

I started cooking when I was a newlywed at 19. I love to experiment with recipes and love variety. My best recipes are easy to prepare, but taste like I've been in the kitchen all day. I always buy the best ingredients, and the sign in my kitchen says it all - I love to cook with wine, sometimes I even put it in the food!

I chaired a successful fundraising cookbook, "SMC Cooks" for the Sales and Marketing Council in Orange County, and provided the inspiration for "20 Years of Good Taste", Mission Viejo's 20th Anniversary Community Cookbook. On a more personal note, my Christmas gift to my children and grandchildren last year was a family cookbook complete with 20 years of photos and all our favorite recipes.

I have been featured on the front page of the Food Section in the Inland Empire's Press-Enterprise Newspaper, was a first place, second place and division winner at several Orange County Fair baking competitions, and was a finalist in the California Strawberry Festival Berry-Off in Oxnard.

Although I enjoy the sunny and bright summer days, my favorite season is fall. As a cook, I enjoy the Farmers markets still bursting with fresh fruits and vegetables along with the craving for comfort food as the days grow shorter. Please enjoy these recipes featuring Lions Peak wines as you settle into fall.

Italian Sausage Soup

Serve with Lions Peak Cabernet '06 Reserve or the new Vis a Vis

1½ c. Lions Peak Cabernet
1½ lbs. Italian sausage cut in ¼" slices
2 cloves garlic
2 onions, chopped
2 lbs. tomatoes, peeled and cored (or 3 cans stewed tomatoes)
5 c. beef stock
¼ c. fresh basil
½ tsp. oregano
16 oz. sliced mushrooms
3 tbsp. chopped fresh parsley
2 medium zucchini, sliced
1 green pepper, seeded and chopped
2 c. pasta (bowties, orecchiette, small shells or tortellini)
salt and pepper to taste
parmesan cheese

Cook sausage 10 minutes until lightly browned. Drain all but 3 tbsp. fat; add garlic, onions, green pepper and sauté until transparent. Add sausage, tomatoes, mushrooms, wine, beef stock, basil, oregano, parsley and simmer uncovered 30 minutes. (Soup may be refrigerated at this point).

Skim fat, reheat soup, add zucchini and pasta*. Simmer covered for 15 minutes or until noodles are al dente. Serve topped with parmesan cheese and a slice of great garlic bread.

*The pasta, once added, becomes mushy the next day. Add only the amount you need for each day of serving. Serves 6

Tomato and Sausage Risotto

Serve with Lions Peak Chardonnay or Mouvedre

28 oz. can diced tomatoes
1 tbsp. olive oil
¾ Italian sausage
1 onion
salt and pepper
1 c. arborio rice
½ c. Lions Peak Chardonnay
6 c. chopped spinach
½ c. parmesan cheese
2 tbsp. margarine

Combine tomatoes and 3 cups water and bring to a simmer. Heat oil in skillet. Add sausage, onion, salt and pepper. Break sausage into small pieces and cook 5-10 minutes until done. Add rice and stir 2 minutes until it is coated. Add wine and stir until it is absorbed, about 1 minute. Add 2 cups of the tomato mixture to the rice. Simmer until absorbed (approx. 5 minutes). Add tomato mixture 1 cup at a time until absorbed. Rice will become creamy and tender in about 25 minutes.

Remove from heat. Stir in spinach, parmesan and margarine. Serve immediately with additional parmesan cheese. Serves 4

Great Garlic Bread

1 c. mayonnaise
1 c. parmesan cheese
1-2 tbsp. minced garlic
2 tbsp. finely chopped basil
1 loaf Italian or sourdough bread, halved horizontally

In small bowl, mix mayonnaise, Parmesan and garlic. Arrange bread cut side up. Broil until slightly browned. Spread mixture on top and broil until top is puffed and golden brown. Sprinkle with chopped basil. Serves 6-8

Wine Country Applesauce

2½ lbs. apples (4 Johnathan, 2 Granny Smith)
peeled and cut into ½ inch cubes
1 c. Lions Peak Vis a Vis
½ to ¾ c. sugar (to taste)
½ tsp. nutmeg
¼ tsp. cinnamon (or more to taste)
⅛ tsp. cloves

Place apples, sugar and wine in a pan and cook until apples are tender. Remove from heat and add spices. Simmer 5 minutes more. Put in food processor to puree or leave chunky. Serve warm or cold. Serves 4 – 6

Chocolate Hot Fudge Cakes
Serve with Lions Peak XIX Augustus Port

chocolate fudge or devil's food cake mix
1½ c. water
½ c. vegetable oil
3 eggs
Hot Fudge topping
8 scoops vanilla ice cream

Beat cake mix, water, oil and eggs 2-3 minutes. Pour ½ c. batter into greased cups of a jumbo size muffin pan. Bake for 25-30 minutes or until toothpick inserted in center of cakes comes out clean. Remove from pan and let cool.

Slice a bit of the domed top so cupcakes lay flat when inverted. Using a serrated knife, cut a 1½" round chunk in the center of the bottom of each cake. Scoop out the chunk of cake with a teaspoon. Spoon 2 tbsp. hot fudge into the holes and store in a sealed container in the refrigerator. At this time I also scoop out 8 scoops of ice cream, wrap individually in plastic wrap and put in freezer.

When ready to serve, heat one cake at a time in the microwave 40-45 seconds on high. Remove from microwave, place a scoop of vanilla ice cream along side. To really go over the top, puree raspberries and sugar, spoon onto plate and place cake on top of sauce. Makes 8 cakes.