

NATIVE SOIL: A PERFECT WINTER IN FRIULI

Tastes *of* Italia

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FEBRUARY 2015



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FEBRUARY 2015

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WITH 7
GREAT SOUPS

MAKING
PERFECT
BISCOTTI



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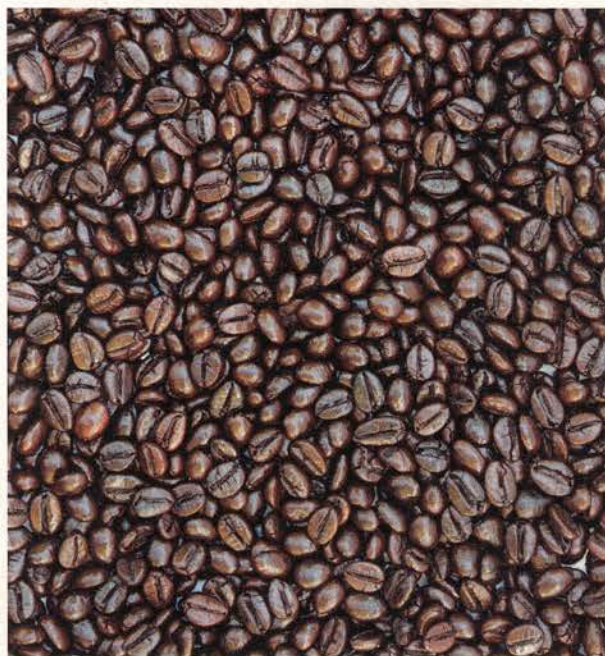
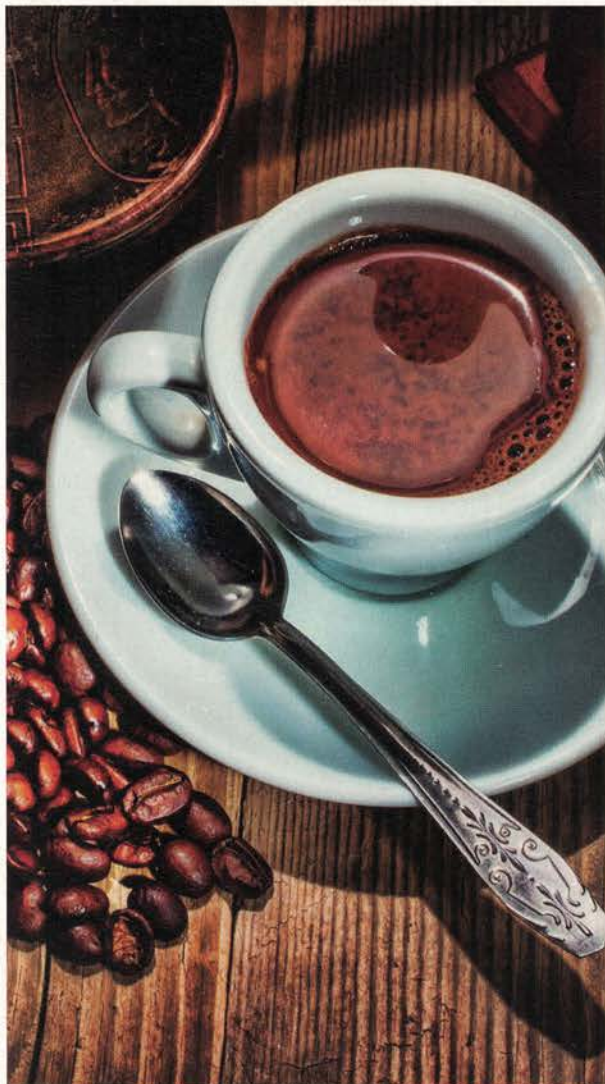
GOOD TASTES



The Essentials

Keep warm with a cup of hot espresso, a slice of Italian cheese, and a hearty dish of pappardelle.

