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Splashing Around in the Kitchen ... Summer Food Fun!

By Susie Iventosch



Chow Bella Kids -Team Green's Caprese on a Stick
Photo Susie Iventosch

When I went to summer camp as a kid, the food was edible ... but barely! These days, kids have a multitude of options for summertime activities and one of those is "cooking camp", where you can bet your sweet cupcake, the meals are going to be tasty!

Chow Bella Kids is offering an interesting menu of summer cooking camps this year from "Farm to Table" and the "All American Bake Shop" to "At Nonni's Table" and "Around the World", featuring international cuisine. The camps are designed for "growing gourmets" seven years and older.

Each session is comprised of five afternoons of cooking. During the first four days, kids learn to make an entire meal each day, including salad and dessert. Then on Friday they divide into two teams to compete with their newfound culinary skills in the "Kids' Iron Chef" or "Cupcake Wars" competitions. As class concludes on Thursday, the group is divided into two teams, and they are given a secret ingredient that must be used in the dish they prepare for competition. The week I visited, cheese was the secret ingredient.

"On Thursday, the teams decide among themselves what they want to make, so we can have all ingredients ready for them on Friday," said Elaine Smit, owner of Chow Bella. "We bring in outside judges-parents, grandparents, siblings and babysitters-so staff can be on hand to assist the kids as needed. All cooking must be completed in two hours, so it is also a race against the clock."

Each judge is asked to score the dishes based upon presentation, taste and how creatively the secret ingredient was used, to determine which team will "Reign Supreme."

The week I was invited to judge the competition, it was very exciting. Young chefs adorned in white aprons were furiously working to complete the final touches to their dishes.

Team Red made Beef and Turkey Lasagna (a recipe from Sarah Armstrong's dad) and Red Velvet Cupcakes with cream cheese frosting. Team Green presented Chicken Parmesan with their own addition of Alfredo Sauce, Tiramisu and Caprese Kebobs-marinated mozzarella balls, grape tomatoes and basil all perched on a skewer. I loved these and will definitely be using this dish for my next party!

"We chose to make the Chicken Parmesan, because it was delicious when we made it earlier in the week," said Sydney Smith, 11, who loved everything about the class, especially learning about new tools and cooking techniques. "And we thought we could make it pretty easily for the competition. We added the Alfredo Sauce so we could use more of this week's secret ingredient in the recipe."

While Team Green won the overall competition with their delicious Chicken Parmesan and Tiramisu, Team Red's Red Velvet Cupcake tree was nicely presented and tasty, too.

"We wanted to be creative," said Dahlia Theriault, who at the age of 12 already knows she would like to own a cupcake bakery someday. "I have an iPhone app for allrecipes.com, where I found recipes for both the cupcakes and the frosting."

Brandon Chu, 8, said he really liked learning how to cook new things.

"Before, I could only cook scrambled eggs and bacon," he pointed out. "But, now, I will try to make spaghetti at home!"

The next summer session, "Around the World", is July 25-29. The cuisine will run the gamut from Chinese and Mexican, to regular old American. There's still a little room at the table, but you'd better hurry!

Chow Bella Kids

For all of the recipes and more information on kids' summer cooking camps, please visit:

www.chowbellakids.com

Email: info@chowbella.net,

or call (925) 878-9932

Camp Location: Founders Grove

584 Glenside Drive

Lafayette, CA 94549

Conveniently located behind Lafayette Christian Church and across from Las Trampas pool.



Chow Bella Kids Chicken Parmesan



Chow Bella Kids Iron Chef Contest Team Green
Photo Susie Iventosch

dish. In the third dish, mix together the grated parmesan cheese and bread crumbs. Dip chicken breasts into the flour mixture, then into beaten egg, and finally into bread crumb mixture to coat.

In a large skillet, heat oil over medium heat. Add coated chicken and saute for about 3 or 4 minutes each side, or until chicken is cooked through and juices run clear.

Pour marinara sauce into a lightly greased 9x13 inch baking dish. Add chicken, then place a slice of mozzarella cheese over a breast, and bake in the preheated oven for 20 minutes or until cheese is completely melted.

Marinara Sauce

INGREDIENTS

- 1/2 cup extra-virgin olive oil
- 2 small onions, finely chopped
- 2 garlic cloves, finely chopped
- 2 stalks celery, finely chopped
- 2 carrots, peeled and finely chopped
- 1/2 teaspoon sea salt
- 1/2 teaspoon freshly ground pepper
- 2 (32-ounce) cans crushed tomatoes
- 2 dried bay leaves

DIRECTIONS

In a large casserole pot, heat the oil over a medium high flame. Add the onions and garlic, and saute until the onions are translucent, about 10 minutes. Add the celery, carrots, and 1/2 teaspoon of each salt and pepper. Saute until all the vegetables are soft, about 10 minutes. Add the tomatoes and bay leaves, and simmer uncovered over low heat until the sauce thickens, about 1 hour. Remove and discard the bay leaf. Season the sauce with more salt and pepper, to taste.

This is an easy recipe for a parent and child to prepare together. Kids love pounding the chicken with a meat mallet. To shorten the cooking time, use a prepared marinara sauce.

INGREDIENTS

- 4 skinless, boneless chicken breast halves
 - 1 cup all-purpose flour
 - 1 teaspoon salt
 - 2 eggs, beaten
 - 1/2 cup grated parmesan cheese
 - 1 cup bread crumbs seasoned
 - 2 tablespoons olive oil
 - 1 cup marinara sauce
 - 1/4 cup fresh mozzarella
 - 1 batch Marinara Sauce (recipe below)
- Optional: serve over linguine

DIRECTIONS

Preheat oven to 375 degrees.

Pound the chicken breasts until they are 1/4 inch thick. A meat mallet works best for this.

Using three shallow dishes, combine flour and salt in one shallow dish. Place beaten eggs into another shallow



Reach the reporter at: suziven@gmail.com

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