

{Dinner with friends}

an italian menu for fall...



{Host an autumn dinner with friends, we planned the meal...}

now you can plan on who to invite! With a little preparation, you to could be enjoying some afternoon bubbles. This fall menu is perfect to share with friends indoors or, weather permitting, out of doors. It can easily be prepared in advance and served family style so you can enjoy spending time with friends and not your stove. Better yet, some of these recipes are easy to plan and assemble with help from your friends right before the meal, so everyone can take part.

Menu

THE STARTERS

Figs & Melon with Speck



Pear Bellini

THE MAINS

Fancy Lettuce Salad



Sweet Corn & Pesto Rub



Ricotta & Fontina-Stuffed Shells

with Leeks & Radicchio

**We skipped a sweet for our dinner but
a wonderful fall fruit galette would do the trick, or try a simple cheese
plate with slices of apple or pear.*





{The starters}



THE STARTERS

{Figs & Melon with Speck}

Wrapping sweet fruits with salty cured meats is not news, but we love the distinct flavor of the speck combined with jammy figs and honeydew melon. If you are buying a melon for this recipe, you will have plenty left over. Plan on about four bites per person.

Ingredients

Fresh fruit, cut into bite-sized pieces

Speck, 1 slice per 2 appetizers

Method

Skewer a thin ruffle of speck with a toothpick or appetizer pick, then add a piece of fruit to finish.

THE STARTERS

{Pear Bellini} Serves 8

The pear purée should be prepped in advance so it is nice and cold when served. It also keeps well, just in case you have leftovers! And don't let the bubbles stop you, this delicious syrup tastes yummy simply stirred into club soda or ginger ale.

Ingredients

3 ripe pears, only peel 2
1 tablespoon lemon juice
½ cup sugar
1 bottle of prosecco, chilled

Method

Put the two peeled pears and lemon juice in a pan with 2 cups of water and the sugar. Bring to a slow gentle boil, then reduce the heat and simmer for 12 minutes, until tender. Take off the heat and let the mixture cool completely.

Cut the flesh from pears and purée with 2 tablespoons of the poaching liquid. Chill.

Spoon 1 tablespoon pear purée into each glass and top up with bubbles of your choice. Cut slivers from the third pear to garnish the drinks.





{The mains}



THE MAINS

{Fancy Lettuce Salad} Serves 4

Adapted from Yotam Ottolenghi's Plenty

This flavorful combination of veggies fits right in alongside an autumn meal. Or, serve it with some soft boiled eggs and a baguette for a picnic lunch. The salad looks beautiful served on a platter or large plate, but a bowl will work as well.

Dressing

- 1 finely diced shallot
- 1 ½ tablespoon freshly squeeze lemon juice
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 1 tablespoon grapeseed oil
- Salt and black pepper to taste

Salad

- 1 small head of butter lettuce
- 1 small head of radicchio
- 3 green onions, sliced thinly on a sharp angle
- 10 radishes, trimmed and sliced very thinly
- 2 cups of oven-roasted tomatoes (recipe follows)
- 2 tablespoons capers