BY PATRICK BARTLETT



Chill Chaser

Keep winter cold in check with a steamy cup of espresso.

Piping hot and strong, espresso means quick in Italian and is a fast way of delivering a strong cup of coffee. Enjoy it alone or use as the base for other coffee drinks, such as cappuccino and caffè mocha.

The first Italian patent for a steam-driven coffee beverage machine was registered to Angelo Moriondo in Turin in 1884. Others followed and today espresso is popular worldwide. While it's best when brewed through an espresso machine, you can improvise by using a good quality strong coffee, such as French roast. The result will not be quite the same, but it will still warm you on a chilly day. For a basic Caffé Latte, brew a double shot of espresso and pour into a cup. Top with steamed milk. For variations, try the recipes below:

Caffé Mocha

- 1 cup espresso
- 1 ounce chocolate syrup
- ¼ cup steamed milk
- Whipped cream
- Chocolate for sprinkling, if desired

Brew espresso according to the directions of the machine's manufacturer. Coat the bottom of a cup with the chocolate syrup. Add espresso and steamed milk to fill the cup. Top with whipped cream and a sprinkle of chocolate, if desired.

Makes 1 cup.

Espresso with Kahlua and Whipped Cream

- 1 cup heavy cream
- 2 teaspoons powdered sugar
- 2 ounces semisweet chocolate chips
- 12 ounces hot espresso or strongly brewed coffee
- 2 ounces Kahlua
- Cocoa powder

In a large bowl, whip the cream and sugar until firm. Set aside. In a small pan or heat-proof bowl set inside a larger pan of boiling water, melt the chocolate, stirring until smooth. Remove and spoon chocolate into each cup. Top with espresso, Kahlua and whipped cream. Dust with cocoa powder and serve.

Make 6 servings.

Note: You may substitute Amaretto for the Kahlua.

Easy Cappuccino

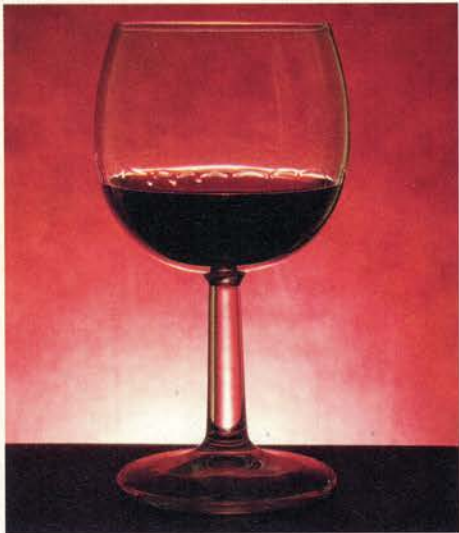
- 2 cups hot espresso or strongly brewed coffee
- 1 cup milk
- 1½ teaspoons sugar

Brew the coffee. Combine the sugar and milk and heat well, but not boiling. Remove the milk and sugar from the heat and let cool several minutes. Using a whisk or a blender, whip the mixture until it is fluffy and foamy.

Fill the cups about two-thirds full with the espresso and top it off with the heated milk and sugar.

Makes 2 cups.

Patrick Bartlett is a freelance writer, wine and food educator, and winery brand consultant. He co-owns and operates Mood Wine, an online wine store with a focus on wine tastings, dinners, and wine country tours. See his wine and food blog at www.moodwinellc.com.



