



TASTE OF THE TIMES

FEATURES EDITOR + ANDREA HOLBROOK + 978-283-7000 x3456 + aholbrook@glocestertimes.com

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Fermented foods. We need them.

Food for Thought
Heather Atwood



Mankind has been preserving food through fermentation artfully for thousands of years, and accidentally

for many more. As Sandor Katz, fermentation expert and the author of "Wild Fermentation," explains, it has always been a regional — think of the blocks of salted fish hanging on Gloucester's docks — if not household process, not dangerous, not precarious, not perilously demanding of sterilization. It was loose and yet artful, as fickle and mysterious

Please see **THOUGHT**, Page 12

Corn Muffins with Pulled Pork and Mashed Sweet Potato

BY TIMES STAFF

Looking for an easy appetizer?

This may be the easiest, popular appetizer you will ever serve. Perfect for a wintertime party or snack, it combines the hearty tastes of a corn muffin and pulled barbecue pork with sweet potatoes mashed with butter and maple syrup.

You can also serve these with any leftover pulled pork you may have by placing that in a dish with a serving spoon.

Corn Muffins with Mashed Sweet Potato and Pulled Pork

- Ingredients**
- 12 mini corn muffins (store-bought or homemade)
 - 18-ounce package of pulled pork (store-bought or homemade)
 - 1 sweet potato
 - 2 tablespoons butter
 - 2 tablespoons maple syrup

Instructions

1. Microwave sweet potato, scoop out center of potato into a mixing bowl, add butter and maple syrup and mix with a fork until well blended.

Preheat oven to 350 degrees F. You can prepare these appetizers in two different ways; as a sandwich or by stuffing the muffin.

To prepare as a sandwich:

2. Slice corn muffins in half.
3. Layer a small amount of sweet potato mixture onto muffin. Spread small amount of pulled pork over that and top off with muffin top.

To stuff the muffin:

2. Take a melon ball scoop and scoop out the center of the muffin from the top.
3. Put the mashed sweet potato in the hole first, and then top off by spreading pulled pork over the potato mixture.

For sandwiches and stuffed muffins:

4. Heat in oven for 5 minutes before serving.

Recipe courtesy of Julie Geary, Classic Cooks Catering, 2011.



MPN/Courtesy photos
Julie Geary of Classic Cooks Catering in Gloucester offers this easy appetizer.



Make your own pulled pork, or make it even easier by buying some at the grocery or barbecue joint.



Microwave a sweet potato, scoop out the center of potato into a mixing bowl, add butter and maple syrup and mix with a fork until well blended.



Take a melon ball scoop and remove the center of the muffin from the top. Put the mashed sweet potato in the hole first, and top off by spreading pulled pork over the potato mixture.



MPN/Courtesy photo

This may be the easiest and most popular appetizer you will ever serve. Perfect for a wintertime party or snack, it combines the hearty tastes of a corn muffin and pulled barbecue pork with sweet potatoes.

MANGIA!



Mary Ann Esposito, host of TV's longest running cooking show, "Ciao Italia," is often asked, "What is Italian food?" This soup is a good example of what her answer is — simple, in-season ingredients and easy preparation.

5 ingredients, 3 easy steps for this hearty, winter soup

BY TIMES STAFF

Mary Ann Esposito is often asked, "What is Italian food?" This soup is a good example of what her answer is — simple, in-season ingredients and easy preparation.

From her personal kitchen, she shows you how to make this delicious and hearty winter soup, Zuppa di Lenticchie Ditalini e Salsiccia or Lentil, Ditalini and Sausage Soup, a recipe from her "Ciao Italia 5-Ingredient Cookbook." The five main ingredients are chicken stock (homemade or store-bought, low sodium),

Please see **ZUPPA**, Page 18



This soup uses only five ingredients: Chicken broth, ditalini, green or brown lentils, diced tomatoes, all left, and three sweet Italian pork sausages with fennel. Esposito removes the filling from the casings, right, then browns in preparation for adding it to the soup.

