



COOKING WITH HERBS FOR THE HOLIDAYS

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This a sampling of some of my favorite recipes collected from travels and from other wonderful sources

Appetizers

Boursin Cheese spread

1# cream cheese, softened

8 T butter, softened

Chop the following FRESH herbs and add to cream cheese/butter mixture:

2 T chives

2 T parsley

1 ½ T marjoram

1 T basil

1 ½ T lemon Thyme or English thyme

1 Clove Garlic

½ t pepper, freshly ground

Salt to taste

Chill for 3 hours before serving. Can be frozen, thaw and re-blend with a mixer before serving.

Note – if using dried adjust accordingly

Fig Goat Cheese Crostini

2 cups dry red wine such as Pinot noir

2 tablespoons plus 1 teaspoon honey

6 dried Mission figs about 4 ounces

2 whole star anise

3 ounces pancetta sliced into 1/4-inch-thick slices

1 loaf country white bread or baguette cut into 1/2-inch slices, and then cut into shapes, optional

2 tablespoons olive oil

8 ounces goat cheese at room temperature

2 tablespoons lemon juice about 1 small lemon

1 teaspoon chopped fresh mint

1/4 teaspoon kosher salt

2 tablespoons sliced fresh mint for sprinkling

In a medium saucepan combine the wine, 2 tablespoons of the honey, the figs and star anise. Bring to a boil over medium heat. Reduce the heat to low and simmer until the figs are plump and tender, about 20 minutes.

Transfer the figs to a cutting board to cool for 5 minutes. Then cut the figs into 1/4-inch slices. Discard the anise and bring the liquid back up to a boil over medium heat. Cook until the mixture is thick and reduced to 1/4 cup, about 10 minutes. Transfer the syrup to a small bowl and cool to room temperature.

Place a rack in the center of the oven and preheat to 375 degrees F.

Place the pancetta on a baking sheet and bake until the slices are crispy and brown, about 6 minutes. Set aside to cool then roughly chop.

Brush the bread slices with the oil. Place on a baking sheet and bake until lightly toasted, about 8 minutes. Transfer to a cooling rack.

In a medium bowl combine the goat cheese, lemon juice, remaining 1 teaspoon honey, the chopped mint, and the salt. Spread 1 tablespoon of the goat cheese mixture onto each crostino. Top with fig slices, pancetta crumbles and a sprinkle of sliced mint. Just before serving, drizzle with the reserved syrup.

From Giada Holidays

Warm Citrus Herb Marinated Olives

2 cups olives such as Castelvetrano, Cerignola and Kalamata
1/2 tangerine sliced and cut into quarters
4 strips lemon zest
1 cup extra-virgin olive oil
3 large sprigs thyme
2 large sprigs oregano
1 bay leaf
1 clove garlic smashed
1/2 teaspoon red pepper flakes

Giada's Holiday Handbook

Bring a pot of water to a boil over medium-high heat. Blanch the olives for about 30 seconds. Using a slotted spoon or spider, remove the olives to a medium bowl. Toss with the tangerine pieces and lemon zest.

In a small skillet, combine the olive oil, thyme, oregano, bay leaf, garlic, and red pepper flakes. Warm gently over medium heat until small bubbles form around the herbs and garlic. Reduce the heat to medium low and simmer gently until the garlic is beginning to brown and the bubbles start to subside, about 7 minutes. Pour the hot oil over the olive mixture and toss well to coat.

Allow the olives to marinate at room temperature for 2 hours or cover and refrigerate for up to 4 days - warm gently before serving.

Salad

Aunt Raffey's Holiday Salad

3 lemons
4 Belgian endives end trimmed and cut into 1- inch slices
1 medium green apple cored and cut into small cubes
2/3 cup corn kernels cut from 1/2 ear of corn and simmered for 3 minutes or defrosted frozen corn
1/4-pound Gruyère cheese cut into 1-inch cubes
1/2 avocado cut into 1-inch cubes
1 small pomegranate optional
1/4 cup plus 2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
1 teaspoon sea salt
Chopped parsley to top
Optional: 1/2 tsp dried thyme

Squeeze the juice of half a lemon in a large bowl and add the endive and apples. Toss to coat so they don't turn brown. Add the corn and cheese and toss. Place the avocado cubes in another bowl and squeeze the second half lemon over them. Toss very gently to coat and add to the salad. Cut the pomegranate in half, if using. Hold over a cutting board, cut side down, and use a wooden spoon to lightly beat the skin, causing the seeds to fall onto the board. Sprinkle the seeds over the salad.

