole new level. These braised cabbage wedges are seared until golden, then cooked gently 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



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

- ½ cup white wine
- 1 cup heavy cream
- ½ cup grated Parmesan
- 1 tsp Dijon mustard
- Fresh thyme or parsley (optional)

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 ½ 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**

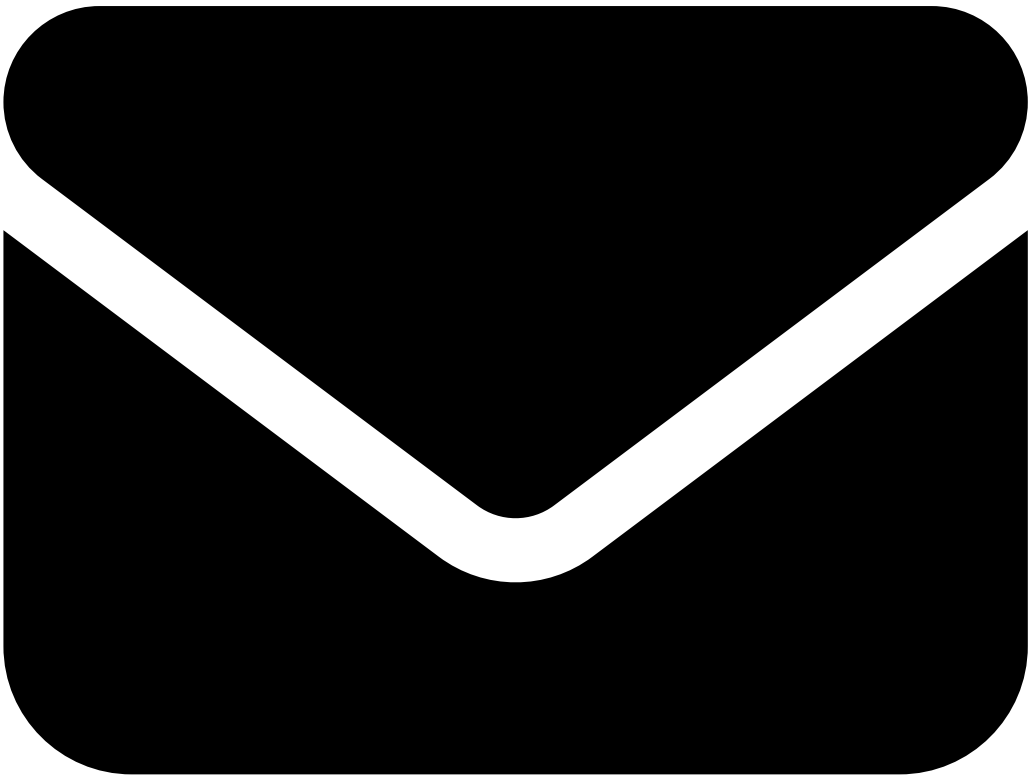
   Spoon extra sauce over the cabbage and top with fresh herbs if desired.