Sausage Soup (Zuppa di Lenticchie Ditalini e Salsiccia)

- Ingredients**
- 3 sweet pork sausage links, casings removed and meat crumbled
 - 6 cups chicken broth
 - 1 cup dried lentils, sorted and washed (1 cup dried lentils yields 3 to 4 cups cooked)
 - 1/2 cup ditalini
 - 2 cups diced tomatoes
 - Salt
 - Freshly ground black pepper

Instructions

1. Cook the sausage in a non-stick skillet over medium heat until it is no longer pink. Set aside.
2. Pour the chicken broth into a soup pot, add the lentils, and bring to a boil. Reduce to a simmer and cook 30 to 35 minutes. (Do not overcook them or they will turn to mush; they should still have a bit of a firm core at this point.)
3. Stir in the ditalini, and 1

teaspoon of salt and continue cooking until the pasta is almost al dente, about 5 minutes depending on the brand. Stir in the sausage and tomatoes. Cover and simmer the soup for 10 minutes. Season to taste with salt and pepper.

A salad is the only accompaniment needed as the soup is quite hearty.
Recipe courtesy of Mary Ann Esposito, "Ciao Italia Five-Ingredient Favorites," 2010.

Many Sicilians call the layered dish of pasta, summer squash, basil, and hard-boiled eggs, left, "Pasta Gagoots," including the family of Felicia (Ciaramitaro) Mohan, right, who offers her recipe for the dish.

MPN/Courtesy photos



Overgrown zucchini perfect for Pasta

BY TIMES STAFF

Referred to as "Pasta Gagoots" by many Italians from Sicily, including the family of Felicia (Ciaramitaro) Mohan, this is a layered pasta dish most often served when the cook has extra large zucchini or cucuzza squash from the garden or elsewhere.

Large zucchinis are usually



Video available online

tougher than the smaller ones, and for this recipe, Mohan fries them and then layers them to form a casserole, mixed

together with fresh basil, parmesan cheese and sliced hard-boiled eggs.

There are theories and ideas all over the Internet as to what and where the actual word "gagoots" comes from, and even how you spell it. Many know the word phonetically from hearing it around the kitchen and dinner table growing up. The Sicilian word for

pumpkin or squash is cucuzza, and that may be the origin, which means the original slang word is probably spelled something like "cucuzz." Tony Soprano called his son "gagoots" when he wanted to convey how stupid he was. In any case, it is definitely a slang term that many have heard

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You always remember what you had for dessert!

Pat's Kitchen

Patricia Altomare



I remember my grandmother saying many times about her sons, "They might not remember what they had for supper, but they always remember what they had for dessert." Isn't that the truth? My family always loved

their desserts. Of course years ago every evening meal ended with dessert of some kind, even if it was pudding or Jello.

For a long time now, I only bake once or twice a week when it's not a holiday. I like to have something on the

counter to serve friends or neighbors when they drop in for a cup of coffee. If I am baking to test a recipe, I share it with someone.

I like making Bundt cakes. A simple glaze drizzled on, only one pan to clean, and you are done.

(If you don't use cake flour too often, see "baking tips" below.)

Chocolate, bananas, walnuts ... a great combination! Next time you have a few overripe bananas, use them to make this deliciously moist cake.

Chocolate-Glazed Banana Cake

Cake ingredients

- 2½ cups cake flour
- ½ teaspoon baking powder
- 1 teaspoon baking soda
- ½ teaspoon salt
- 3 very ripe bananas, mashed
- ¾ cup sour cream
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- ¾ cup butter, softened

- ⅓ cup granulated sugar
- 2 large eggs

Glaze ingredients

- 2 ounces (2 squares) semi-sweet chocolate, coarsely chopped
- 1 tablespoon granulated sugar
- ¼ cup sour cream

Garnish

- ¼ cup chopped walnuts
- Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Grease a 9-inch tube pan or Bundt pan. Dust with flour, tap out excess.

Combine flour, baking powder, baking soda, and salt.

In another bowl, mix well bananas, sour cream, and vanilla.

In a large bowl, beat together butter and sugar at medium speed until light and fluffy. Beat in eggs one at a time, beating well after each egg.

At low speed, alternately add flour mixture and banana mixture to butter mixture, beating until smooth. Pour batter into prepared pan.

Bake cake 35 to 40 minutes, or until a toothpick inserted near center comes out clean. When cake is done transfer to a wire rack to cool for 10 minutes in pan. Then turn out onto rack to cool completely.

For Glaze

In small saucepan, melt chocolate over low heat, stirring constantly. Stir in sugar. Remove from heat; stir until slightly cooled. Stir in sour cream until smooth. Drizzle glaze over top of cake. Sprinkle with chopped nuts.

