

PAIR UP

with Maria Terry



January 2010 – Italian Comfort

Casseroles are one of the best ways to warm you when it's cold out. Here is a Cal-Italia menu, anchored by lasagna, guaranteed to make you toasty warm, transporting you to the hills of Tuscany. Start with a peachy, Prosecco 'cocktail' and finish with a rich, golden Vin Santo. This meal can be a romantic get-away for two (with easily freezable leftovers). Or serve the whole pan to feed a busload of twelve.

California citrus aptly represents Italy's sunshine. Pick oranges or grapefruits, cut them into supremes and then scatter them over a bed of romaine lettuce. Drizzle with a tangy citrus vinaigrette and serve with a bubbly, peach Bellini (3 parts Prosecco to 1 part peach schnapps). Now that's refreshing!

Next is a fundamental wine-and-food pairing that works nearly every time: regional foods with their regional wines. Italy proves this rule more than almost anywhere in the world. For example, the classic red wine of Tuscany, Chianti, is made primarily from high-acid Sangiovese grapes. The higher acidity will make it perfect with the tomato sauce found in the lasagna recipe listed here.

A simple but elegant finish to this Italian comfort meal is crunchy biscotti, a twice-baked cookie that can be found on most grocery store shelves. It is excellent for dipping into a tiny glass of sweet Italian Vin Santo or a cup of bitter Espresso.

So, go on. Pair Up!

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Citrus Vinaigrette

Mix together 2 tablespoons marmalade with 2 tablespoons white wine or cider vinegar and whisk in 1/3 cup extra-virgin olive oil.

My Kid's Favorite Lasagna

INGREDIENTS

- 1 box of dry Lasagna noodles
- 1 lb. of ground beef
- 1 jar of Ragu or your favorite jarred spaghetti sauce
- 1 lb. of Monterey jack cheese, grated
- 1 lb. of mozzarella cheese, grated
- 1 lb. of cream cheese

DIRECTIONS

Cook noodles as per package directions.

Brown ground beef, season with salt and pepper. Drain fat and mix in spaghetti sauce.

In an 11" X 13" rectangle baking pan, spread 1/4 of the meat mixture on the bottom of the pan. Top with 1/3 of the noodles. Add another 1/4 of the meat mixture and dot with 1/3 of the cream cheese. Then sprinkle on 1/3 of each of the grated cheeses. Repeat the noodle, meat, cream cheese, grated cheese layers two more times. The last layer should be grated cheese.

Cover with foil and cook for 1/2 hour. Remove foil and cook ten more minutes or until golden brown. Allow to cool 15 minutes before serving to set-up.

Yield: (about 12) 3" X 3" squares