Method

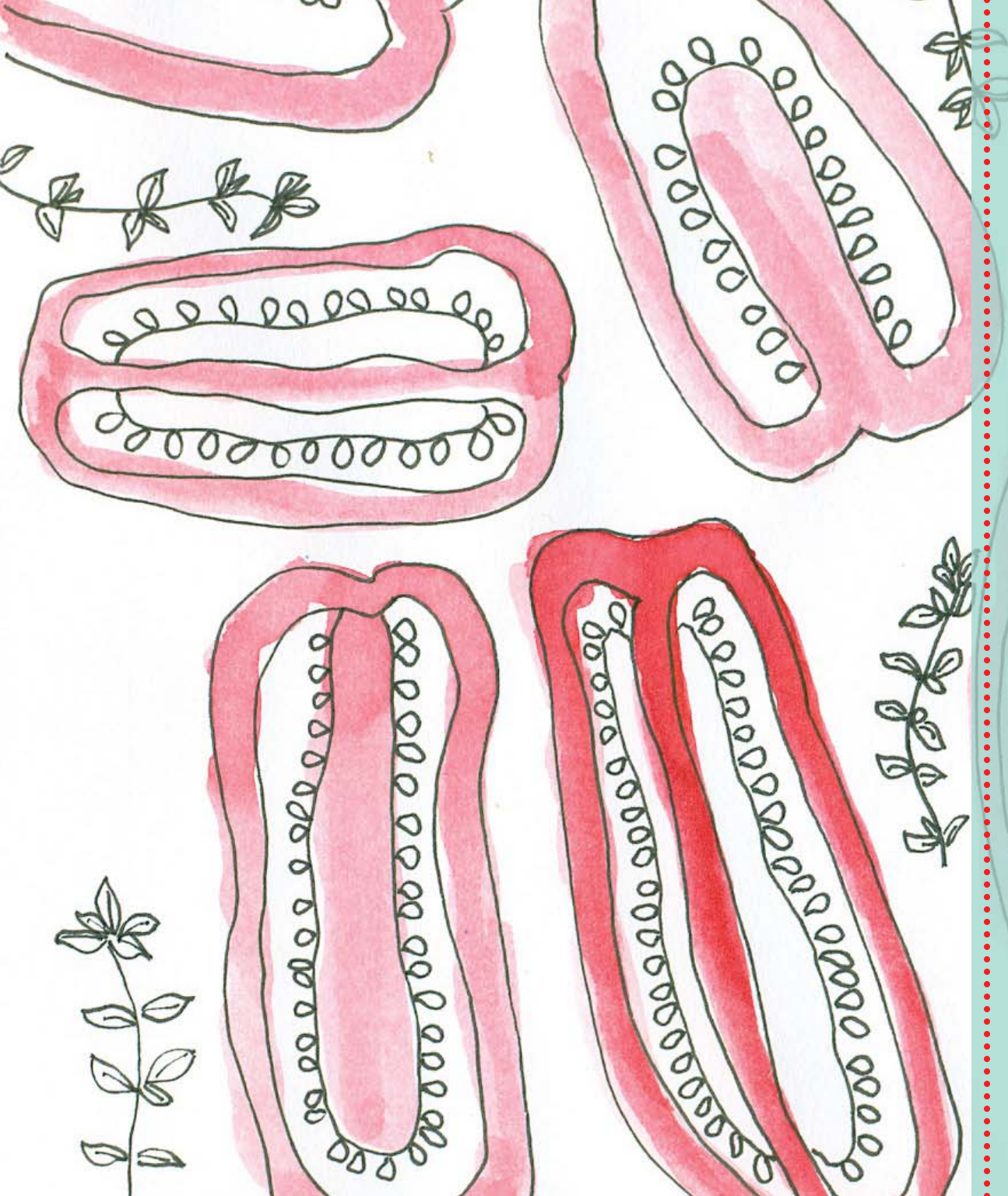
In a small bowl combine the ingredients for the dressing and mix well. Set aside.

Wash the lettuce and radicchio leaves and dry well. Tear into large pieces or keep the leaves whole. Arrange the leaves on a serving platter and top with the green onions, radishes and roasted tomatoes.

Just before serving, drizzle the salad dressing over the greens and toss gently to combine. Sprinkle the capers over the greens and top of a little more black pepper.







THE MAINS

{Oven-Roasted Tomatoes}

Whether trying to tame a bumper crop of garden tomatoes or roasting just a few to spice up a dish, this technique is lovely. Make as few, or as many, as you need. For the salad, you will need about six fresh tomatoes. A slow roast in the oven keeps plenty of the delicious tomato juices, making them perfect for all kinds of recipes. Use the nicest plum or Roma tomatoes you can find.

Ingredients

Tomatoes, washed and cut in half
Thyme sprigs
Olive oil
Salt

Method

Heat oven to 225°F. In the meantime, lay the tomatoes, cut side up, on a rimmed baking sheet. Give the tomatoes a generous drizzle of olive oil and nice sprinkle of salt. Place the thyme sprigs onto of the tomatoes. Roast for at least four hours, checking occasionally and spooning the pooling juices and olive oil back onto the tomatoes to keep them from drying up too much. Once the tomatoes have reached a desired consistency, remove from the oven and allow to cool.