Baking Tips

1. If you really like nuts, add two-thirds of a cup chopped nuts to the batter before baking.
2. If glaze is too thick, stir in water, 1 teaspoon at a time, till thin enough to drizzle.
3. When you buy flour, transfer to an airtight container for storage. Stick in a few whole bay leaves (prevents flour weevils), and mark what it is and date.

If you don't use flour often, store in refrigerator and it will keep for a long time.

Good to Hear From You

Etta and Sandra W. wrote in to say that the Pumpkin Bars that they made over the holidays were a hit.

Diana T. wrote me that she has made her second batch of sweet potato minestrone, and that she is sending me her recipe for Butternut Squash Macaroni & Cheese. I'm anxious to see that recipe, sounds fascinating.

I have sent the apple squares recipe to all those that requested it. If I have missed anyone, just e-mail me and I will get it right to you.

CORDIALLY, PAT

Patricia Altomare invites feedback. E-mail her at patakitchen@yahoo.com, or write c/o Gloucester Daily Times, 36 Whittemore St., Gloucester, MA 01930.

WHAT'S COOKING

Next week's featured video and recipe at gloucestertimes.com/food



These melt-in-your-mouth butter cookies become a delicacy when you use a dab of tart jam to turn them into Raspberry Thumbprint Cookies. These have long been a favorite dessert for holidays, special occasions and every day use because they are easy, inexpensive, and taste so good! Gloucester native Jennifer Scala McGrath, co-owner of Cookies By Jenn, offers her recipe for this Italian specialty cookie.

THOUGHT: Fermented foods important for our diets

Continued from Page 11

as the invisible bacteria that make it happen.

"I know of no food that is without a history of fermentation," Katz says.

Every culture has done it.

Except, most recently, ours.

With the advent of pasteurized, homogenous foods, the need for — and taste for — fermented food products has almost been lost to us western grocery-store shoppers.

In the past 50 years we've almost completely eliminated a complicated food group that civilized mankind has never lived without. This loss may also mean the loss of important nutrients never before absent in our diets.

"Fermentation is the action of life upon death," Katz says.

Bacteria in the air acts on the food to produce either alcohol, lactic acid, or acetic acid which retain nutrients and prevent spoilage. Start with wine, beer, yogurt, cheese, sourdough, but then think of miso, natto, seitan, soy sauce, Vietnamese fish sauce and its Roman equivalent made with salted anchovies and sardines, Swedish lutefisk, Korean kimchee,

sausages, prosciutto, sauerkraut. In Africa, they ferment sorghum for beer.

According to Harold McKeese's "On Food and Cooking," in China they started fermenting fish 2,000 years ago, but Katz points out that as far away as the Arctic they bury whole fish in pits and let them ferment to a cheese-like texture. Those "hundred-year-old eggs" from China are actually fermented only three months in horse urine. Even maple syrup, according to Rowan Jacobsen's book "American Terroir," owes its "maple flavor" to the bacteria in the air excreting enzymes into the sap and breaking down the sugars, one of those "accidental" fermentation jobs.

Remember, canning was only invented by the French in the late 18th century and freezing obviously "just now" in terms of relative history. Katz points out it is no accident that the word "culture" is synonymous with both a bacterial process and with the advancement of civilization. Discovering a method for preserving a harvest of anything, from cabbage to herring, allowed "culture" to advance. In fact, Katz points out, the first great globalized industry, that sent fleets of ships sailing and filled coffers from The Netherlands to Sri Lanka — chocolate, coffee and tea — all depended upon someone understanding fermentation.

Some recognized long ago fermentation's nutritional powers: The explorer Captain Cook used sauerkraut to prevent scurvy in his ship's crew when crossing the Pacific to discover the Hawaiian Islands, but a thousand years before him the Polynesians crossed the Pacific to Hawaii nutritionally charged with poi, a porridge of fermented taro root, still popular in the Hawaiian Islands today.

