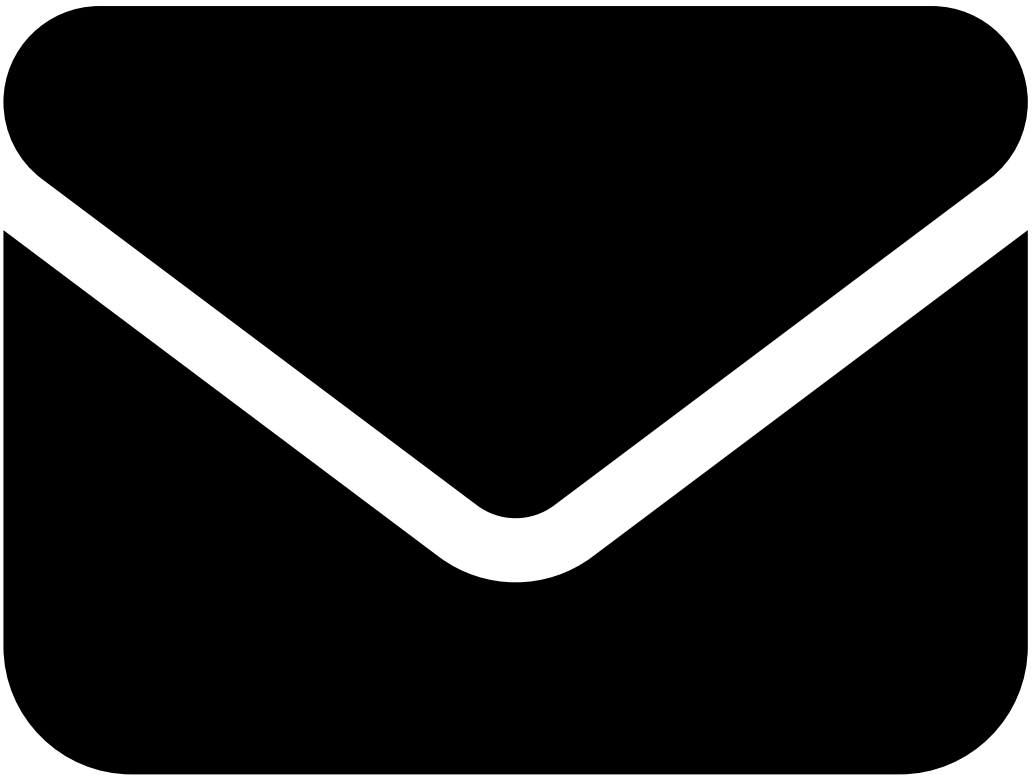
# Italian Fennel Gratin (Finocchi Gratinati)