If not all of the tomatoes are used in the salad, store in a glass jar and top with olive oil. They will keep nicely in the fridge for a few weeks, or in the freezer for several months.





THE MAINS

{Ricotta & Fontina-Stuffed Shells with Leeks & Radicchio}

Serves 8

Adapted from Food and Wine, October 2012

These delicious stuffed shells get flavor from a mixture of two kinds of cheese and vegetables. If you are not serving a crowd, this recipe can be split and frozen for an easy meal later.

Ingredients

2 tablespoons unsalted butter	6 ounces Italian Fontina cheese, shredded (1 ½ cups)
2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil	¼ cup chopped parsley
1 ½ pounds leeks, thinly sliced	Salt
1 medium sweet onion, thinly sliced	Freshly ground pepper
2 medium heads of radicchio (10 ounces total), chopped	2 large eggs, beaten
1 teaspoon fennel seed, lightly crushed	3 cups tomato sauce
12 ounces jumbo shells	½ cup heavy cream
2 cups fresh ricotta cheese	

Method

Preheat the oven to 375°F. In a large, deep skillet, melt the butter and the oil. Add the leeks and onion and cook over moderate heat, stirring occasionally, until lightly browned, about 15 minutes. Add a little water as needed to keep the vegetables from scorching. Add the radicchio and fennel seed and cook until very soft, about 10 minutes, adding more water as needed. Remove from heat, placing the vegetables into a bowl and let cool.

Meanwhile, in a large pot of well-salted boiling water, cook the pasta until al dente. Drain and cool under running water. Pat the shells dry and set out on a clean towel.

Fold the ricotta, 1 cup of the Fontina and the parsley into the bowl of vegetables and season with salt and pepper. Stir in the eggs.

In another bowl, mix the marinara sauce with the heavy cream. Pour about 1 ½ cups into a 9-by-13-inch baking dish. Stuff each shell with a slightly rounded tablespoon of the filling and nestle the shells in the sauce as close together as possible. Drizzle the remaining sauce on top and sprinkle with the remaining Fontina.

Bake the shells for about 40 minutes, until golden. Let rest for 15 minutes before serving.

THE MAINS

{Sweet Corn & Pesto Rub}

It doesn't take much to dress up delicious sweet corn, but this pesto rub makes a tasty addition. Use fresh pesto if it is available. Served alongside other dishes, plan on one cob of corn per person.

Ingredients

Sweet corn on the cob, cooked as you wish

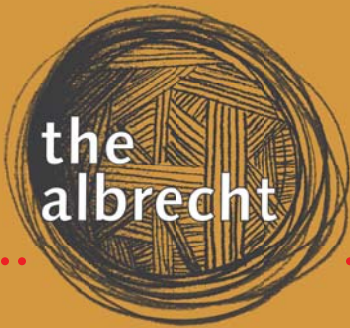
1 tablespoon pesto, per cob

Freshly grated Parmesan cheese

Method

Slather each cob of corn with about 1 tablespoon of pesto. Once coated, place on serving platter and repeat with the remaining corn. Once all the corn has been coated with pesto, finely grate a little Parmesan cheese on top of the stack. Serve immediately with a little more Parmesan at the table, if you like.





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Photography & design by The Albrecht www.thealbrecht.com

This lovely little publication is a collaboration from The Albrecht. We're two sisters, Ginger and Tina, who share a love of good food, art projects and a last name! Since Ginger lives in America and Tina in Canada, we're usually busy planning how much cooking we can squeeze into our next visit. Since we both love autumn (Tina, the decaying leaves and fog, and Ginger, a reason to bring out the teapot and turn on the oven!) we wanted to share this meal with you.

If you are interested in seeing more of our work or working on a collaboration with us, send an email to us@thealbrecht.com or visit our blog: www.thealbrecht.com