To make the dressing, juice the remaining 2 lemons into a medium bowl. Gradually add the olive oil, whisking constantly, and season with salt and pepper. Just before serving, pour the dressing over the salad and toss gently. **Giada Holiday Cookbook**

Fennel Orange Salad

2 fennel bulbs, cut into slice

2-3 oranges, (cut into segments)

Handful of black olives

Dressing – use the juice from the oranges

1 Tbsp extra virgin olive oil

Salt and pepper to taste and sprinkle with fresh mint leaves

Arrange on a plate

Christmas Waldorf Salad

2 large Pink Lady or Cortland apples, cored cut in half and cut into ¼ inch dice

4 Greek dried figs, stemmed and cut into ¼ inch dice

1/2 cup dried cranberries

1 1/2 cups diced fennel or celery

½ teaspoon fennel powder

2 tablespoons mayonnaise

½ cup plain Greek yogurt

½ cup chopped pecans

salt and pepper to taste

1 cup washed and dried pea shoots or broccoli sprouts

In a large bowl combine the apples, figs, cranberries, fennel or celery and fennel powder. Mix well. Combine the mayonnaise and yogurt and mix into apple mixture. Add the nuts and mix well. Season with salt and pepper.

Divide the mixture among six salad plates and top each one with a heaping tablespoon of the pea shoots. Serves 6

Eat your Heart out Salad

2 hearts of romaine, chopped

1 cup sliced celery hearts, cut on the bias, 1/4 inch thick

14 oz. can quartered artichoke hearts, drained

3 hearts of pam, drained and sliced ½ inch thick

6 oz container fresh Mozzarella pearls, drained and cut in half

¼ cup pitted kalamata olives

¼ red onion, sliced

Dressing

¼ cup white vinegar

¼ cup extra virgin olive oil

3 Tbsp Dijon mustard

2 tsp dried oregano

1 tsp dried rosemary (or 2 tsp fresh)

2 tsp sugar

1 tsp salt

1 tsp fresh ground pepper

Place all ingredients for salad in a large bowl and toss well. In a small bowl, whisk all dressing ingredients until well combined. Drizzle dressing over salad and toss until evenly coated.

Main Dish

Herbed Turkey Breast

- 1/2 turkey breast about 3 pounds
- 2 teaspoons thyme leaves chopped fine
- 2 teaspoons rosemary leaves chopped fine
- 1/4 teaspoon red pepper flakes
- 2 garlic cloves chopped fine
- 3 tablespoons duck fat warmed gently so it is liquid
- 1 teaspoon kosher salt

Remove the turkey from the refrigerator 30 minutes before cooking.

Preheat the oven to 400°F.

In a small bowl, mix together the thyme, rosemary, red pepper flakes, garlic, and duck fat. Season the turkey evenly with the salt and rub the herb mixture all over. Heat a medium skillet over medium-high heat. Sear the turkey breast, skin side down until the skin gets crispy and golden brown, about 4 minutes. Flip the turkey and sear for another 4 minutes.

Transfer the breast to a rimmed baking sheet along with the duck fat from the pan. Place the tray in the oven and roast, flipping the breast every 15 minutes and basting with the juices. An instant-read thermometer should read 155°F when done. Remove the turkey from the tray and allow the meat to rest for 10 minutes before slicing. Reserve the drippings for the gravy.

Herb Rubbed Roast Pork

- 1 Tbsp sugar
- 2 tsp ground sage
- 2 tsp dried sweet marjoram, crushed
- 1 tsp salt
- ½ tsp celery seed
- ½ tsp dry mustard
- 1/8 tsp black pepper
- 5 # boneless pork loin roast
- 1 Tbsp fresh parsley chopped

In a small bowl, combine sugar, sage, sweet marjoram, salt, celery seed, dry mustard, and pepper. Thoroughly rub the roast with this mixture. Cover and let stand at least 4 hours (or overnight) in the refrigerator. Set meat on a rack in a shallow roasting pan. Insert meat thermometer. Roast uncovered in a 325-degree oven for 2 ½ - 3 hours or until temperature reaches 170 degrees. Sprinkle chopped parsley over roast. Loosely cover and let rest for 15 minutes before carving. Serves 8 or more.