Cabbage & Apple Holiday Slaw

Cabbage & Apple Holiday Slaw

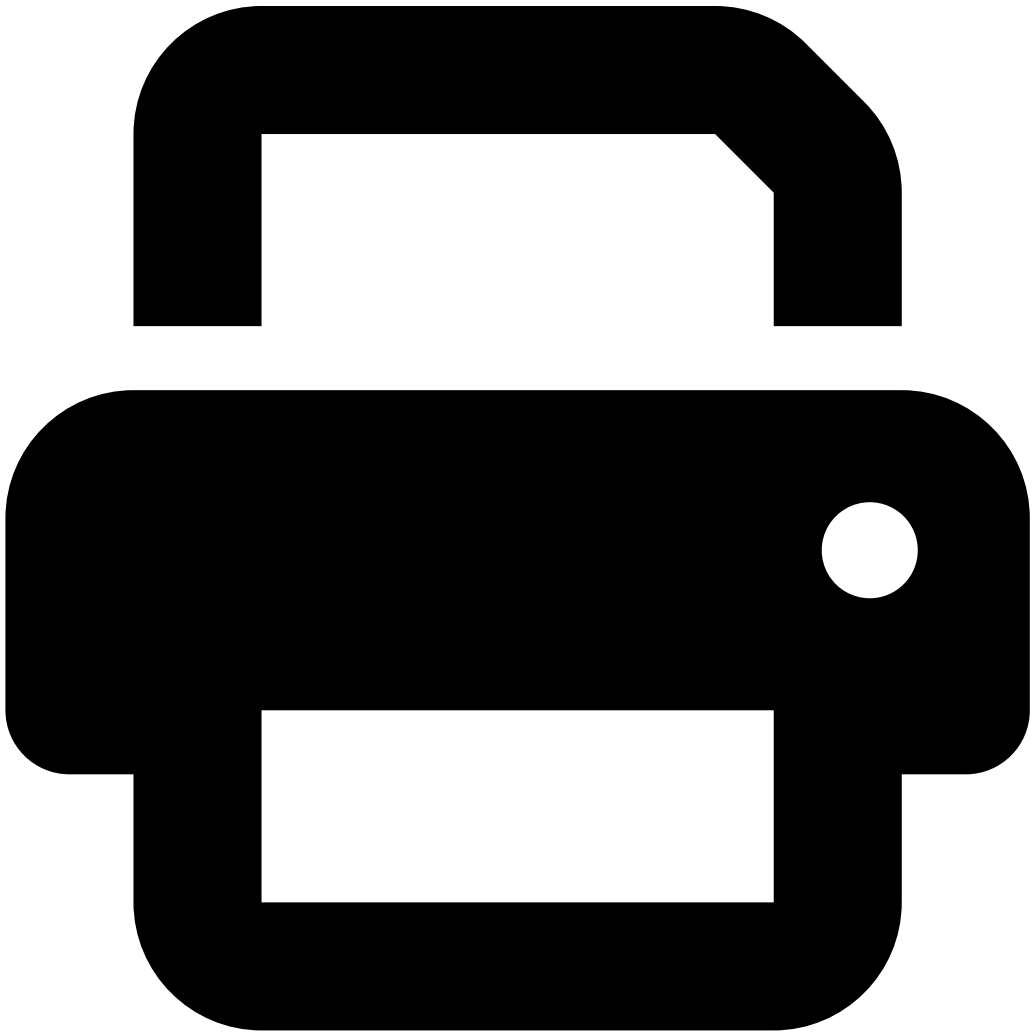
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I think cabbage is underrated. It’s one of those ingredients we often overlook, yet it brings so much crunch, sweetness, and freshness to a holiday spread. While everyone gravitates toward the heavier, richer dishes this time of year, I always find 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

