**Sweet Potato Salad**

1 lb. sweet potatoes, peeled and cut into 1-inch cubes

2 tbsp. distilled white vinegar (I used apple cider vinegar)

1 stalk celery, chopped

1/4 cup chopped red onion

1/4 cup mayonnaise

2 tbsp. pickle relish

1 tbsp. chopped fresh chives (I used shallots)

1 tbsp. chopped fresh flat-leaf parsley

1 tbsp. whole-grain mustard (I used Heinz yellow)

1. In a large saucepan, cover the potatoes with 1 inch of cold water; salt generously. Bring to a boil over medium high heat. Reduce heat to medium. Simmer until the potatoes are just tender, about 10 minutes. Drain, then transfer to a large bowl. Sprinkle with the vinegar. Using a silicone spatula, gently toss the potatoes and vinegar.

2. In a medium bowl, mix the celery, onion, mayonnaise, relish, chives, parsley, and mustard; season with salt and pepper. Gently fold into the potatoes. Cover and chill until the flavors meld, about 30 minutes.

**Gingerbread Cupcakes**

1 box prepared gingerbread mix, prepared to package directions for cake

8 ounces cream cheese, softened

1/2 cup canned pumpkin puree

1/4 teaspoon grated nutmeg

1 orange, zested

1/2 teaspoon vanilla extract

3 1/2 cups powdered confectioners' sugar

Shaved crystalized ginger, for garnish

Preheat the oven to 375 degrees F. Divide prepared cake mix into nonstick muffin tins and bake for 20 minutes. The batter will make 8 to 10 muffins, depending on the size of your tin. Turn muffins out of tins to quick cool. Beat cream cheese, pumpkin, nutmeg, orange zest and vanilla with hand mixer at medium speed. Beat in sugar until frosting is fluffy. Frost cupcakes and top with crystalized ginger.

**Meatball Marsala**

MEATBALLS:

12 ounces ground beef

12 ounces sweet Italian sausage

1/3 cup bread crumbs

1 egg, slightly beaten

1 1/2 cups low sodium chicken broth, divided

½ teaspoon salt

freshly ground pepper to taste

MARSALA SAUCE:

2 tablespoon unsalted butter

12 ounces mushrooms

½ teaspoon salt

freshly ground pepper to taste

1 tablespoons flour

1 cup dry Marsala wine

1 cup fresh parsley chopped

1. Preheat broiler. In a large mixing bowl combine beef, sausage, breadcrumbs, egg, 1/2 cup chicken broth, 1/2 teaspoon salt and a few grinds of pepper; mix together using your hands until well combined. Form into 2” meatballs and arrange on a rimmed baking sheet and broil until browned about 7–10 minutes.
2. In a large sauce pan make the Marsala sauce by melting butter over high heat. Once melted add mushrooms, salt and pepper. Cook stirring mushrooms until softened for about 8 minutes.
3. Sprinkle flour over the cooked mushrooms and stir together. Add Marsala wine and bring to a boil. Add in chicken broth and bring back to a boil.
4. Reduce heat to medium-high and add meatballs.
5. Allow to simmer for 10 minutes. Before serving stir parsley into meatballs.