Myrtle Magic

Myrtle thrives in Sardinia and is used to make mirto, a liqueur. With a flavor similar to juniper, mirto has a bouquet of sweet herbs. Try it in Mussels with Mirto found in *Sweet Myrtle and Bitter Honey: The Mediterranean Flavors of Sardinia* (Rizzoli International Publications, Inc.) by Efsio Farris. Use 3 pound of mussels, 1 medium orange, 3/4 cup extra virgin olive oil, 6 cracked garlic cloves, and 1/2 cup mirto. Rinse the mussels, remove the zest and cut the orange into long strips, avoiding the bitter white part. Heat the olive oil and garlic in a large skillet over medium heat until the garlic is softened. Add the mussels and sauté 1 minute. Add the orange strips and 1 cup of warm water, cover, and steam until the mussels begin to open. Add mirto when most of the mussels have opened. Lower the heat and simmer until the sauce becomes syrupy. Serve mussels in the shell, drizzled with the cooking liquids. Makes 4 servings.

ANCIENT TASTE

Caciocavallo, made as a cow or sheep milk cheese, similar to provolone, with a hard edible rind. The name caciocavallo means "cheese on horseback."

Shaped like a teardrop, this southern Italian cheese is tied together in bundles and hung straddling horizontal

sticks to cure, thus conjuring the horseback name. Like most things Italian, caciocavallo is an ancient cheese. It is first mentioned by Hippocrates

around 500 B.C.; he marveled at the Greeks' cleverness in making cheese, and your discovery of it will be just as clever.

Cheese
of the
month



FINDS



HEALTHY TREAT

In many Old-World cultures, dried fruit played an important role in winter dishes. The fruit brought nutrients and a myriad of flavors to otherwise drab winter options. This is true in Italy, too. One of the most popular is the Sultana raisin, more commonly known in the U.S. as the Thompson seedless. Grapes are among the oldest cultivated fruits in the world. The Sultana grape is mostly known to have originated in the Ottoman Empire. As in most of the world, Sultana grapes are prolific all over the Mediterranean. One way to use them is in the Italian condiment Mostarda. Made as a savory sauce, it is traditionally served with roasted and braised meats, but has recently gained popularity as a cheese board condiment.

IN SEASON

Going Wild

Similar to domestic pork, boar is a savory winter game meat that pairs best with hearty wide pasta, like pappardelle.

Like all ancient cultures, Italian cuisine is founded on what is plentifully available in the wild. One of the most important wild meats in Italy is pork, due in large part to Italy's impressive wild boar populations. The Italians boast several heritage breeds, two major ones being Cinta Senese and Nero Romagnolo.

Historically, wild boar populations were in harmony with people living nearby. It was easy for a farmer to quickly hunt for fresh meat. But when not kept in check, boar can also be destructive, tearing through vineyards, orchards, and gardens in no time. To keep the populations under control in Italy, boar hunts are sanctioned, bringing fresh meat to local markets.

Most boar recipes call for marinating, stewing, or braising. When prepared correctly, it is a delicious meat that can stand up to many bold Italian flavors, and pairs well with big Italian wines like Brunello di Montalcino. If you can't find wild boar locally, you may substitute high quality pork.

Wild Boar with Pappardelle

- 3 teaspoons olive oil
- 1 medium onion, coarsely chopped
- 1 medium carrot, coarsely chopped
- 1 celery rib, coarsely chopped
- 1½ pounds wild boar stew meat, cut in ½-inch cubes
- 4 ounces Italian sausage, crumbled
- 3 bay leaves
- ½ teaspoon salt
- Freshly ground black pepper
- 1 cup dry red wine
- 1 cup vegetable broth
- ¼ cup hot water, if needed
- 1 pound pappardelle, cooked according to package directions
- ½ cup grated Parmesan cheese

