

## LITTLE GREEN THINGS

# Spaghetti con Verdure Verdi in Padella

### SPAGHETTI WITH SAUTÉED GREENS

❖ *Funghi con Ripieno di Pesto e Formaggio*

❖ *Insalata Capricciosa*

❖ *Spaghetti con Verdure Verdi in Padella*

❖ *Un Piatto di Carne Fredda Assortita per L'Uomo che ha fame, per favore*

❖ *Torta di Cioccolato con Fragole*

Sometimes, when the weather is really beautiful and the chill has left the morning air, you can get up really early and get to the farmers' markets before most people have beaten you to the very best produce. My favorite tomato supplier will have seconds for half the price of the usual tomatoes. When I know that I am going to be using a lot of them in the next few days, or I plan on chopping them for a salsa, sauce, or soup, I don't really care if there's a blemish or cut in the skin of the tomato. On this morning the tomato pickings were excellent. What I wasn't expecting was an excellent selection of fresh spring greens. Every vendor had his or her best spring greens, dandelion, Brussels sprouts, small young cabbages, colored chard, arugula and even basil. They all looked good, and I bought several different types. When I arrived home, I realized that I'd bought way too much in the greens category. Jim will eat some greens, though usually under duress. If it's raw, and is arugula, he will notice it every time and complain. A perfectly sautéed platter of greens is definitely not something he will look forward to or request. He will very likely pass on the entire course. If I occasionally add it to pasta, it can be delicious. He will eat it (not too often), although he once told me that adding greens to pasta was just a good way to ruin a perfectly good plate of pasta. Never mind that greens contain huge amounts of anti-oxidants and other great nutritional elements, he'd rather just have the pasta, and "Skip the greens, please!"

## Appunti/Notes

**MUSHROOMS STUFFED WITH PESTO AND CHEESE** ~ I can usually put basil into anything, and it is well received. After a long winter, the sight of basil is a welcome thing. I made a quick *pesto*, most of it to be used for another evening. Pull the stems out of the mushrooms, and, as a minimum, put a little cube of a light cheese into each, followed by a dollop of *pesto*. A coating of breadcrumbs (you made them yourself, right?), salt and pepper, herb and olive oil, and into the oven or broiler. They can be cooked ahead, and reheated just before serving if you're pressed for time at the dinner hour.

**CHOPPED RAW VEGETABLE SALAD** ~ Not only were the greens wonderful, but the sugar snap peas and small green beans had arrived on the scene. This salad can be made by keeping the vegetables whole or chopped into very large pieces. For variety I like to finely chop the green beans, sugar snap peas in their pods, and pieces of colored bell peppers, and combine them with the chopped stems from the chard, parsley or dandelion greens, and even julienned cabbage leaves. You can dress the mixture with either oil and vinegar or a coleslaw-like dressing involving the addition of some mayonnaise or yogurt. Season it well; add some of the herbs and perhaps a bit of lemon zest and juice.

**SPAGHETTI WITH SAUTÉED GREENS** ~ Now for the greens: You can do this dish in a vegetarian manner; however, I prefer the flavor of pork or poultry. (Did you know that if you get a yellow layer of fat off the top of a pot of chicken broth that does not get hard, it's actually called the *schmaltz*?) Start sautéing your onion, leek or shallot in a little bit of *schmaltz*, bacon fat or goose fat with your olive oil. You can sauté bacon, ham, and *pancetta* with the greens, also. I like to sauté the meat until it's crispy and then reserve it on some paper towels and use it at the very end as a garnish. Sauté any of the greens, including spinach (for those wary of the more unusual greens), and finish with some form of acid; either lemon juice, a bit of wine or vinegar. Add your favorite cooked pasta to the pan. Add some of the reserved pasta water so it's not too dry. Toss together, add grated *Parmigiano* or Romano cheese, and finish with chopped parsley or basil.





### A PLATE OF ASSORTED COLD MEATS FOR THE HUNGRY MAN, PLEASE ~

Now, while the rest of us can be content with a great plate of pasta for the main course, especially if some crispy meat pieces are included, my man loves meat! So, as homage to his inner beast, and as a diversion from the greens, which cannot be so cleverly concealed when tossed with pasta, I added a plate of whatever meat happened to be around from the night before. A leftover steak, chops or roast, sliced and artfully displayed with some crumbled gorgonzola or herbs, allows him to decide to eat them cold, or microwave them at will. Either way, a meat eater can be empowered and not have to succumb to the “girl food” pasta preparation. My husband will count the number of pieces of meat and the number of people, and, if the number of meat is not vastly greater than the number of people, he will state, “There’s not enough food!” in a voice of panic. I will tell him calmly that “The women are not having meat tonight, dear,” even if it’s not true. There’s usually plenty of meat for all, as necessary, the rest of us requiring far less than his “fear of insufficient meat” obsession allows.

**CHOCOLATE CAKE WITH STRAWBERRIES** ~ Whenever we have an entire cake for someone’s birthday or other event, it’s usually pawned off on an outgoing guest with, “*Please*, take home some cake!” No one else will eat it, except me. Nowadays, I try to only eat really good dark chocolate pieces for dessert, so even I will be willing to let a cake go home with someone else. This cake was a very good bakery-made seven layer chocolate torte. I couldn’t let it go, but knew I needed to limit our (meaning my) consumption, so I had quartered it and frozen each piece. It had gotten a little banged up in the freezer, so I sliced it into the size of lady fingers while still frozen. I placed them along the bottom and sides of a trifle dish and added lots of frozen strawberries and boysenberries to fill the spaces between. The dessert became about the berries, not the chocolate. The whole dish went back into the refrigerator to stay chilled until time to serve. Once everyone was seated at the table, I pulled out the dish, drizzled some orange liqueur over it, and left a container of vanilla ice cream on the counter to soften. Some of the ice cream was spooned on top, and in this case a few birthday candles were added. It made a delicious dessert, and I did not have to dilute my available time with baking or driving to the bakery that day.