**Pasta with Pumpkin and Sausage**

1 tablespoon extra-virgin olive oil, plus 1 tablespoon

1 pound bulk sweet Italian sausage

4 cloves garlic, cracked and chopped

1 medium onion, finely chopped

1 bay leaf, fresh or dried

4 to 6 sprigs sage leaves, cut into chiffonade, about 2 tablespoons

1 cup dry white wine

1 cup chicken stock, canned or paper container

1 cup canned pumpkin

1/2 cup (3 turns around the pan) heavy cream

1/8 teaspoon ground cinnamon

1/2 teaspoon ground nutmeg, ground or freshly grated

Coarse salt and black pepper

1 pound penne rigate, cooked to al dente

Romano or Parmigiano, for grating

Heat a large, deep nonstick skillet over medium high heat. Add 1 tablespoon of olive oil to the pan and brown the sausage in it. Transfer sausage to paper towel lined plate. Drain fat from skillet and return pan to the stove. Add the remaining tablespoon oil, and then the garlic and onion. Saute 3 to 5 minutes until the onions are tender. Add bay leaf, sage, and wine to the pan. Reduce wine by half, about 2 minutes. Add stock and pumpkin and stir to combine, stirring sauce until it comes to a bubble. Return sausage to pan, reduce heat, and stir in cream. Season the sauce with the cinnamon and nutmeg, and salt and pepper, to taste. Simmer mixture 5 to 10 minutes to thicken sauce. Return drained pasta to the pot you cooked it in. Remove the bay leaf from sauce and pour the sausage pumpkin sauce over pasta. Combine sauce and pasta and toss over low heat for 1 minute. Garnish the pasta with lots of shaved cheese and sage leaves.

**Florentine Penne with Chicken**

2 tablespoons olive oil

1 to 1 1/2 pounds chicken thighs or breast tenders, diced

Salt and pepper

4 tablespoons butter

3/4 pound mushrooms, cremini or button, sliced

1 small onion, finely chopped

4 cloves garlic, finely chopped

2 rounded tablespoons flour

1 cup dry white wine

1 cup chicken stock

1 1/2 to 2 cups whole milk

A few grates fresh nutmeg

16 ounces chopped frozen spinach, defrosted and wrung dry

1 pound penne or mostaccioli rigate

Grated Parmigiano-Regginao cheese

Heat olive oil in a large deep skillet over medium-high heat. Add chicken and brown then remove to plate. Add butter to pan and melt; add mushrooms and lightly brown, 5-6 minutes. Add onions and garlic, and season with salt and pepper. Reduce heat a bit and cook to soften onions, 5-6 minutes more. Add flour and stir 1 minute. Add wine and reduce by half. Add stock and milk, and thicken to coat a spoon. Season with nutmeg and stir in spinach to heat through. Adjust salt, pepper and nutmeg to taste.

Stir a handful of cheese into sauce. Add chicken to sauce to heat it through. Bring a large pot of water to a boil for the pasta. Salt water and cook pasta to *al dente*, drain and toss with sauce and chicken. Serve in shallow bowls and top with more cheese.

**Spaghetti and Meatball “Stoup”**

2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil

1 carrot, peeled and chopped into small dice

1 medium onion, chopped

2 stalks celery, from the heart, chopped

3 cloves garlic, chopped

3 cups tomato sauce (or 1 14-ounce can plus 1 8-ounce can)

3 cups chicken stock

1 lb meatloaf mix (ground beef, pork and veal, ground turkey)

½ cup grated Parmigiano or Romano cheese, plus additional Parmigiano or Romano cheese, to pass at table

½ cup Italian seasoned breadcrumbs

1 large egg

2 tablespoons chopped fresh parsley leaves

1/2 lb elbow macaroni

1 cup basil leaves, torn or shredded

Preheat a medium soup pot over medium heat; add olive oil, carrots, onions, celery, garlic, and saute 5 minutes. Add tomato sauce, chicken stock and cover pot; turn up heat and bring to a fast boil; while soup comes cooks make meat balls. Mix ground meat with cheese, bread crumbs, egg and parsley; roll into 1 inch balls. Remove lid from soup and SLIDE balls into soup; bring back to a boil then stir in macaroni; reduce heat and simmer soup 10 minutes more, until pasta is tender and balls have cooked through; Stir in basil and remove “Stoup" from heat, serve soup with bread and cheese.

