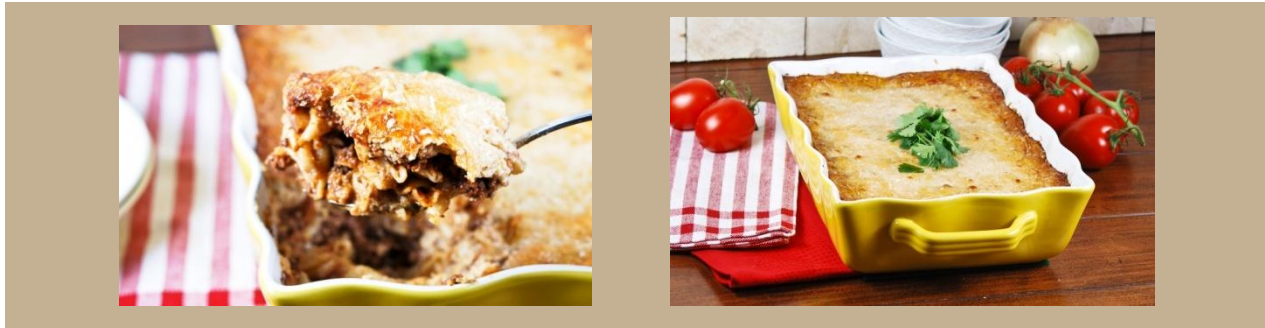


Recipe of the Month - December 2014

Pastitsio



Last week my Mom was over and we were making dinner. We started talking about the new Ina Garten cookbook that just came out and I told her that I had bought it. She went on to tell me that she had bought it as well and had already made one of the recipes. It's a dish called Pastitsio and Ina describes it as Greek lasagna. My mom went on to tell me she has actually made it twice now, once for some friends who came over for dinner and second time for a dinner at her church. Both times it was a big hit. I needed a recipe for this month so I looked at the recipe to see if I liked it and it looked really good. So I made it myself to try it out. It's delicious and a perfect time of year for a dish like this, cold weather and rain. When you look at the recipe there is a lot going on, but it's not as complicated as it seems. The hardest part is the béchamel sauce. Take your time and you'll be fine. Also, make sure to cook the pasta al dente because it will cook more when you bake everything. I would serve this with green beans or another green vegetable and a nice red wine. This is our last recipe for this year! I hope you enjoy this and I hope you have enjoyed another year of us sharing recipes with you and your friends. Happy Holidays.

Ingredients

Good olive oil

1 1/2 cups chopped yellow onions (1 large)

1 pound lean ground beef

1 pound lean ground lamb
1/2 cup dry red wine, such as Cotes du Rhone
1 tablespoon minced garlic (3 cloves)
1 tablespoon ground cinnamon
1 teaspoon dried oregano
1 teaspoon chopped fresh thyme leaves
Pinch of cayenne pepper
1 (28 oz) can crushed tomatoes in thick puree
Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper
1 1/2 cups whole milk
7 oz plain Greek yogurt
1 cup heavy cream
4 tablespoons (1/2 stick) unsalted butter
1/4 cup all-purpose flour
1/4 teaspoon ground nutmeg
1 1/2 cups freshly grated Parmesan cheese, divided
7 ounces small pasta shells, such as Ronzoni
2 extra large eggs, lightly beaten

Heat 3 tablespoons of olive oil in a large pot over medium to medium-high heat. Add the onion and sauté for 5 minutes. Add the beef and lamb and sauté over medium heat for 8 to 10 minutes, crumbling it with a wooden spoon, until it's no longer pink. Add the wine and cook for 2 more minutes. Add the garlic, cinnamon, oregano, thyme, and cayenne, and continue cooking over medium heat for 5 minutes. Add the tomatoes and their liquid, 1 tablespoon salt, and 1 1/2 teaspoons black pepper. Lower the heat and simmer, stirring occasionally, for 40 to 45 minutes, until the liquid evaporates. Set aside.

Preheat the oven to 350 degrees.

For the béchamel, heat the milk and cream together in a small saucepan over medium-low heat, until simmering. In a medium saucepan, melt the butter, add the flour, and cook over medium heat, whisking constantly, for 2 minutes. Pour the hot milk mixture into the butter and flour mixture, whisking constantly. Continue whisking over medium heat for 4 to 6 minutes, until thick and smooth. Add the nutmeg, 1 tablespoon salt, and 1 teaspoon black pepper. Stir in 3/4 cup

of the Parmesan cheese and allow to cool for 10 minutes. Stir in the yogurt and set aside.

Meanwhile, in a large pot of boiling salted water, cook the shells al dente, according to the package instructions. Don't overcook the pasta; it will be baked later. Drain and set aside.

To assemble, combine the pasta with the meat and tomato sauce, stir in the eggs, and pour the mixture into an 11x15x2-inch baking dish. Spread the béchamel evenly over the pasta and sprinkle with the remaining 3/4 cup of Parmesan cheese. Bake for 1 hour, until golden brown and bubbly. Set aside for 10 minutes and serve hot.

Enjoy!