Honey wine, or mead, was probably the first fermented food, probably the happy accident of a honeycomb having fallen into the water-filled hollow of a tree trunk. A little water, a little honey, a little time, some bacterially charged air, and you've got a batch of mead. By the way, Isaak's of Salem brews, right in Beverly, a delicious Honey Wine in a

couple of varieties, available at Salem Wine Importers in Salem, or the Isaak's of Salem website. <http://blog.isaaksofsalem.com/>

Here are the health benefits Captain Cook and others understood, and out of which we may have sanitized and sterilized ourselves: According to the U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization, which promotes fermentation as a critical source of nutrients worldwide, fermentation improves the bioavailability of minerals present in food. Katz claims that fermentation also creates new nutrients — microbial cultures create B vitamins, including folic acid, riboflavin, niacin, thiamin, and biotin. That means you start with cabbage, salt it, add air and time, and you have an almost entirely different food, packed with a different nutrition profile.

Fermentation also breaks down foods naturally difficult to digest. Soybeans for example, can be eaten raw, but fermented are much more digestible and interesting in the form of tamari (soy sauce), miso, tempeh, tofu. Lactobacilli breaks down the lactose in milk to the more digestible and interesting yogurt. By eating a variety of fermented foods we produce biodiversity in our gut. A healthy gut means a better working one, which means it has the resources to better extract nutrients.

Here's the part that's going to send you running out for miso: Live fermented foods (Bread is fermented, but baked, and therefore not live.) most importantly are packed with enzymes that some people claim are the key to aging. Our pancreas produces enzymes, but begins to run out toward the middle of life. The more foods we can consume that pile on enzymes, thus relieving the burden on our pancreas, the better. Do you remember the study that launched the homemade yogurt trend of the 1970s? Russian immunologist and Nobel laureate Elie Metchnikoff went looking for the long-life secrets of 100-year-old Balkans. The answer? Yogurt. Metchnikoff concurred that with a daily diet of live-cultured yogurt, the centenarian Balkans were getting a daily dose of lactobacilli, which "postpone and ameliorate old age."

Perhaps, because of all that

pasteurization and those hand sanitizers, our culture has regressed, not advanced. We've been foolish thinking we could, and should, sterilize bacteria away. Instead we should consider them important local ingredients. To quote the master of the process himself, Louis Pasteur, "It's the microbes that will have the last word."

Katz's book offers a broad selection of recipes, from healthful sauerkraut to Kvass, a drink made from fermented stale bread, and which Tolstoy's Anna Karenina noted the peasants drinking.

Fruit Kimchee

TIME FRAME: ONE WEEK

Ingredients for one quart

- ¼ pineapple
- 2 plums, pitted
- 2 pears, cored
- 1 apple, cored
- 1 small bunch grapes, stemmed
- ½ cup cashew or other nuts
- 2 teaspoons sea salt
- juice of one lemon
- one small bunch cilantro, chopped
- 1 to 2 fresh jalapeno peppers, finely chopped
- 1 to 2 hot red chilies, or any form of hot red pepper, fresh or dried
- 1 leek or onion, finely chopped
- 3 to 4 cloves garlic (or more), finely chopped
- 3 tablespoons grated ginger

Chop fruit into bite-size pieces. Peel if you wish. Leave grapes whole. Add in any other fruit you want to try. Add nuts. Mix fruit and nuts together in a bowl. Add salt, lemon juice, and spices and mix well.

Stuff kimchee mixture into a clean quart-size jar. Pack it tightly into the jar, pressing down until the brine rises. If necessary, add a little water. Weight down with a smaller jar, or a zip-lock jar filled with some brine. Or if you think you can remember to check the kimchee every day; with clean fingers push the fruit down into the brine. Keep covered to keep out flies. Ferment in a warm place. After a week of fermenting, when it tastes "ripe," move to the refrigerator.

Food for Thought runs weekly in the Times' Taste of the Times section and is written by Heather Atwood, an author and mother from Rockport. Questions and comments can be sent to Heather at heatheraa@aol.com. And follow her blog at gloucestertimes.com/foodforthought.