**Cranberry Cheesecake Bars**

16 graham crackers, finely ground (2 1/4 cups)

1 stick (4 oz.) butter, melted

2/3 cup plus 2 tbsp. sugar

1/4 teaspoon ground cinnamon

2 8 ounce packages cream cheese, at room temperature

3 eggs

2 teaspoons finely grated lemon zest

1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract

1/4 teaspoon salt

3/4 cup whole-berry cranberry sauce, stirred

Preheat the oven to 350 degrees. Grease a 9-by- 13-inch baking pan. Line with foil, leaving a 2-inch overhang; grease the foil. In a bowl, mix the cracker crumbs, butter, 2 tbsp. sugar and cinnamon. Press into the bottom of the pan; bake until firm and browned, 10 minutes. Transfer pan to a rack; let cool completely.

In a large bowl, using an electric mixer at medium speed, beat the cream cheese and 2/3 cup sugar until smooth. Beat in the eggs, zest, vanilla and salt. Pour over the crust. Dollop the cranberry sauce on top; swirl with a knife.

Bake until a toothpick inserted in the center comes out clean, about 40 minutes. Transfer to a rack; let cool. Cover; refrigerate until firm, at least 6 hours. Using the foil, lift the cheesecake out of the pan; cut into 1-by-2-inch rectangles.

**Zucchini Pizza**

Extra-virgin olive oil (EVOO), for drizzling

2 pizza dough rolls from a tube (such as Pillsbury)

Coarse salt and coarse black pepper

2 cups ricotta

8 garlic cloves, minced

4 cups shredded mozzarella cheese

2 medium to large zucchini, cut into lengthwise thin ¼” strip slices

1. Preheat oven to 400 degrees.
2. Drizzle olive oil on one large or two small cookie sheets, then roll out the dough. Poke with fork and season with salt and pepper. Place in the oven for 5 or 6 minutes.
3. In a medium bowl, mix the ricotta with the garlic. Cover crust in mixture and top with mozzarella cheese. Return to the oven for 12 to 13 minutes or until golden.
4. Heat a large skillet over medium heat. Heat the zucchini in the skillet on both sides until crisp tender. Scatter on top of pizza and cook an additional 2 to 3 minutes.
5. Serve large squares of the pizza hot from the oven.

**My Mom’s Baked Apples**

4 McIntosh apples, pick 4 about the same size

2/3 cup Grape Nuts brand cereal

1/2 teaspoon cinnamon

1/4 teaspoon freshly grated nutmeg

2 tablespoons brown sugar

2 tablespoons cold butter, diced

1/3 cup walnuts, chopped (a couple of handfuls)

2 tablespoons currants

Pre-heat the oven to 350°F.  
  
Cut a deep X over the stem on each apple. Use a spoon to scoop halfway into each apple, making a cavity and removing the core. Trim the bottoms of the apples, if necessary, to make sure they sit upright. Place the apples in a small baking dish.

Mix the cereal with the cinnamon, nutmeg, sugar, butter, nuts and currants. Stuff the apples and bake for 30-35 minutes, until the apples are tender and the filling is brown and bubbly.  
  
  
Tip: You can make this recipe with tart and tangy Granny Smith apples, too, but bake them for 45-50 minutes because they are much firmer apples to start with.

**Italian Tuna Casserole**

1 10-ounce box frozen chopped spinach, defrosted and squeezed to drain excess water (note: I used ½ of the package)  
Salt  
1 pound medium shell pasta  
1 tablespoon EVOO (extra-virgin olive oil), once around the pan  
2 tablespoons butter  
1 medium onion, finely chopped  
5 garlic cloves, finely chopped  
3 tablespoons all-purpose flour  
1/2 cup dry white wine  
1 cup chicken stock  
2 cups milk

¼ teaspoon freshly grated nutmeg  
1 teaspoon hot sauce  
1 teaspoon Dijon mustard  
Black pepper  
2 6-ounce cans white tuna in water, drained  
1 cup grated Parmigiano-Reggiano or Pecorino Romano cheese

A handful of chopped fresh flat-leaf parsley

1. Spray a 2 quart or 9×13′ casserole dish with non-stick cooking spray.  
2. Bring a large pot of water to a boil cook pasta as directed on the package. Drain and set aside.