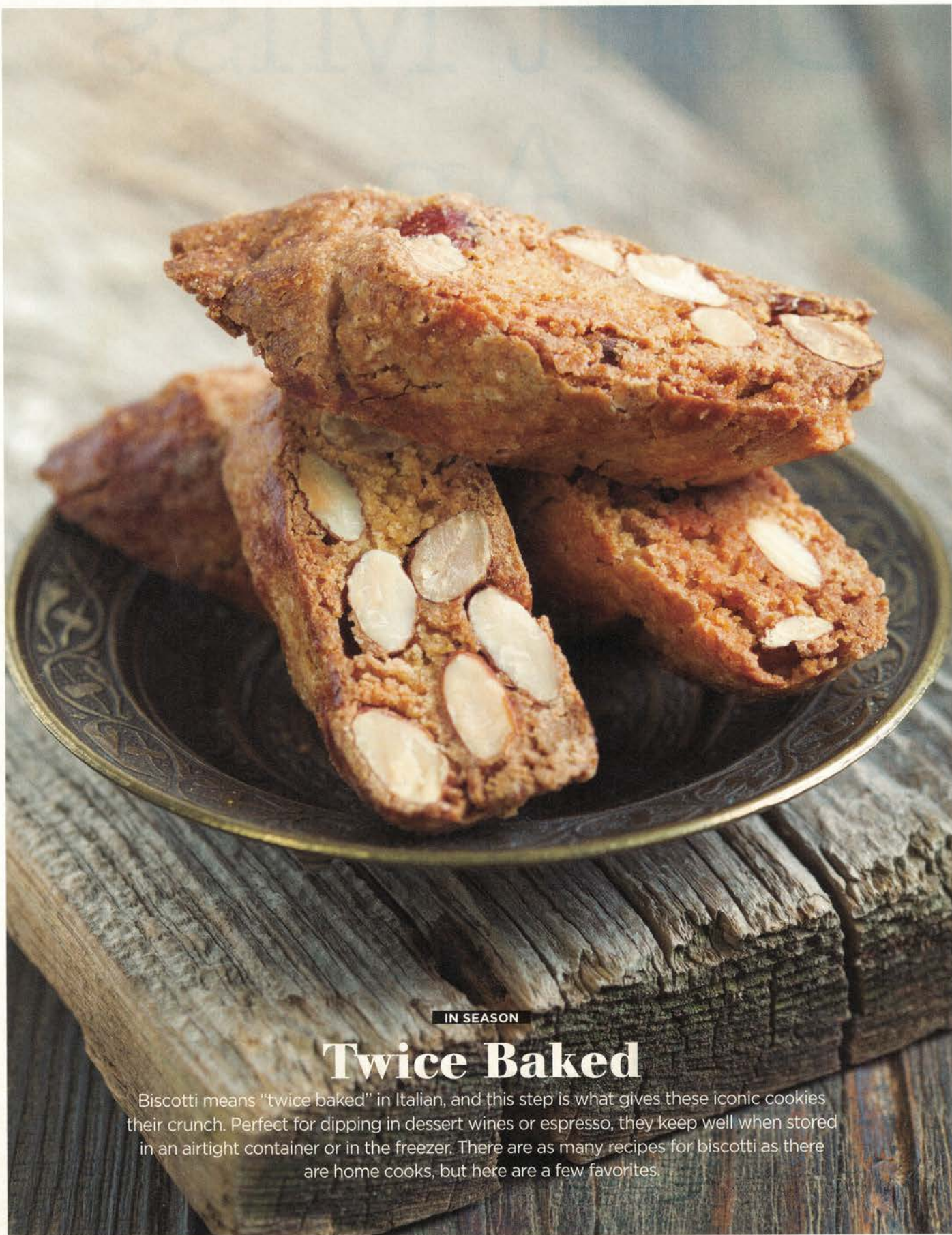
In a large skillet over medium heat, heat the olive oil and add the onion, carrot and celery. Sauté, then add the boar and sausage. Cook until the meat is well browned, about 10 minutes. Add the bay leaves, salt and pepper.

Cook over medium heat for about an hour, gradually adding the wine and broth. If the mixture sticks to the pan, add some hot water as needed. The boar should have taken on a nice, dark color and be tender. Remove the bay leaves.

Serve over pappardelle and top with grated Parmesan cheese.

Makes 6 servings.