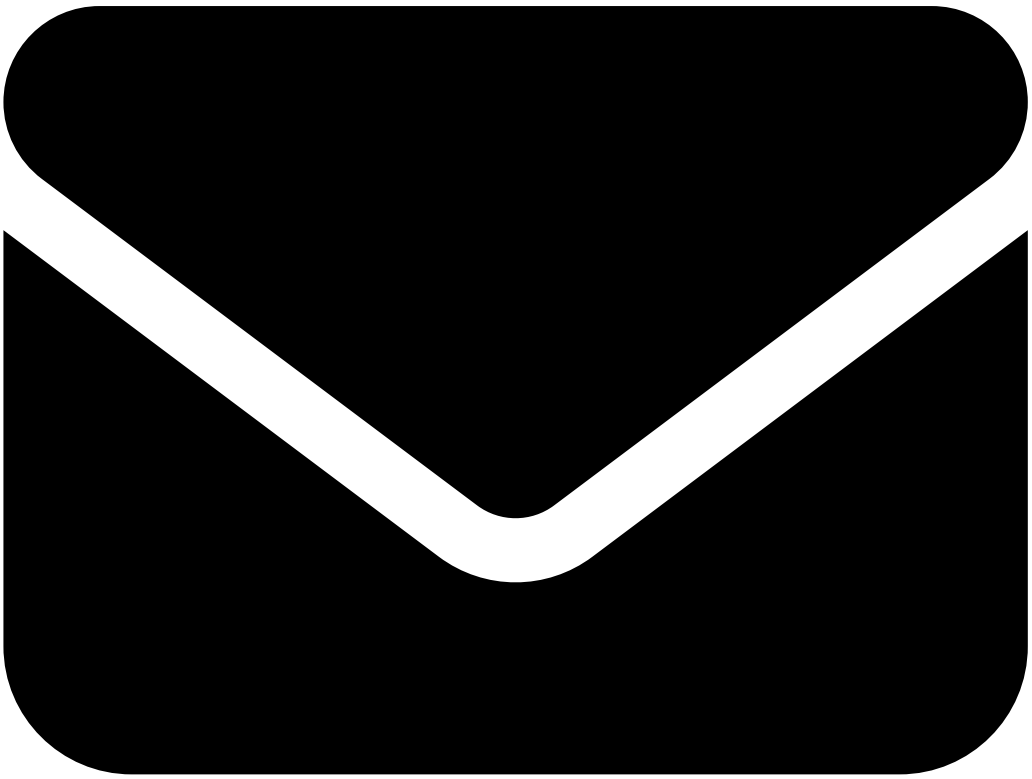
Creamy Italian Mac and Cheese

Bake

Creamy Italian Mac and Cheese Bake

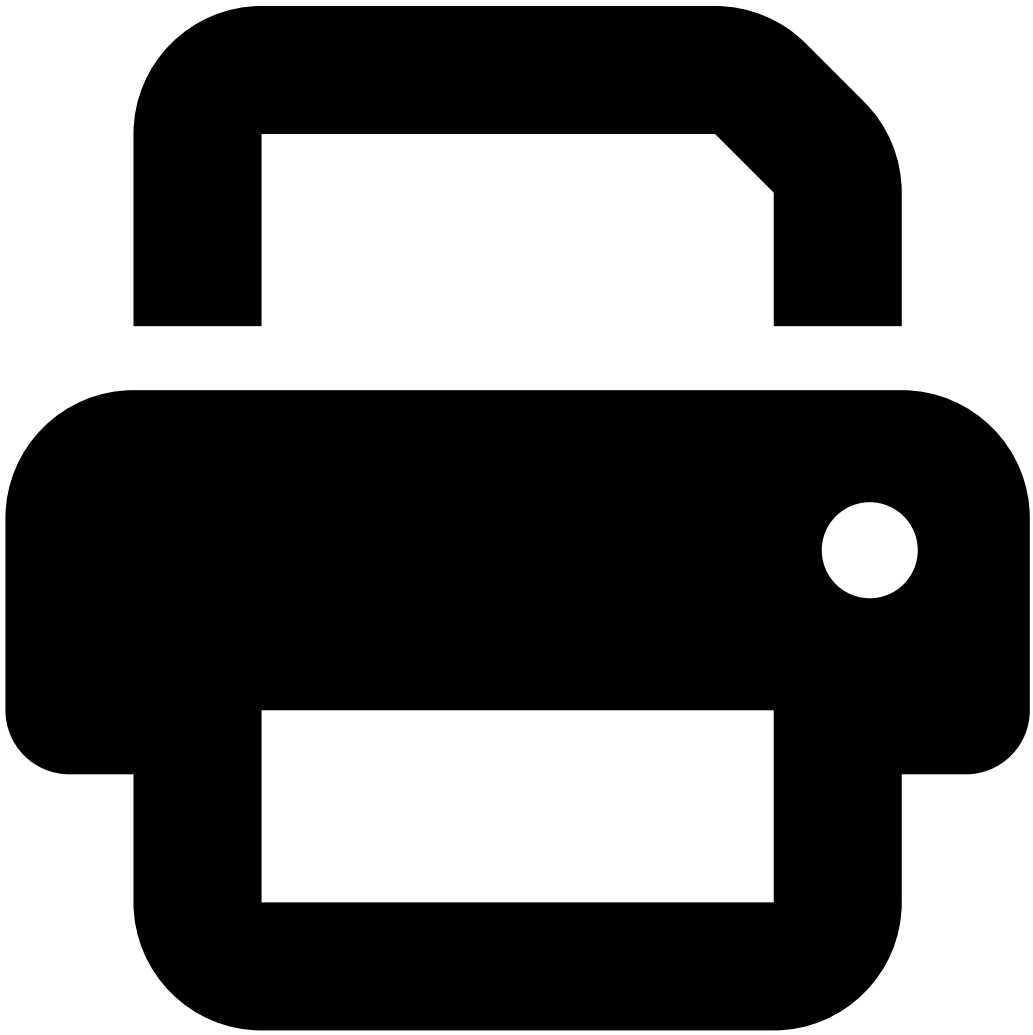
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There’s something so comforting about a bubbling dish of mac and cheese coming out of the oven — golden, creamy, and impossibly cheesy. But in our Italian home, even the most classic dishes tend to take on a Mediterranean twist. This **Creamy Italian Mac and Cheese Bake** is my way of giving a familiar American favorite a little Italian soul — rich with Fontina, sharp cheddar, mozzarella, and plenty of Parmesan. It’s a dish that feels right at home on any holiday table, especially Thanksgiving.