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FOOD for THOUGHT the blog

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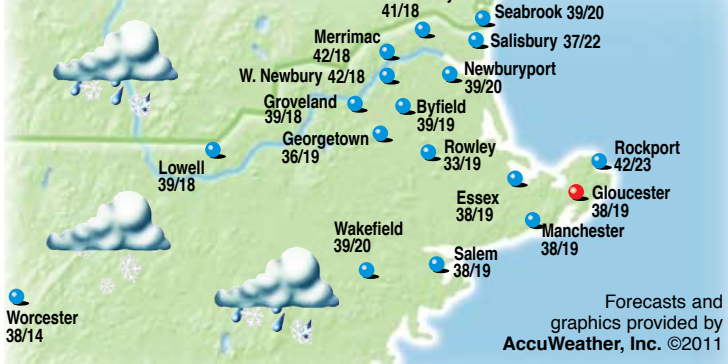
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AccuWeather.com 5-Day forecast for Gloucester

Today	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
38° 19°	27° 14°	28° 13°	17° 0°	17° 5°
A rain or snow shower in spots	Partly sunny and colder	Becoming windier with snow, 1-3"	Mostly sunny, windy and colder	Cold with partial sunshine
RealFeel 26°/1° UV 1	RealFeel 21°/-1° UV 2	RealFeel 9°/-10° UV 1	RealFeel -3°/-15° UV 2	RealFeel 8°/-7° UV 2

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Shown is today's weather. Temperatures are today's highs and tonight's lows.



Almanac

Readings for Cape Ann through Mon.
Temperature:
 High/low 19°/1°
 Normal high/low 34°/14°
Precipitation:
 Monday 0.00"

Snowfall
 Estimated Month 29.8"
 Monday 0.0" Season 49.6"

Sun

Sunrise today 7:08 a.m.
 Sunset tonight 4:39 p.m.

Moon Phases



The Region

City	Today	Thu.	Fri.
Braintree	40/25/c	32/16/pc	32/14/sn
Cambridge	45/21/c	33/17/pc	28/13/sn
Chicopee	37/12/sf	21/6/pc	23/9/sn
Fall River	43/23/c	32/18/pc	38/15/sn
Glens Falls	35/4/sf	18/3/c	22/0/sn
Hyannis	42/25/c	33/18/pc	38/17/sn
Lawrence	39/18/c	25/14/pc	23/11/sn
Newburyport	39/20/c	31/14/pc	24/11/sn

The Nation

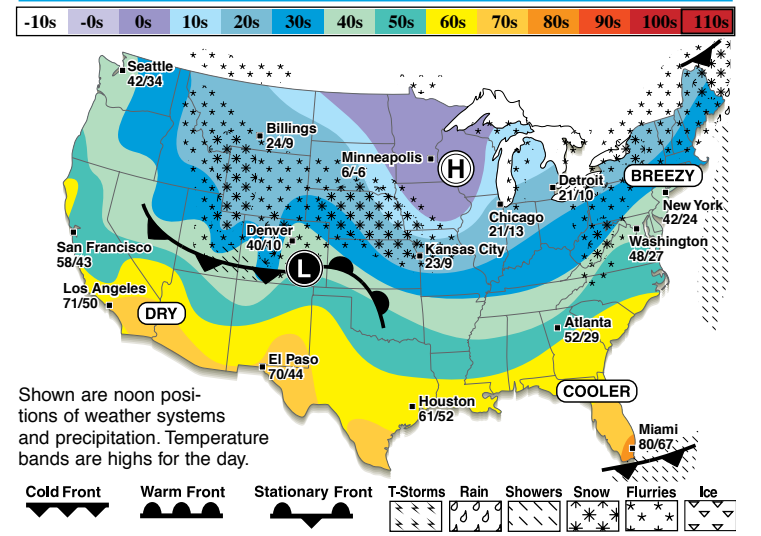
City	Today	Thu.	Fri.
Albany	36/11/c	18/10/c	24/5/sn
Anchorage	20/16/sf	27/18/sf	29/21/sn
Atlanta	52/29/s	55/32/pc	39/21/c
Billings	24/9/sn	29/27/s	36/27/pc
Buffalo	26/8/sn	23/16/sn	19/5/c
Chicago	21/13/pc	21/5/sn	9/1/pc
Cincinnati	31/21/c	31/5/sn	12/2/pc
Dallas	56/43/s	45/23/c	48/27/s
Denver	40/10/sn	34/19/c	48/23/pc
Detroit	21/10/c	24/14/sn	19/4/c
Los Angeles	71/50/s	73/48/s	78/49/s
Minneapolis	6/6/c	3/22/sf	3/7/sn
New York City	42/24/c	32/24/pc	32/18/sn
Orlando	76/56/pc	76/60/s	73/44/t
Philadelphia	41/25/c	32/23/pc	32/14/sn
Raleigh	54/30/pc	49/40/pc	44/26/r
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National Weather for January 19, 2011



Marine Forecast

Gloucester
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Thursday: Wind from the northwest at 10-20 knots. Wave heights 2-4 feet. Visibility generally unrestricted.