IN SEASON

Twice Baked

Biscotti means “twice baked” in Italian, and this step is what gives these iconic cookies their crunch. Perfect for dipping in dessert wines or espresso, they keep well when stored in an airtight container or in the freezer. There are as many recipes for biscotti as there are home cooks, but here are a few favorites.

Biscotti di Prato (Cantucci)

- 2¼ cups unbleached flour
- ¾ cup sugar
- 2 teaspoons baking powder
- ¼ teaspoon salt
- 3 large eggs
- ¾ cup chopped raw almonds
- ¼ teaspoon orange extract
- 2 teaspoons vanilla

Preheat oven to 350°F. Coat a baking sheet with nonstick cooking spray and set aside.

In a large bowl, combine ingredients with a large spoon. Form two logs about 12 x 4 x 1-inch each. Bake about 25 minutes. Remove and let cool. Cut the logs into 1-inch slices while warm. Return to baking sheet and bake 5 minutes. Cool on a wire rack before serving. Makes 24 biscotti.

Chocolate Cherry Biscotti with Almonds

- 1¾ cups unbleached flour
- ⅔ cup Dutch-process cocoa
- 2 teaspoons baking powder
- 2 teaspoons ground cinnamon
- ⅛ teaspoon salt
- ¾ cup sugar
- ½ cup lightly packed brown sugar
- 1 cup dried sour cherries
- ¾ cup sliced almonds
- 3 large eggs, beaten
- 1 teaspoon vanilla

Preheat oven to 350°F. Coat a baking sheet with nonstick cooking spray and set aside.

In a large bowl, combine the flour, cocoa powder, baking powder, cinnamon, and salt. Stir in the sugar and brown sugar. Mix in the cherries and almonds.

Add the eggs and vanilla. Use a hand mixer to blend the ingredients into a soft dough. Use your hands to work the last bits of dry ingredients into the dough.

Divide the dough into 2 parts. On the baking sheet, form each half into a log, 12 x 4 x 1-inch each. Flatten each log slightly. Bake about 30 minutes, until the logs are hard and dry to the touch. Remove them from the oven and let cool on the pan.

When the logs are completely cooled, place them on a cutting board and cut them into 1/2-inch slices, diagonally, using a serrated knife.

Replace the sliced biscotti on the baking sheet. Stand them up so they are close, but not touching. Bake 5 minutes or until the biscotti are dry and crisp. Remove from the oven and let them cool on the pan.

Makes 36 biscotti.

Espresso Chocolate Chip Biscotti

- 2¾ cups all-purpose flour
- 1 cup sugar
- 2 teaspoons baking powder
- ¼ teaspoon salt
- ½ cup chocolate chips
- ½ cup instant coffee powder
- 2 teaspoons hot water
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 3 large eggs
- 1 teaspoon cocoa powder

Preheat oven to 350°F. Coat a baking sheet with nonstick cooking spray and set aside.

In a small bowl, combine the flour, sugar, baking powder and salt. In a large bowl combine the remaining ingredients with an electric mixer. Slowly add the flour mixture and continue mixing until dough is slightly stiff.

Form the dough into 2 logs, about 12 x 4 x ½-inch each, and place on a baking sheet. Bake about 25 minutes. Remove and cool for 10 minutes. Lower the oven temperature to 325°F.

Using a long, serrated knife, cut the logs in ½-inch diagonal slices. Arrange the slices on a baking sheet, cut side down, and bake 5 minutes. Turn slices over and bake 7 minutes more. Remove, transfer to a rack, and cool.

Makes 30 biscotti.

Almond Orange Biscotti

- 2 tablespoons butter
- 1 cup sugar
- 1 tablespoon amaretto
- 2 cups flour
- ¼ cup cornmeal
- 2 teaspoons baking powder
- ¼ teaspoon salt
- 1 large egg
- 3 egg whites
- 1 teaspoon vanilla
- ½ teaspoon almond extract
- ½ teaspoon orange extract
- ½ teaspoon orange zest
- ½ cup chopped almonds
- ½ dried apricots, diced

Preheat oven to 350°F. Coat a baking sheet with nonstick cooking spray and set aside.

