

Focaccia di Recco

Makes 2

Preheat your oven to 500 degrees (or as high as it will go).

1 1/4 pounds stracchino or crescenza cheese
2 cups bread flour, plus more as needed
1 teaspoon kosher salt, plus more for sprinkling
1/3 cup extra-virgin olive oil, plus more for the pans and as needed

Break up the cheese by pulling it apart a bit, in a strainer lined with cheesecloth over a bowl. Let it drain in the refrigerator for a couple of hours.

Combine the flour and salt in the food processor, and pulse to combine. Combine 1/2 cup plus 2 tablespoons cold water and 1/3 cup olive oil in a spouted measuring cup. With the processor running, add the water mixture, and process until the mixture forms a loose ball on the blade. Continue to process until the dough is smooth and elastic, about 1 minute. Put the dough on a floured counter, knead it a few times to bring it together, and wrap it in plastic wrap. Let it rest at room temperature for 1 hour.

Brush two 11-to-12-inch pizza pans liberally with a tablespoon of olive oil each. Divide the dough into quarters. Roll or stretch one piece of dough into an 11-to-12-inch round. (Roll it as thin as possible without its tearing, as thin as pasta dough if you can.) Set that piece of dough in one pizza pan, and drop half of the cheese in small lumps over the top, leaving a scant 1-inch border. Brush the edge of the border with water. Roll out a second piece of dough in the same way, and lay it over the top of the first. Press the edges to seal. (For a neater look, you can run a pizza cutter around the border to make a perfect round.) Cut a few small slits in the top of the dough to help steam escape. Brush with olive oil and sprinkle with salt. Repeat with the remaining ingredients in the second pan.

Bake on the bottom rack until the bottom and top of each focaccia is crisp and golden, 16 to 18 minutes. Brush once more, liberally, with olive oil, and serve warm.

Penne with Cauliflower and Green Olive Pesto

Penne con Cavolfiore e Pesto d'Olive Verdi

Serves 6

Active Time: 20 minutes

Total Time: 20 minutes

Cooking a vegetable along with the pasta, in this case cauliflower, is a great way to stretch a pound of pasta with healthy ingredients, without dirtying another pan. You could do the same here with broccoli or broccolini, green beans, or snap or snow peas.

- Kosher salt
- 1 cup pitted Italian green olives, such as Castelvetrano
- ½ cup walnuts, toasted
- 2 cups loosely packed fresh Italian parsley leaves
- 2 garlic cloves, crushed and peeled
- Peperoncino flakes
- 1/3 cup extra-virgin olive oil
- 1 pound penne
- 1 small cauliflower, cut or broken into small florets
- ½ cup freshly grated Grana Padano

Bring a large pot of salted water to a boil for the pasta. In the meantime, combine the olives, walnuts, parsley, garlic, and a large pinch of peperoncino in the work bowl of a mini-food processor. Pulse to make a chunky paste. With the machine running, add the olive oil in a steady stream to make a smooth pesto. Remove it to a serving bowl. Season with salt.

Add the penne to the boiling water. After about 2 minutes, add the cauliflower. When the pasta is al dente and the cauliflower is tender, remove them with a spider to the serving bowl with the sauce. Add the grated cheese; toss, adding up to ½ cup pasta-cooking water if it seems dry, to coat the pasta with the sauce, and serve.

Shaved Artichoke, Spinach, and Mortadella Salad

Insalata di Lamelle di Carciofo, Spinaci, e Mortadella

Serves 4

Active Time: 20 minutes

Total Time: 20 minutes

This is the salad to make when you find young, tender, chokeless baby artichokes. Don't attempt it if the artichokes are tough or past their prime. If needed, substitute Jerusalem artichokes, washed well and thinly sliced. If you don't have a mandoline, use a very sharp knife and thinly slice the artichokes by hand.

- 1 lemon
- 12 ounces baby artichokes (about 6)
- 3 stalks celery, very thinly sliced, plus ½ cup inner leaves
- 3-ounce chunk Grana Padano, grated on the coarse holes of a box grater
- 6-ounce chunk mortadella, cut into matchsticks
- 6 cups loosely packed baby spinach
- ¼ cup extra-virgin olive oil
- Kosher salt
- Freshly ground black pepper

Juice the lemon into a large serving bowl, and set aside.

Trim the stems, tough outer leaves, and tops from the artichokes. Halve them, and thinly slice on a mandoline into the large bowl with the lemon juice, tossing as you go. Add the celery, cheese, mortadella, and spinach. Drizzle with the olive oil, and season with salt and pepper. Toss well, and serve right away.