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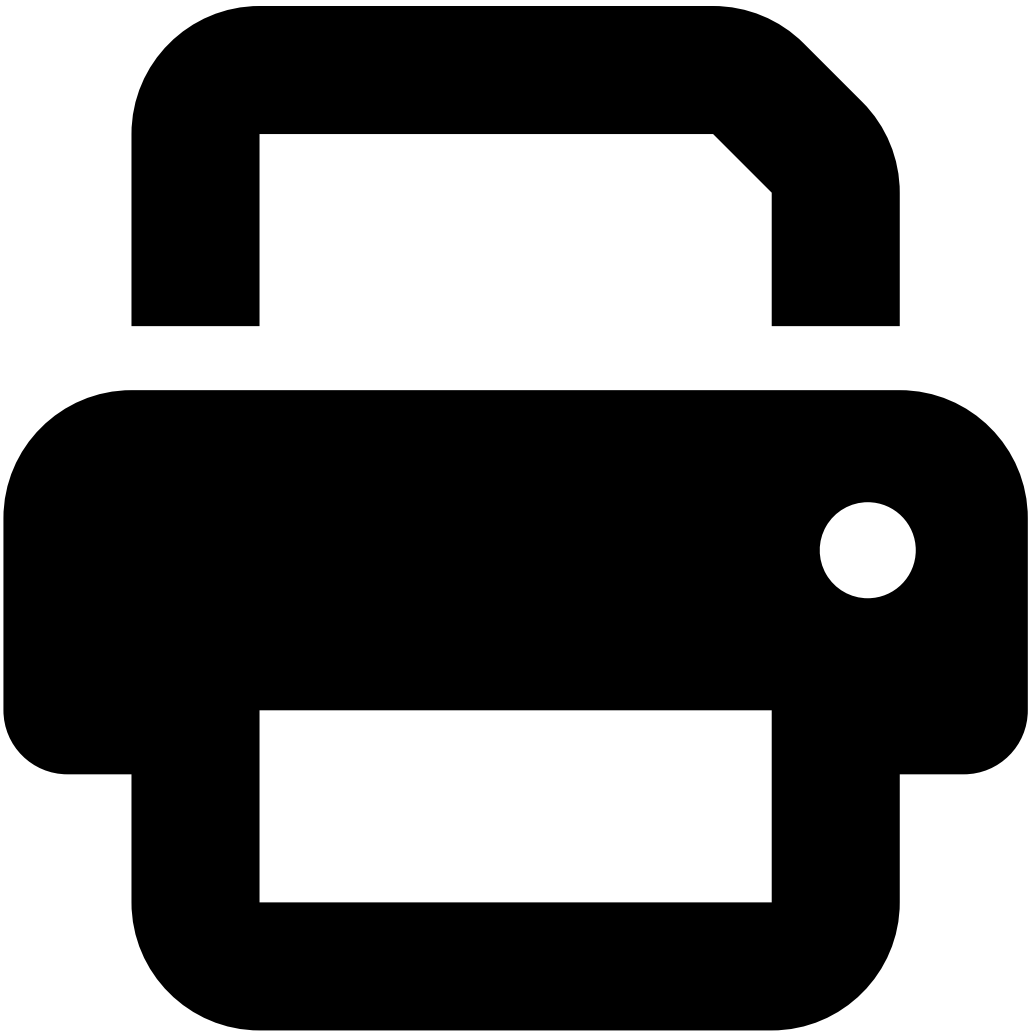
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If you love simple Italian vegetable dishes, this Italian Fennel Gratin is one to add to your table. Made with fresh fennel, red onions, tomatoes, and olives, everything is drizzled with extra virgin olive oil and finished with a golden topping of Italian breadcrumbs and freshly grated Parmesan cheese.

In Italy, fennel is a favorite winter vegetable, and baked fennel dishes are often served for special family meals and holiday gatherings. This version takes inspiration from the flavors of Southern Italy, with tomatoes, olives, red onion, and a crunchy Parmesan breadcrumb topping. It’s the kind of rustic vegetable dish that feels right at home on a Christmas table, but it’s simple enough to make any night of the week.

It’s a rustic Southern Italian-inspired recipe where humble ingredients come together to make something really delicious.

The fennel becomes tender and slightly sweet as it bakes, the tomatoes soften and release their juices, and the olives add just the right amount of briny flavor. The breadcrumb and Parmesan topping gets beautifully golden and crispy in the oven.

I love recipes like this because they don’t require much preparation. Just slice your vegetables, arrange everything in a baking dish, add your olive oil and seasonings, and let the oven do the work.

Serve it as a side dish alongside roasted chicken, grilled fish, or your favorite Italian meal. It’s also delicious served at room temperature.

# Tips for the Best Fennel Gratin

- **Slice evenly:** Try to cut your fennel into similar-sized pieces so everything cooks evenly.
- **Don’t skip the olive oil:** It helps soften the fennel and gives the vegetables that wonderful roasted flavor.
- **Use freshly grated Parmesan:** It makes a difference in both flavor and texture.
- **Watch the breadcrumbs:** You want a golden, crispy topping, not one that becomes too dark.
- **Don’t overcrowd the baking dish:** Give the vegetables enough room to roast properly.

# Frequently Asked Questions

**What does fennel taste like?**

Fennel has a mild anise or licorice flavor when raw, but it becomes much sweeter and milder when cooked. Roasting brings out its natural sweetness.