Marge Clark – The Best of Thymes

Mushroom Ragu

2-3 cups sliced mushrooms – fresh mixed, button or portabella

3 sprigs thyme

1 spring rosemary (about 4" long)

4-5 sage leaves

¼ cup extra virgin olive oil

4 Tbsp butter

1 medium onion, sliced thin

1 cup finely sliced shallots

½ tsp salt

1/3 cup tomato paste

1 cup dry Marsala

1 cup water (as needed)

Fresh ground black pepper

Tie the herbs together with kitchen twine.

Put oil and butter in a large skillet and place over medium heat. When the butter is melted, dump in the onion and shallots and a pinch of salt. Cook for about 6 minutes, stirring often until the onion are soft without browning.

Pour all the mushrooms into the pan and spread them out, sprinkle with another pinch of salt. Drop in the herb bouquet, toss briefly, and cover the pan. Cook for about 3 minutes to sweat the onions. The mushrooms will release liquid as they start to cook.

Uncover and continue to cook over medium heat, stirring frequently, as the mushrooms shrink and the liquid evaporates, about 5 minutes.

Clear a spot in the middle of the pan and put in the tomato paste, toast for a minute or so then mix into mushrooms.

When everything is brown, pour in the Marsala wine, stir until it thickens and evaporates. At this point you can add a small amount of water as needed to keep a sauce. Cover for about 15 minutes and continue to add water if needed.

Remove the herb bouquet and taste for salt and pepper – adjust accordingly.

Serve over polenta or pasta.

Sides

Lemon Smashed Potatoes

2 pounds baby or fingerling potatoes
1/4 cup olive oil plus extra as needed
3 cloves garlic peeled and halved

Dressing:

3 tablespoons olive oil
3 tablespoons fresh lemon juice
2 tablespoons chopped fresh parsley leaves
1 tablespoon chopped fresh thyme leaves
2 lemons zested
Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper

For the potatoes: Put the potatoes in an 8-quart stockpot with enough cold water to cover by at least 2 inches. Bring the water to a boil over medium heat and cook until the potatoes are tender, about 20 to 25 minutes. Drain the potatoes in a colander and allow to dry for 5 minutes. Using the palm of your hand, gently press the potatoes until lightly smashed. *Giadzy*

Roasted Acorn Squash Agrodolce

2 large acorn squashes
1/4 cup extra virgin olive oil
1 1/2 teaspoons kosher salt divided
1/4 teaspoon cayenne pepper
1/8 teaspoon ground cinnamon
1/4 cup 1/2 a stick unsalted butter, at room temperature
1/4 cup apple cider vinegar
2 tablespoons sugar
1/4 cup mascarpone cheese
1/4 cup smoked almonds
15 fried sage leaves

Preheat the oven to 450 degrees F.

Using a chef's knife, cut off a small amount of the top and bottom of the squash. Set the squash on a flat side and cut it in half. Using a large spoon, scoop out the seeds and discard. Cut each half into 5 wedges and place them in a large bowl. To the bowl add the olive oil, 1 teaspoon salt, cayenne, and cinnamon. Using your hands, toss well to coat. Place the seasoned squash on a rimmed baking sheet and bake for 35 minutes or until golden brown and fork tender. Flip the squash half-way through to ensure even browning.

Place butter in a small skillet and melt over medium heat until the foam subsides, and the solids begin to smell nutty and turn brown, about 3 to 4 minutes. Allow the butter to cool for 2 minutes. In a small bowl whisk together the vinegar and sugar until the sugar is dissolved. Whisk in the brown butter. Use a rubber spatula to get all the brown bits out of the pan. Season with the remaining 1/2 teaspoon salt. Lay the squash on a rimmed platter and spoon the vinaigrette over the squash. Dollop with the mascarpone and sprinkle with the almonds and sage. **Giada's Holiday Handbook**

Baked Fennel

For 2 people:

3 fennel bulbs, cleaned and cut into ½ inch strips

1/3 cup extra virgin olive oil

1 tsp lemon zest

1 clove garlic

½ cup Pecorino or Parmesan cheese

Salt and pepper to taste

Heat oven to 375 degrees. Arrange fennel into an oven proof pan and drizzle with olive oil, sprinkle with lemon zest, garlic, salt, pepper and ½ the cheese.

