

Matthew May's

TEACHING KITCHEN

BETTER LIVING THROUGH FOOD AND SCIENCE

"A Taste of Greece"

July 13, 2024

SPANAKOPITA DIP/RUSTIC BREAD

12-16-ounces fresh baby spinach, any large stems removed

1-tsp. fresh garlic, minced

¼-cup water

4-ounces cream cheese, room temperature

4-ounces feta cheese, crumbled

cracked black pepper to taste

Using a large skillet or fry pan, add chopped garlic, and water; stir. Cook over medium-low heat until almost all the water has evaporated (about 2-3 minutes). Add spinach. Stir and cook for 2-3 minutes, or until all the spinach has wilted and the moisture has evaporated out of the pan. Turn heat off, then add cream cheese, feta, and black pepper to taste; stir to evenly combine. If you see any moisture (water on the bottom of the pan, turn heat back on and stir until moisture has evaporated. Taste and adjust pepper if needed. Transfer to individual ramekins or a larger serving dish. Serving option: Make a double or triple batch, transfer to a casserole dish, top with breadcrumbs, and bake at 375°F until top is golden brown. Serve with toast points, bread, and/or crackers.

MEDITERRANEAN PAN-ROASTED HALIBUT

1-pound wild caught halibut, portioned, skin-on

½-tsp. Lemon Garlic Sea Salt (found at www.eastcoastsaltcompany.com)

1-tsp. cracked black pepper

6 TBSP. olive oil

6 TBSP. unsalted butter

1 lemon, juiced

2 cloves garlic, minced

¼-pound multi-color heirloom grape tomatoes, cut in half (lengthwise)

(substitute or add julienned colored peppers instead of or addition to the tomatoes)

¼-cup Kalamata olives, pitted, halved

1 red, yellow, or orange bell pepper, julienned

Pat the fish dry and cut into desired sized portions. Four portions are ideal for a 1-pound piece of halibut. Ideally, you want the portions to be the same size so they will cook evenly, at the same rate. Heat a skillet over medium-high heat and add butter and olive oil. Once the butter has begun to foam, carefully add the portions of halibut to the pan (skin side up), leaving space in between each piece. This is important as you want the moisture in the fish to evaporate for the fish to brown (the Maillard reaction). Cook this first side for about 3-4 minutes, allowing a sear to form on the bottom. Carefully, turn fish over and cook for another 2-3 minutes on this second side. Ideally, the goal is to cook the halibut one third of the way through on each side, allowing for 'carry-over-cooking'. The halibut should be seared on the outside, and opaque and flaky on the inside when finished. Avoid overcooking. Remove halibut from pan and transfer to a serving plate. Add tomatoes, olives, garlic, peppers, salt, pepper, and lemon juice to the browned butter; stir. Cook for about 2 minutes or until the peppers are tender and tomatoes have begun to release their juices. Taste and adjust seasoning if needed. You want to taste the delicious brown butter, the salt, and the acidity from the lemon juice. Spoon the lemon garlic brown butter sauce over the fish and serve. You will notice the halibut finished cooking while it rested and while you made the pan sauce.

KEFTEDES (GREEK MEATBALLS)

1-pound ground beef (85/15 or 8/20 works best with its' fat content)

¼-cup breadcrumbs

¼-cup whole milk or heavy cream

¼-tsp. dry oregano

¼-tsp. dry cumin

1/8-tsp. salt

1/8-tsp. ground black pepper

1/8-tsp. ground cinnamon

1/8-tsp. ground nutmeg

½-tsp. "Lemon Garlic" Sea Salt (from www.eastcoastsaltcompany.com)

½-tsp. Worcestershire sauce

1-tsp. minced fresh garlic

2-TBSP. minced white or yellow onion

1-tsp. chopped parsley

1-tsp. chopped fresh mint

zest from half a lemon

Preheat oven to 400°F. In a 1-cup measuring cup, combine breadcrumbs, milk, Worcestershire sauce, all dry spices, and salt; stir and set aside for about 5 minutes to allow time for the breadcrumbs to absorb the milk and for the salt to dissolve. In a medium size mixing bowl, add ground beef and remaining ingredients. Stir to combine. Add breadcrumbs and milk mixture (also called 'panade'). Stir to evenly combine and there are no traces of breadcrumbs. Using a tablespoon or small measuring cup, measure out meatballs to a uniform size, until all the ground beef mixture has been used. Try to create evenly sized meatballs to ensure they will all cook evenly. Place meatballs on a baking sheet tray or rimmed baking dish. **This recipe is traditionally cooked in a skillet on the stovetop that results in 'browning' the meatballs. We are going to make an adjustment to the oven that will allow moisture to evaporate quickly, to get better browning on the meatballs. Place a wooden spoon in the door of the oven which will allow the steam from the meatballs to evaporate much more quickly.* Bake for about 20 minutes, then rotate the pan and continue baking another 20 minutes. Insert a stem thermometer into the center of the meatballs that are in the center of the pan. (The meatballs in the center of the pan will cook slower than those around the outside of the pan). You're

looking for an internal temperature of about 160°F. When meatballs reach an internal temperature of 160°F, remove from oven and allow to rest for about 10 minutes. The meatballs will continue to cook and will climb in temperature of about 165°F. (This is called “carry-over-cooking”).

CREMA CATALANA

4 egg yolks

zest of 1 medium-sized lemon

zest of 1 small orange

1-cup heavy cream

¼-tsp. ground cinnamon

2 TBSP. sugar (divided)

2 6–8-ounce baking cups/ramekins

(Makes two desserts)

Heat oven to 300°F. Zest lemon and orange. You can use a vegetable peeler to remove large ‘ribbons’ of the zest, which will be much easier to remove later. Separate egg yolks from the whites (discard or save the whites for another recipe). In a small saucepan, bring cream, cinnamon, lemon zest, and orange zest to a low simmer over medium-low heat. Stir occasionally and do not let it boil. Once the cream mixture reaches a low simmer, turn off heat and allow the zest to steep in the hot cream for at least 20 minutes. Strain the citrus cream through a strainer or cheese cloth to remove the zest. Slowly pour the hot citrus cream into the egg yolk mixture (a little at a time), while stirring constantly. Pouring too fast will result in scrambled eggs. Place your 2 ramekins into a 9”x9”-inch pan. Divide the custard mixture into the ramekins. Pour the water into the pan until it’s halfway up the side of the ramekins. Be careful not to pour any water into the custard. Bake 40-45 minutes or until centers are just set. A thermometer inserted into the center should read between 170°-175°F. Remove ramekins from hot water and cool them on the counter to room temperature, then refrigerate for a minimum of three hours. When ready to serve: Sprinkle powdered sugar on top or Bruleè them to make ‘crème Bruleè’.