

4 garlic cloves, pressed (preferable) or chopped
2 T olive oil
2 6 oz cans tomato paste, plus water
2 T finely chopped fresh oregano leaves
1 sm bay leaf
1 tsp salt
1/2 tsp freshly ground black pepper

Pasta:

1 tsp olive oil
14 manicottie noodles

Filling:

1 1/2 c ricotta cheese
6 lg eggs
3/4 lb Fontina cheese, grated
1/4 lb mozzarella cheese, grated
1/3 c freshly grated best quality Parmesan cheese
6 T soft butter (NOT margarine)
1 tsp salt
3/4 tsp freshly ground black pepper
2 T finely chopped fresh basil leaves

freshly grated Parmesan cheese for sprinkling on top

Preheat the oven to 350.

To make the sauce, gently saute' onion and garlic in the olive oil in a saucepan over Med heat until onion is translucent, about 5 min. Add the tomato paste and stir. Slowly add 4 tomato paste cans of water and stir. Add the seasonings and allow the sauce to simmer while you prepare the manicotti and filling

Bring a lg pot of water to a boil, add the olive oil, and drop in the manicotti. Cook just until al dente, about 10 to 15 min. Drain and run cold water over the manicotti in a colander. Set aside.

To make the filling, beat the ricotta with the eggs until combined in the large bowl of an electric mixer. Add the grated cheeses and softened butter; beat until combined. Add the salt, pepper, and basil. Beat on low just until everything is combined.

Gently fill the cooked manicotti with the cheese mixture and arrange in 2 buttered 9 by 13 inch pans. Cover the pasta in each pan with half the sauce; sprinkle on additional Parmesan. Bake for about 20 min until the cheese is thoroughly melted and the sauce is bubbling. Makes 7 servings.

SWEETHEART SANDWICHIES

Cookies:

1/4 lb (1 stick) unsalted butter
1 1/4 c sugar
2 lg eggs
1 tsp van extract
1/2 c unsweetened cocoa (recommended brands: Hershey's Premium European style, Droste, Ghirardelli) 2 c flour 1/2 tsp salt 1 tsp baking powder 1/2 tsp baking soda

Filling:

4 T (1/2 stick) unsalted butter
1 tsp vanilla extract
4 c confectioners' sugar
whipping cream

To make the cookies, cream the butter with the sugar in a large bowl until light. Beat in eggs and vanilla; set aside. Sift the cocoa, flour, salt, baking powder, and baking soda together. Stir the dry ingredients thoroughly into the butter mixture. Cover the bowl with plastic wrap and refrigerate for 2 or 3 hours. Preheat the oven to 375 and butter 2 cookie

sheets. Using a tsp. measure, roll level tsp of the dough into balls and place them 2 inches apart on the sheets. Bake for 10 to 15 min, until cookies are puffed and surfaces slightly dry and cracked. Cool on racks.

To make the filling, cream the butter until light. Beat in the vanilla and confectioners' sugar, adding whipping cream and continuing to beat until the consistency is like creamy frosting.

When the cookies are completely cool, spread about 1/2 tsp of filling on the bottom of one cookie, then top with the bottom side of another cookie.

Makes about 3 doz. sandwiches

Variation:

For half a batch of vanilla-filled and half a batch of peppermint-filled cookies, add 1/8 tsp. peppermint extract to half the filling. Tint the peppermint filling pink or green before filling half the sandwiches.