Bake 30-40 minutes until soft when pierced with fork. Sprinkle with the remaining ½ cup of cheese continue to bake until golden brown – watch so it does not burn.

Sprinkle with fennel fronds if desired.

Tuscany Style Peas

4 tbsp. extra virgin olive oil

1 yellow onion, diced finely

1 tbsp. sugar

1/4 - 1/2 tsp. chili flakes

1 tbsp. tomato paste

2 cup fresh green peas or frozen

Salt

Mint leaves

In a large pan heat the oil, add the onion, cook until softened, about 7-8 minutes. Add the sugar, chili flakes and tomato paste. Cook for 5 minutes. Add the peas and cook until tender 8-10 minutes. Season with salt. Serve warm and garnish with mint. If using frozen; keep frozen until ready to use.

Dessert

Panna Cotta

1 tbsp. plus 2 tsp. powdered unflavored gelatin
2 cups whole milk
1 cup sugar
1 vanilla bean, split and seeds scraped out, or 1/4 tsp vanilla extract
2 cups very cold heavy cream

Put 1/4 cup cold water in a small bowl. Sprinkle the gelatin over it and let it soak for 5 minutes, or until softened. Combine the milk, sugar, and vanilla bean halves in a large saucepan. Stir over medium-high heat until the sugar has dissolved, then bring to a gentle boil. Remove from the heat and let cool for 2 minutes. Stir in the gelatin mixture until dissolved. Stir in the cream and remove the pieces of vanilla bean. Cool to room temperature, then refrigerate for 30 minutes, or until the mixture begins to thicken.

Pour 1/2 cup of the mixture into each of eight 6-oz. ramekins or glasses. Refrigerate for at least 2 hours, until set. If you plan to refrigerate overnight, cover with plastic wrap.

Run a sharp knife around the edge of each Panna Cotta and unmold each onto a serving plate, and garnish as desired.

Note: this is a basic recipe for Panna Cotta. You can substitute flavorings such as orange peel, lemon verbena, mint, chocolate, caramel, instant espresso powder.

Serves 8

Topping suggestions: berries, honey, strawberries with balsamic, chocolate, caramel

Nutella Version: Add 2 tbsp. of Nutella over finished Panna Cotta

Cinnamon Vanilla Ice Cream

1 cup white sugar
1 ½ cup half and half (can also use light cream or half milk/half heavy cream)
2 eggs, beaten
1 cup heavy cream
1/2 vanilla bean
2 tsp. ground cinnamon

In a saucepan over medium-low heat, stir together the sugar and half-and-half. When the mixture begins to simmer, remove from heat.

Whisk half of the cream mixture into the eggs (whisk quickly so as not to scramble the eggs). Pour the egg mixture back into the saucepan and stir in the heavy cream.

With a sharp knife, cut the vanilla bean in half lengthwise then scrape out the tiny seeds on the inside. Add the vanilla bean and the seeds to the cream mixture.

Return the cream mixture to the stove and continue cooking over medium-low heat, stirring constantly, until the mixture is thick enough to coat the back of a metal spoon.

Remove from heat and strain mixture into a bowl. Whisk in the cinnamon then set aside to cool. When mixture has cooled a bit, cover and refrigerate overnight or several hours until well chilled (I press plastic wrap over the surface to prevent a skin from forming).

Pour cold mixture into an ice cream maker and freeze according to the manufacturer's instructions.

Pears Poached in Red Wine

3 cups dry red wine
1 cup sugar
1 cinnamon stick, broken into pieces
2 Tbsp vanilla
4 whole cloves
4 firm ripe pears, peeled

Combine wine, sugar, cinnamon vanilla, and whole cloves together in a heavy pan. Bring mixture to a boil. Add pears and simmer until tender but not mushy, turning them often. Cook about 15 minutes. Place pears and syrup in a bowl. Cover and refrigerate several hours, or overnight. To serve, cut pears in half lengthwise and remove cores. Starting ½ inch from the stem end, make several lengthwise cuts in each pear half. Lay pear half onto a serving plate. Press gently on ear to fan out the slices. Spoon a little syrup over each half. Pass more syrup, if desired. Serves 4.