Growing up, mac and cheese wasn’t something we made often. My mom would serve baked pasta dishes layered with cheese and béchamel, but I didn’t truly fall in love with mac and cheese until years later, when I realized how easily it could be made the Italian way. One Thanksgiving, after too many side dishes that felt the same, I wanted something creamy and comforting that still fit our family’s table — something with the coziness of pasta al forno and the nostalgia of childhood

comfort food. This recipe was born that day, and now it’s a staple every year.

The base starts with a simple roux, but instead of plain butter, I melt it with a bit of diced pancetta or prosciutto — just enough to give the sauce a salty, savory depth. The fat renders into the butter, infusing the whole dish with that unmistakable Italian aroma. Then comes the magic: Fontina for smoothness, sharp cheddar for bite, mozzarella for stretch, and Parmesan for that nutty, salty finish.

When it bakes, the top turns crisp and golden while the inside stays luxuriously creamy. It’s comfort food through and through — a little rustic, a little elegant, and completely irresistible. On Thanksgiving, it’s the first dish to disappear from our table, and I can promise it’ll become one of your family’s favorite too!!!

Things to know about this Creamy Italian Mac and Cheese Bake

One of my favorite things about this Creamy Italian Mac and Cheese Bake is how easy it is to customize. I love using Fontina, cheddar, mozzarella, and Parmesan, but Asiago, Provolone, or even a little Gorgonzola are delicious options too.

This recipe is perfect for entertaining because you can assemble it a day ahead and refrigerate it until you’re ready to bake. Just pop it in the oven until it’s hot, bubbly, and golden.

For a vegetarian version, simply leave out the pancetta and add sautéed mushrooms or roasted butternut squash. Whether it’s part of your holiday table or a cozy family dinner, this creamy baked pasta is always a crowd-pleaser.

Craving more comforting Italian classics? Try my Spinach and

Mushroom Lasagna with Béchamel Sauce, Roasted Butternut Squash Gnocchi, or Creamy Italian Sausage Risotto next — each one made to warm your heart and your kitchen.

Italian Mac and Cheese bake



This Italian Mac and Cheese Bake is the ultimate comfort food, combining tender pasta with a rich, creamy blend of Italian cheeses and a golden, bubbly topping. Made with Fontina, mozzarella, cheddar, and Parmesan, every bite is smooth, cheesy, and full of flavor. It's an easy family-friendly casserole that's perfect for weeknight dinners, holidays, or potlucks.

- 1 Lb. pounds **short pasta** (cavatappi, shells, or elbow macaroni)
- 3 Tbsp. tbsp **unsalted butter**
- 3 oz. **prosciutto or pancetta**
- 3 tbsp. tbsp **all-purpose flour**
- 2 cups **whole milk**
- 1 cup **heavy cream**
- 1 cup **shredded Fontina cheese**
- 1 cup s**hredded sharp cheddar cheese**
- 1 cup **shredded mozzarella cheese**
- 1/2 cup **grated Parmesan cheese**, divided
- 2 cloves **garlic** minced

- 1 tsp. **fresh thyme leaves** (or ½ tsp dried)
- pinch of **nutmeg** (optional)
- Salt and black pepper, to taste

Crispy topping

- 1 cup Italian seasoned breadcrumbs
- 1/2 cup grated parmesan cheese
- 1 Tbsp. extra virgin olive oil

1. **Cook the pasta:**

   Boil in a large stock pot in salted water until *just* al dente. Drain and set aside.

2. **Cook the pancetta/prosciutto:**

   In a large saucepan, melt butter over medium heat. Add diced pancetta or prosciutto and cook until lightly crisp and the fat has rendered, about 3–4 minutes.

3. **Build the roux:**

   Stir in the minced garlic and cook 30 seconds. Sprinkle in the flour and whisk for 1 minute, letting it absorb the butter and drippings.

4. **Make the sauce:**

   Gradually pour in the milk and cream while whisking constantly until smooth and slightly thickened, about 4–5 minutes.

5. **Add the cheeses:**

   Lower the heat and stir in Fontina, cheddar, mozzarella, and ½ cup Parmesan until melted and creamy.

   Season with thyme, nutmeg (if using), salt, and pepper.

6. **Combine:**

Add the cooked pasta to the sauce and stir until well coated.

7. **Prepare the topping:**

   Mix breadcrumbs with Parmesan and olive oil.

8. **Bake:**

   Pour the pasta mixture into a buttered 9×13-inch baking dish. Sprinkle evenly with the breadcrumb topping.

   Bake at **375°F (190°C)** for 40**–45 minutes**, until bubbly and golden brown.