In a large bowl, mix the butter, sugar and amaretto until slightly creamy. Add the remaining ingredients and continue mixing until the dough is slightly stiff.

Form the dough into 2 logs, about 12 x 4 x ½-inch each, and place on a baking sheet. Bake about 25 minutes. Remove and cool for 10 minutes. Using a long, serrated knife, cut the logs in ½-inch diagonal slices. Arrange the slices on a baking sheet, cut side down, and bake 5 minutes. Remove, transfer to a rack, and cool.

Makes 48 biscotti.

Almond Marsala and Apricot Biscotti

- 2½ cups flour
- 1½ teaspoons baking powder
- ¼ teaspoon salt
- ⅓ cup almond paste
- ¾ cup sugar
- 2 large eggs
- 4 tablespoons marsala wine (use more if dough is too dry to form into logs)
- ¾ cup dried apricots, diced
- ½ cup toasted almonds, slivered

Preheat oven to 350°F. Coat a baking sheet with nonstick cooking spray and set aside.

In a small bowl, combine the flour, baking powder and salt; set aside. In a large bowl, combine remaining ingredients with an electric mixer. Slowly add the flour mixture and continue mixing until the dough is slightly stiff.

Form dough into 2 logs, 12 x 4 x 1 inch each, and place on the cookie sheet 2 to 3 inches apart. Bake 25 minutes, until slightly brown. Remove, transfer to a wire rack and let cool 10 minutes.

Using a long, serrated knife, cut the logs in ½-inch diagonal slices. Arrange slices on a baking sheet, cut side down, and bake for 5 to 7 minutes. Remove, transfer to a rack, and let cool.

Makes 24 biscotti.



Healthy Sides

Escarole

Abundant and full of flavor, escarole makes a perfect addition to your cold weather menu.

Also known as broad leaf endive, escarole looks like a head of curly lettuce and varies in size. It thrives in cool weather and grows from fall through winter, but can be found year-round in most supermarkets. Escarole is less bitter than other varieties of endive, making it the go-to choice for many winter dishes. When buying, look for firm heads and unblemished leaves. A medium head of escarole usually yields about seven cups of torn leaves. When you get it home, wrap escarole in paper towels and store in an unsealed plastic bag in the refrigerator for up to four days. Escarole can be sautéed, or chopped fresh and added to soups, stews, and salads.



PASTA WITH VEGGIES

Penne with Asparagus

- 8 ounces penne
- 1 pound fresh asparagus, trimmed and cut into 1-inch pieces
- 2 tablespoons water
- ¼ cup olive oil
- Zest of 1 lemon
- 2 tablespoons fresh lemon juice
- 1 teaspoon honey
- ¼ cup parsley, chopped
- 1 teaspoon fresh dill, chopped

Cook pasta according to package instructions. Place asparagus in microwave-safe dish with 2 tablespoons water. Microwave on high 5 to 7 minutes or until tender-crisp, stirring once during cooking.

Toss together pasta and asparagus in a large bowl.

Stir together oil, lemon peel and juice, honey, parsley and dill in a small bowl. Pour over pasta; toss evenly to coat. Cover, refrigerate 2 hours to blend flavors. Makes 4 servings.

COMFORT FOOD

Baked Polenta

Baked Polenta with Butter and Gorgonzola

- 8 cups water
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 2 cups polenta
- 4 tablespoons melted butter
- ½ cup chicken broth
- 1 cup crumbled Gorgonzola cheese

Preheat oven to 350°F. In a 4-quart ovenproof pot, combine water, salt and polenta. Whisk well. Add butter and bake for about 1 hour 20 minutes. Remove and stir in chicken broth. Return to oven and cook another 8 to 10 minutes. Remove from oven, stir in cheese and serve.

Makes 4 to 6 servings.

