

FESTA ITALIANA 2pm, Sept 24th, 2023
Presented by Ronald Holden
<https://forkingseattlecom.wordpress.com/>

Cena con Tre Erbe

Three courses, as befits an Italian feast, but easy to prepare, serve, and clean up.

ANTIPASTO: BASILICO

Insalata Caprese

People always complain about tasteless tomatoes. They're right. Tomatoes are tasteless until they are shocked into life.

Here's how: Slice a beefsteak tomato horizontally, set on a large plate so the slices don't overlap. Sprinkle generously with coarse sea salt, flip it over on the same plate, salt the second side. Then drizzle with a good olive oil.

Cut a fresh ball of mozzarella into quarter-inch slices. Arrange atop the tomato slices. Drizzle with balsamic vinegar.

Just before serving, top with a few chopped or shredded basil leaves.

PASTA: SALVIA

Fusilli con Salsiccia

Fusilli in a creamy sauce with Isernio's ground chicken sausage and fresh sage leaves.

One small or half a large onion, thinly sliced. Melt a TB of butter and a TB of olive oil and sweat the onions until soft. Add the chicken sausage and mushrooms, sauté until cooked. Deglaze with white wine, stock, or water. Add chopped sage leaves and about 1 cup of half & half. Taste for balance; add salt if needed.

Now the trick: zest a lemon with a microplane grater. Mince 3 or 4 cloves of garlic and half a bunch of parsley. Combine to create a gremolata. Set aside.

As for the pasta: boil the water in a big pot; add a fistful of salt. At least 1 TB per quart. When the water is boiling rapidly, drop in your pasta. The fettuccine package says to cook for 10 minutes; set your timer for 8.

Now, you've got your sauce in the skillet and your pasta almost ready in the pot. With a pair of tongs or a pasta fork begin transferring the pasta into the skillet. Don't drain the pasta, just pick it up and slosh it out of the stock pot into the sauce. Use the tongs to stir the pasta into the sauce. Add half a ladle of cooking water to the skillet to help the sauce stick to the pasta. If it's too sticky, add another ladle of the cooking water; it's full of starch.

Just before serving, shower the pasta with the reserved gremolata.

DESSERT: MINT

Fresh berries with whipped ricotta

Ricotta's a relatively bland cheese made from sheep's milk. Widely available here, although usually made from cow's milk in the US. Dump a pint container of ricotta into a mixing bowl and sprinkle it with $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of granulated sugar. Use a wire whisk to blend the sugar into the ricotta. Taste, add another $\frac{1}{2}$ cup, whisk again, taste again.

Fold $\frac{1}{2}$ pint of fresh raspberries into the ricotta mixture, top with fresh mint leaves. Refrigerate until ready to serve.