Main Course
Italian
Italian mac and cheese, baked mac and cheese, creamy macaroni and cheese, Italian cheese pasta bake,

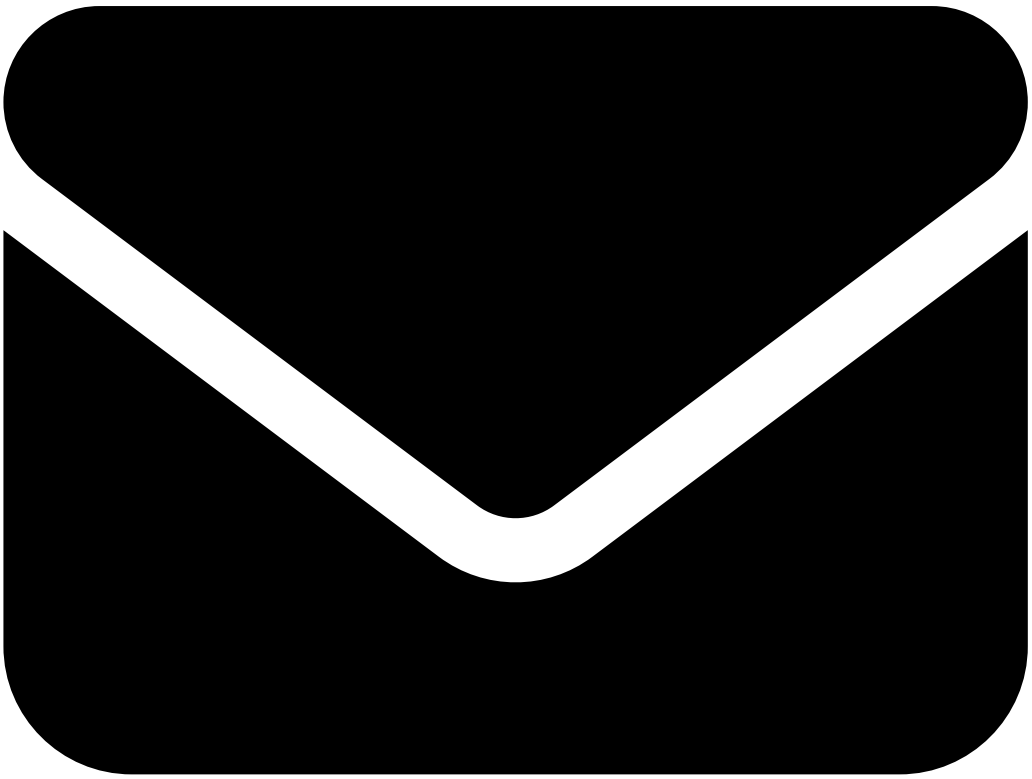
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Creamy Italian Sausage Ditalini Soup Recipe