Marge Clark – The Best of Thymes

Lemon Vanilla Rice Pudding (Instant Pot)

2/3 cup Arborio or other short-grain white rice
3 cups whole milk
1/3 cup sugar
1 cinnamon stick
1 teaspoon finely grated lemon zest
Pinch of kosher salt
1/2 vanilla bean, halved lengthwise
3/4 cup heavy cream
2 egg yolks
1/2 cup raisins (optional)
Ground cinnamon, for serving (optional)
Whipped cream, for serving (optional)

In the pressure cooker pot, stir together the rice, milk, sugar, cinnamon stick, lemon zest, and salt. Use the tip of a paring knife to scrape the vanilla seeds out of the pod into the pot and add the vanilla bean, too.

Lock the lid into place and cook on high pressure for 4 minutes. Let the pressure release naturally for 10 minutes, then manually release the remaining pressure.

Remove and discard the cinnamon stick and vanilla bean.

In a small bowl, whisk together the cream and yolks. Whisk into the rice, continuing to stir until thickened, 2 to 4 minutes. The residual heat of the rice will cook the yolks. Stir in the raisins (if using).

Spoon the pudding into serving bowls, then cover with plastic wrap and chill for at least 4 hours. The pudding will thicken as it cools. Serve with a sprinkle of ground cinnamon and whipped cream, if desired.

Comfort in an Instant by Melissa Clark

A Treat for that holiday breakfast or as gifts

Rosemary Remembrance Bread

Makes: approx. 10 slices

FOR THE FILLING

1 eating apple (approx 180g / 6oz in weight)

2 sprigs fresh rosemary (1 small and 1 long)

1 teaspoon caster sugar

zest and juice of ½ lemon

1 teaspoon butter

FOR THE CAKE BATTER

225 grams butter

150 grams caster sugar (plus 1 tablespoon)

3 large eggs

300 grams plain flour

2 teaspoons baking powder

Peel, core and roughly chop the apple and put into a saucepan with the small sprig of rosemary, the teaspoon of sugar, the lemon zest and juice, and butter. Cover the pan and cook on a low heat for 4-8 minutes until the apple is soft. How long this takes really depends on the variety of apple you're using.

Leave to cool, and fish out the rosemary sprig when it is cold.

Preheat the oven to gas mark 3/170°C/150°C Fan/325°F. Line a 450g / 1lb loaf tin with a loaf liner, or butter and line the bottom with baking parchment.

Put the cooled apple into a food processor and blitz to a pulp. Then add the butter, 150g / ¾ cup of sugar, eggs, flour and baking powder and process to a smooth batter.

Spoon and scrape into the loaf tin and smooth the top. Sprinkle the surface with the remaining tablespoon of sugar and then lay the long sprig of rosemary along the center of the cake. On baking, the rosemary sheds its oil to leave a scented path down the middle of the cake.

Bake the cake for 50 minutes or until a cake tester comes out clean, then leave to cool on a rack. Slip the paper-lined cake out of the tin once it is cool. Nigella, Feast

Ideas for Herbal gift giving

Salt – make a variety of herb salts and package in cute jars with labels. Example: basil, rosemary/lemon, oregano, lemon verbena

Sugar – make herbal sugars – give someone several jars to use over the winter in tea, cookies, and desserts.

Example: lavender, mint, lemon verbena

Vinegar – make a large batch of your favorite vinegar – divide up into smaller bottles and provide a recipe card for a basic vinaigrette using the vinegar and suggestions on what to do with their gift.

Ideas: Italian herbs, tarragon, chive blossom, basil

Dried herb blend – give a package of your favorite blend with a recipe card

Ideas for a charcuterie Board

Meats and cheese

Nuts

Mustards

Jams

Dried Fruit

Fresh Fruit

Crackers and Bread

Pickles, peppers and olives

Fresh herbs for garnish such as rosemary, thyme, mint



Happy Holidays and Happy Herbal Treats!