Tides

TODAY	TOMORROW
highs/lows	highs/lows
Merrimack River Ent.	
10:14 am/4:21 am	11:01 am/5:09 am
10:52 pm/5:02 pm	11:37 pm/5:47 pm
Essex	
10:30 am/4:23 am	11:17 am/5:11 am
11:08 pm/5:04 pm	11:53 pm/5:49 pm
Annisquam	
10:19 am/3:55 am	11:06 am/4:43 am
10:57 pm/4:36 pm	11:42 pm/5:21 pm
Rockport	
10:14 am/3:58 am	11:01 am/4:46 am
10:52 pm/4:39 pm	11:37 pm/5:24 pm
Gloucester	
10:21 am/4:04 am	11:09 am/4:53 am
10:58 pm/4:42 pm	11:45 pm/5:28 pm

The World

Athens	62/48/s	59/51/pc	58/51/sh
Baghdad	57/35/pc	60/37/s	62/37/s
Beijing	34/18/s	35/20/c	37/21/cf
Berlin	36/24/c	29/19/c	28/20/sf
Cairo	64/50/sh	63/48/s	65/53/s
Hong Kong	64/59/pc	66/58/pc	65/61/r
Istanbul	53/48/s	57/47/pc	58/49/sh
London	43/34/pc	43/34/pc	43/32/pc
Madrid	52/37/pc	50/32/s	50/21/s
Moscow	21/14/sn	21/16/sn	18/12/c
Paris	43/29/pc	40/25/c	37/30/t
Rio de Janeiro	92/79/c	95/78/pc	91/78/t
Singapore	86/75/c	85/75/sh	86/76/sh
Tel Aviv	58/49/pc	59/49/sh	67/47/r
Tokyo	48/36/pc	44/32/pc	48/37/pc

W-weather, s-sunny, pc-partly cloudy, c-cloudy, sh-showers, t-thunderstorms, r-rain, sf-snow flurries, sn-snow, i-ice.



MPN/Courtesy photo

A salad is the only accompaniment needed as this Lentil, Ditalini and Sausage Soup is quite hearty.

ZUPPA: Soup easy to cook: 5 ingredients and 3 steps

Continued from Page 11

ditalini pasta (a small tube shaped pasta typically used in Italian soups), dried lentils (dear to the hearts of Italians and a symbol of good luck), chopped fresh tomatoes (but you can use canned San Marzano as a substitute), and a good Italian sausage (she uses one flavored with fennel).

As described in Mary Ann's book, lentils are a powerhouse of protein. These tiny dried disk-shaped legumes

have been used for centuries throughout the Mediterranean, and are at the heart of many Italian dishes, especially salads, soups, and casseroles.

There are many varieties ranging in color from brown, to black, green, reddish-brown, and yellow. It is not necessary to soak lentils before cooking, but they should be sorted and washed to remove any bits of stone or other debris.

PASTA: 'Gagoots' perfect dish for overgrown squashes

Continued from Page 11

and few are sure of the exact spelling or origin.

Pasta "Gagoots" (Pasta with Zucchini)

Ingredients

- 1 oversized zucchini
- fresh, grated Parmesan cheese
- 1 pound pasta, cooked (reserve cooking water)
- 1 cup fresh basil, sliced
- 8 hard boiled eggs, sliced
- Pepper to taste
- 1 to 2 tablespoons olive oil

Instructions:

1. Slice zucchini into slices about 1/8 of an inch thick and fry in oil for about 2 to 3 minutes on each side until golden brown.
2. Fold several of the basil leaves together into a cigar-shaped piece and slice cross ways into small strips.
3. Place one-third of the cooked pasta into a large bowl and add a layer of the fried zucchini.
4. Sprinkle a layer of the parmesan cheese over the zucchini.
5. Add a layer of the basil and then the sliced eggs on top.
6. Ladle about 1/4 cup of pasta water on top and sprinkle a



small amount of pepper on top. 7. Repeat the above steps twice more with the rest of the ingredients to make three

layers. 8. Top off final layer with olive oil and extra parmesan cheese. 9. Serve on plates with olive

oil and fresh basil leaves. Recipe courtesy of Felicia (Ciaramitaro) Mohan, 2011.

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