Creamy Italian Sausage Ditalini Soup Recipe

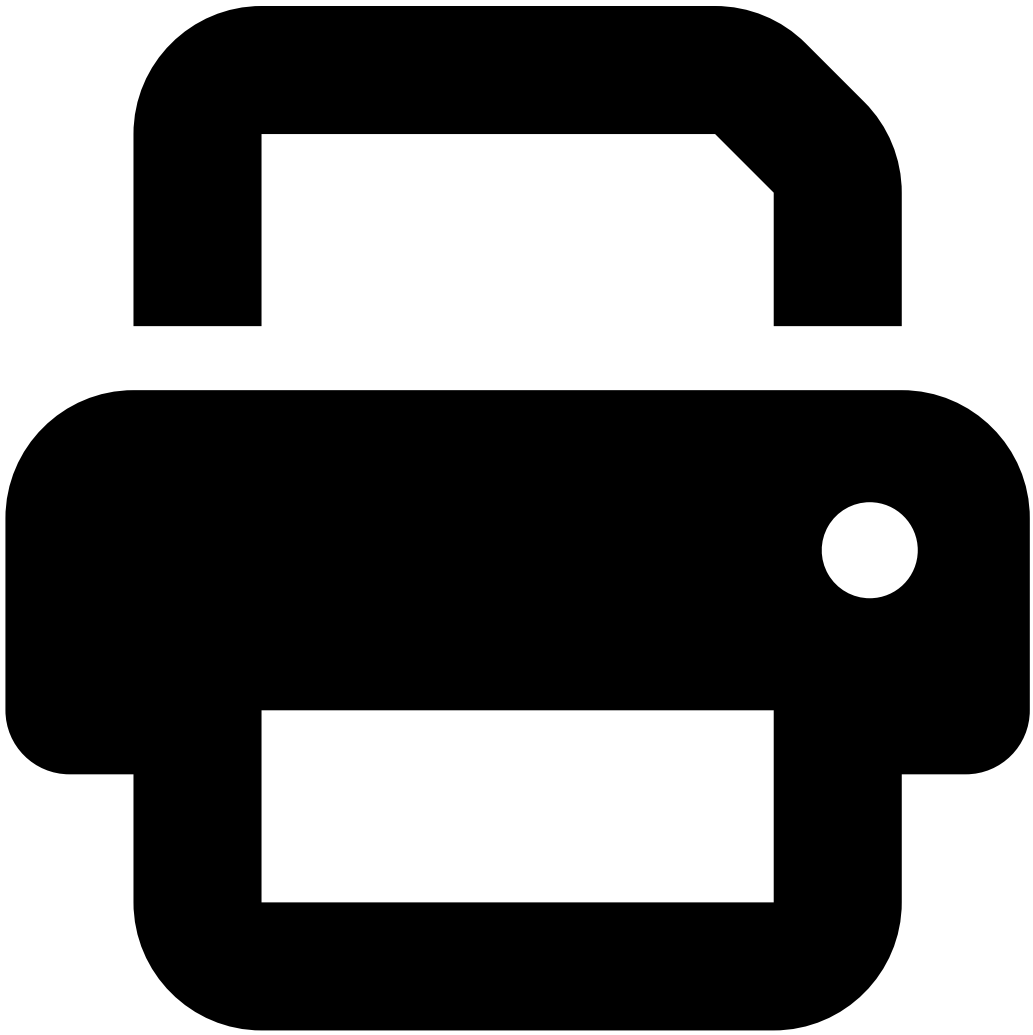
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This **Creamy Italian Sausage Ditalini Soup with Cannellini Beans** is Italian comfort in a bowl – hearty, rich, and full of flavor. It combines tender ditalini pasta, creamy white beans, savory sausage, and a touch of cream for the perfect weeknight meal.

When times were lean, my mom would make a simpler version of this soup without any meat – just beans, pasta, and vegetables simmered in broth. It was humble, nourishing, and filled with love. Over time, I've added Italian sausage and cream for a heartier twist, but the essence of that comforting bowl she made remains the same.

Think of it as a cross between classic *pasta e fagioli* and a creamy Tuscan-style soup – rustic, cozy, ready in just 30 minutes and made in one pan.

Things to know about this Creamy Italian Sausage Ditalini Soup Recipe

- **Cannellini beans:** These creamy white beans are a classic Italian pantry staple. They add protein, fiber, and a naturally velvety texture that makes the soup satisfying — even without meat. If you're keeping it traditional, mash a few beans with the back of your spoon while simmering to naturally thicken the broth.
- **When times were lean:** Just like my mom did, you can easily skip the sausage and make this as a simple, meatless bean and pasta soup. It's humble, nourishing, and deeply comforting — proof that Italian cooking is about love and resourcefulness, not fancy ingredients.
- **Cooking the pasta:** Ditalini works beautifully because it's small and sturdy, but it can continue to absorb liquid as it sits. If you're planning to store leftovers, cook the pasta separately and add it just before serving to keep the texture perfect.
- **Broth and consistency:** For a thicker soup, reduce the amount of broth slightly or simmer uncovered for a few extra minutes. For a lighter consistency, add more broth or water before serving.
- **Cheese options:** Parmesan gives a savory richness, but you can also stir in a spoonful of ricotta or a sprinkle of pecorino Romano for a sharper bite.

Variations

- **Vegetarian version:** Omit the sausage and use vegetable broth. Add extra beans or chopped mushrooms for a hearty

texture.

- **Tuscan twist:** Add chopped sun-dried tomatoes, a splash of white wine, and a few fresh basil leaves at the end for brightness.
- **Spicy version:** Use spicy Italian sausage and increase the red pepper flakes for a little kick.
- **Greens galore:** Swap spinach for kale, escarole, or even Swiss chard – whichever you have on hand.
- **Dairy-free:** Skip the cream and add an extra cup of broth; the beans will still make the soup naturally creamy.
- **Rustic style:** Blend half the soup with an immersion blender, then stir it back in – a trick that creates a naturally thick, velvety consistency without losing texture.

Try my Classic Pasta e Fagioli Soup for another hearty bean and pasta dish.

Check out the Creamy Tortellini Soup – a rich and cheesy twist on Italian comfort food.