**Can I prepare fennel gratin ahead of time?**

Yes! You can slice the vegetables and prepare the breadcrumb mixture ahead of time. Store them separately in the refrigerator and assemble just before baking for the best texture.

**Can I use different olives?**

Absolutely. Kalamata olives, Castelvetrano olives, or other Italian olives work well. Choose whichever you enjoy.

**Can I make this without Parmesan cheese?**

You can, but Parmesan adds a wonderful savory flavor to the topping. Pecorino Romano is another delicious option.

# How to Store and Reheat

Store leftover fennel gratin in an airtight container in the refrigerator for up to 3 days.

To reheat, place it in a 350°F oven until warmed through. The oven will help bring some crispness back to the breadcrumb topping.

I don’t recommend microwaving if you want to preserve the crispy topping.

# Complete Your Italian Meal

This Italian fennel gratin makes a wonderful side dish, especially when served alongside a main course and a few other Italian favorites. If you’re planning a Sunday dinner or a holiday meal, here are a few recipes from my kitchen you might enjoy:

- **Italian Roasted Chicken** – A beautiful main course to serve with roasted vegetables.
- **Baked cod Fish** – A delicious pairing, especially for a lighter Italian meal.
- **Easy Marinara Sauce** – A staple in my Italian kitchen.
- **Italian Roasted Vegetables** – Another simple way to bring fresh vegetables to your table.

## Kitchen Tools I Recommend

A few simple kitchen essentials make preparing this dish even easier:

- **Ceramic Baking Dish** – Perfect for baking and serving your fennel gratin right at the table.
- **Extra Virgin Olive Oil Dispenser** – Makes it easy to drizzle olive oil evenly over your vegetables.
- **Box Grater** – Ideal for freshly grating Parmesan cheese.
- **Mixing Bowls** – Handy for preparing your breadcrumb and Parmesan topping.

# Italian Fennel Gratin (Finocchi Gratinati)



This Italian Fennel Gratin is a rustic Southern Italian-

inspired vegetable side dish made with tender fennel, red onions, tomatoes, and olives. Everything is drizzled with extra virgin olive oil and topped with a crispy mixture of Italian breadcrumbs and freshly grated Parmesan cheese before baking until golden. A delicious side dish for Sunday dinners, holiday meals, or any night of the week.

- 2 large fennel bulbs, trimmed and cut into thin slices
- 1 large red onion, thinly sliced
- 2 cup cherry tomatoes, halved
- 1 cup pitted kalamata or Italian olives
- 1/3 cup extra virgin olive oil, divided
- 1 cup Italian breadcrumbs
- 1/2 cup freshly grated Parmesan cheese
- 2 tsp. dried oregano
- salt and pepper to taste

1. **Preheat the oven:** Preheat your oven to 400°F. Lightly grease a baking dish with olive oil.
2. **Prepare the fennel:** Trim the fennel bulbs, remove any tough outer layers, and cut into evenly sized slices. Rinse and pat dry.
3. **Arrange the vegetables:** Place the fennel, sliced red onion, cherry tomatoes, and olives in the prepared baking dish.
4. **Season:** Drizzle with most of the olive oil. Sprinkle with oregano, salt, and black pepper. Toss gently to coat.
5. **Prepare the topping:** In a small bowl, combine the breadcrumbs and grated Parmesan cheese. Add the remaining olive oil and mix until lightly moistened.
6. **Top the vegetables:** Sprinkle the breadcrumb and Parmesan mixture evenly over the vegetables.

7. **Bake:** Bake uncovered for 35–45 minutes, or until the fennel is fork-tender and the topping is golden brown. Cooking time will depend on the thickness of your fennel slices

8. **Serve:** Allow to rest for a few minutes before serving. Enjoy warm or at room temperature.



Chef’s Tip: For extra flavor, lightly toast the breadcrumbs in a skillet with a drizzle of olive oil before mixing them with the Parmesan. This gives the topping a head start on browning and adds a wonderful nutty flavor to your fennel gratin.
Appetizer, Side Dish
Italian
Italian Fennel Gratin