3. While the pasta cooks, heat a large skillet over medium heat. Add the EVOO, then melt the butter into the oil. When the butter melts, add the onions and garlic and cook until tender approximately 4 to 5 minutes. Sprinkle the flour around the pan and cook for a minute.  Whisk in the wine and then the stock.  Then whisk in the milk and bring mixture to a bubble. Reduce the heat to low. Season the sauce with the hot sauce and mustard, then season with salt and pepper to taste. Simmer for 2 to 3 minutes to thicken, then add the spinach, separating it as you add it to the sauce.  Add the tuna, flaking as you go, then stir to combine.  Heat the spinach and tuna through for a minute.  Add the cooked pasta and mix with the sauce.  Pour the tuna and pasta mixture into the prepared casserole dish.  Sprinkle with the shredded cheese.

4. Preheat the broiler.

5. Place the casserole under the broiler for 2 minutes to brown the edges and the cheese. Top with parsley and serve.

**Mexican Lasagna**

12 oz. cooked chicken, shredded

1 cup sour cream

1 cup Monterey jack cheese, shredded

1 cup cheddar cheese, shredded

½ cup salsa

4 oz. chopped green chiles \*

2 T. cilantro \*

1 t. chili

¼ t. cayenne pepper

8 – 10 corn tortillas

Combine all of the above except for ¼ cup of cheeses. Arrange tortillas flat in sprayed 11” x 7” pan . Top with 1/2 of chicken mixture. Repeat layer. Top with cheese. Cover with foil. Bake at 350 for 30 minutes. Uncover and bake for another 30 minutes. Cheese will be bubbly. Cool and cut.

\*Note: Rotel can be used in place of green chiles and cilantro

**Curtis Stone Oatmeal Coconut Butter Cookies**

¾ cup unsweetened shredded coconut

1 cup sugar

1 cup old-fashioned rolled oats

1 cup flour

12 T. butter (1 ½ sticks)

3 T light corn syrup

1 ½ t. baking soda

2 T. boiling water

1. Position the racks in the top third and center of the oven, then preheat to 300.
2. Line 2 large, heavy, rimmed baking sheets with parchment paper
3. In a large bowl, mix coconut, sugar, oats and flour.
4. In a medium heavy saucepan, stir the butter and syrup over low heat until the butter is melted. Remove the saucepan from the heat.
5. In a small bowl, combine baking soda and water. Stir into the melted butter mixture.
6. Stir the melted butter mixture into the flour mixture.
7. Use 1 tablespoon dough for each cookie (12 balls of dough per cookie sheet).
8. Bake the cookies, switching the sheets from top to bottom and front to back halfway through baking, for about 15 minutes, until golden brown.
9. Let cool on the baking sheet for 5 minutes then transfer to wire racks to cool completely.

**Cinnamon Roll Cake w/Optional Crumb Topping**

Cake:

3 cups flour

3/4 cup sugar

4 tsp baking powder

1 1/2 cup milk

2 eggs

2 tsp vanilla

1/3 cup butter, melted

Cinnamon Topping:

1 cup butter, softened

1 cup brown sugar

2 tbsp flour

1 tbsp cinnamon

1. Mix flour, sugar, baking powder, milk, eggs and vanilla together.
2. Stir in melted butter, slowly. Pour into greased 9x13 pan.
3. Mix cinnamon topping ingredients. Drop over cake mixture evenly.
4. Swirl your topping and cake mixture with a knife going up and down the length of the pan (but only inserting it in the cake mix a little - not all the way).
5. Bake at 350 for 28-32 minutes (note: I added the below crumb topping and baked it for 60 minutes (or until toothpick inserted in center comes out clean)).

Crumb Topping:

¾ cup butter, melted

2 cups flour

½ T. cinnamon

¾ cup brown sugar

Mix all together until crumbly. Sprinkle over top of batter.