For a simple weeknight dinner, see my Gnocchi lasagna soup

If you loved this **Creamy Italian Sausage Ditalini Soup**, you'll also enjoy exploring more of my cozy Italian recipes:

Don't forget to **save this recipe** and **share your creation** with me on Instagram – tag **@lorianasheacooks** so I can see your delicious bowls of comfort!

Creamy Italian Sausage Ditalini

Soup Recipe



This Creamy Italian Sausage Ditalini Soup is a cozy, satisfying meal made with savory Italian sausage, tender ditalini pasta, vegetables, and a rich, creamy broth. Packed with comforting Italian flavors, it's an easy one-pot soup that's perfect for chilly evenings, family dinners, or meal prep. Serve it with crusty bread for a restaurant-worthy meal at home.

- 2 tbsp Olive oil
- 1 cup onion, diced
- 1/2 cup carrots, diced
- 1/2 cup celery stalks, diced
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- ½ lb. Italian sausage (mild or spicy), casings removed
- 1 tsp. Italian seasoning
- 1 tsp. crushed red pepper flakes (optional)
- 3 cups chicken broth
- 1 cup water (or more for desired consistency)
- 1 cup ditalini pasta
- 1 15 oz. cannellini beans, drained and rinsed
- 1 cup diced tomatoes
- 1 cup heavy cream (or half-and-half for a lighter option)
- ½ cup grated Parmesan cheese
- 2 cups spinach (or chopped kale)
- Salt and black pepper, to taste

1. **Sauté the vegetables:**

   Heat olive oil in a large soup pot or Dutch oven over medium heat.

   Add onion, carrots, and celery; cook until softened, about 5–7 minutes.

   Add garlic and cook 1 minute longer.

2. **Brown the sausage:**

   Add the sausage and cook until browned, breaking it up with a spoon.

   Drain any excess fat.

3. **Add flavor and liquid:**

   Stir in Italian seasoning and crushed red pepper flakes.

   Add the tomatoes, cannellini beans, chicken broth, and water.

   Bring to a gentle boil.

   Simmer for 10 minutes

4. **Cook the pasta:**

   Add ditalini pasta and cook until al dente, about 6-8 minutes, stirring occasionally.

5. **Make it creamy:**

   Reduce heat to low.

   Stir in the heavy cream, Parmesan cheese, and spinach.

   Simmer gently until the spinach wilts and the soup thickens slightly, 2–3 minutes.

6. **Taste and serve:**

Season with salt and black pepper.

Serve warm with extra Parmesan and crusty Italian bread

Soup
Italian
creamy Italian sausage soup, ditalini soup recipe, Italian sausage pasta soup

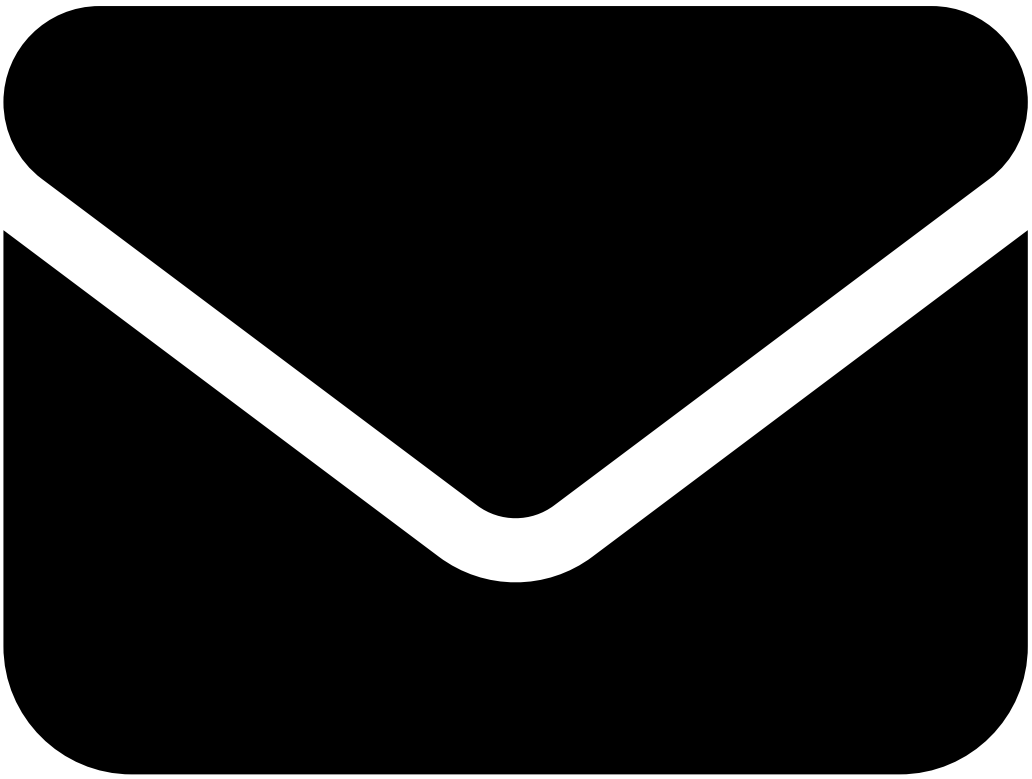
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Baked Spaghetti Squash with Tomato Sauce and Cheese

Baked Spaghetti Squash with Tomato Sauce and Cheese

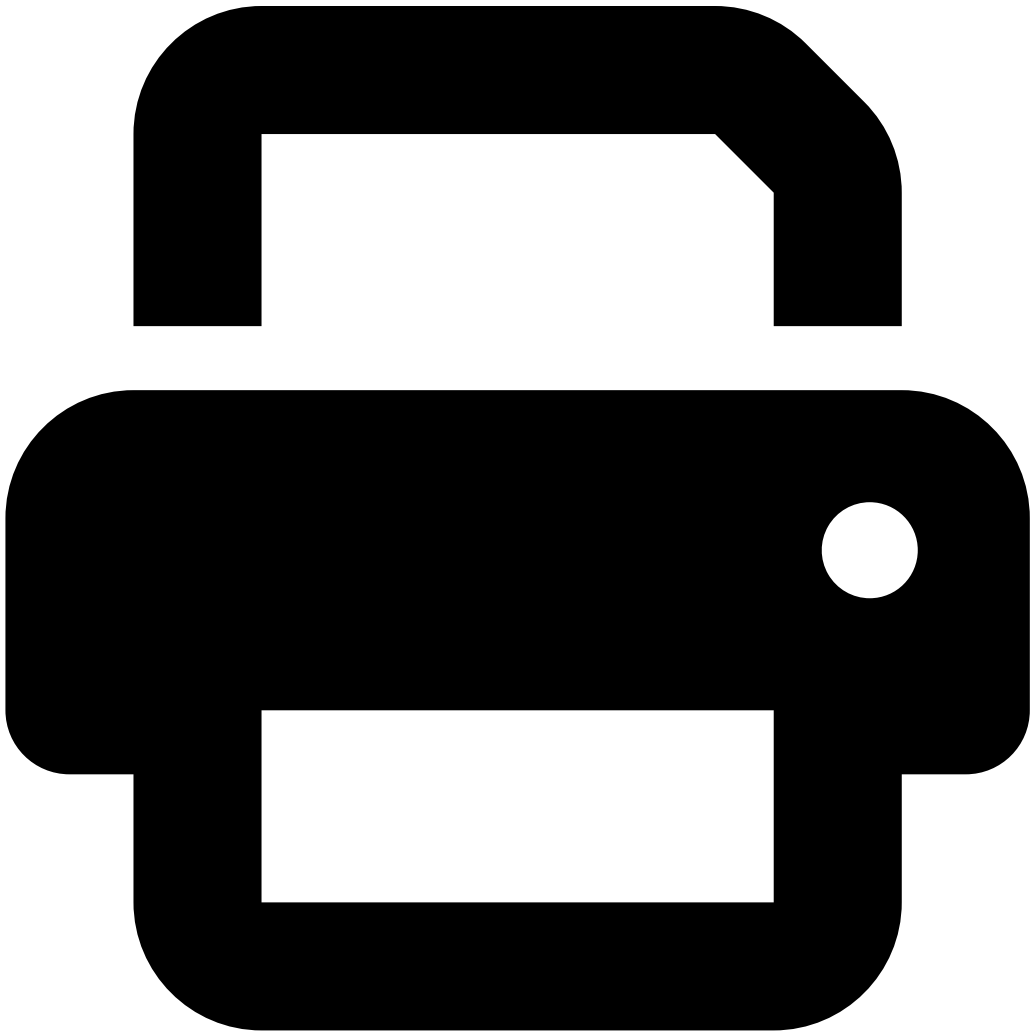
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When you’re craving something cozy yet light, this baked spaghetti squash hits the spot. The squash is roasted until tender, then topped with a rich tomato sauce, shredded mozzarella, and grated parmesan before being baked again until bubbly and golden. 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.

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