

Quiche Muffins Make a Quick Meal

By Susie Iventosch



Jose's Spinach Quiche Muffins

Photo Jose Gonzalez



Jose Gonzalez with his creation

Photo Susie Iventosch

I was perusing Facebook a few weeks ago, and found that my daughter's good friend, Jose Gonzalez, had posted a photo of these delicious-looking quiche-like "muffins." Immediately, I messaged him to see if he would share the recipe with me for the food column, because they looked so good. Of course, he said yes! That's what is so fun about FB, you never have to wait to long for an answer.

Jose said that the idea for making these "muffins" surfaced because he wanted to make a quiche, but didn't want to bother with the crust and all of that. Then, he saw the muffin tin and thought, why not make little individual quiches?

"This was something I could just store in the refrigerator and easily heat up for a meal, or take them on the go," he said.

When Jose is not acting, dancing or auditioning, he also is a substitute grade school teacher, and with such a crazy schedule, a good meal that can go with him is great to have.

Jose, who was born and raised in Oakland, went to college with my daughter and, it is fun to note, I first met him when they sang a duet together for a musical at San Jose State. Since then, Jose has performed in the national tour of Memphis and was also in the cast of all three Woodminster Theater musicals in Oakland this past summer. Now, he is back in New York City, hoping to land a show on Broadway.

Since I was going to visit my daughter in just a few weeks after his posting, we decided that the three of us would meet up at his apartment and make this recipe together, which we did last week and it was so much fun. They are really easy, and great for a fancy brunch, or to take on the road for those with a busy, hectic schedule. What I really like about them, too, is the fact that they are chock-full of sautéed onion, garlic, bacon, cheese and lots of fresh spinach. The beauty of this recipe is that you can also change it up and add any sort of veggie or sausage that you like. They would also work well, I think, with just egg whites instead of whole eggs, for those who prefer to omit the yolk. And, if you make them in the mini muffin tins, they would be the perfect finger food for any kind of party, brunch, lunch or dinner.

INGREDIENTS

6 strips of bacon, cooked crispy and crumbled (reserve 2 tablespoons of the grease for onions)
1 yellow onion, coarsely chopped
1 clove garlic, minced
2 cups chopped fresh spinach
½ to ¾ cup grated mozzarella cheese
8 eggs

DIRECTIONS

Preheat oven to 350F. Spray a muffin tin with coconut spray or PAM.
Cook bacon until crispy. (If you prefer, you can use pre-cooked bacon and then just use oil or butter to sauté the onion and garlic.) Set aside until cool, and discard all but a couple tablespoons of the bacon grease. Crumble the bacon.
In the same pan, cook the onions and garlic until translucent. Add spinach and cook for just a few minutes.
Meanwhile, beat eggs in a large bowl. Add the veggies, bacon and cheese to the eggs and mix well.
Distribute the egg mixture evenly into the muffin tins. You will have some of the mixture leftover for a second batch, maybe about four of them. (You can also use the larger muffin tins, or the mini muffin tins for this recipe. Just adjust cooking time as necessary.)
Bake for 30 minutes, or until done in the center. Eat right away, or cool and store in containers for quick meals during the week.

Susie Iventosch is the author of Tax Bites and Tasty Morsels, which can be found at Across the Way in Moraga, www.amazon.com, and www.taxbites.net. Susie can be reached at suziventosch@gmail.com.

This recipe can be found on our website: www.lamorindaweekly.com. If you would like to share your favorite recipe with Susie please contact her by email or call our office at (925) 377-0977.



Specialties of the House: The Hunt for Happy Hour

By A.K. Carroll



Photos A.K. Carroll

This week's Hunt for Happy Hour, which brings you the freshest and finest when it comes to discounted beverages and premium small bites in the Lamorinda area, focuses on La Finestra, a Sicilian dining spot with old-world charm and classic cocktails.

Recently, I have been watching The Dick Van Dyke Show – light-hearted, black and white, 1960s television. I watch Laura Petrie prance around her suburban New York bungalow, baking cakes and shredding cabbage, making coffee in pedal pushers and a sweater. Something about this version of life seems simple, straightforward, classic. It is the same sort of classic I feel when

I pass through the light-trimmed archway that leads to La Finestra. It is not trendy or hipster chic. There are no brass-studded chairs, tiny pots of succulents or a reclaimed wood bar. In fact, there is no bar at all. What it does have, however, is old-school charm along with an air of old-world Italy.

The best feature of happy hour at La Finestra is the restaurant itself. Photos, paintings and prints of the Italian peninsula fill the walls, along with framed maps of the region and gold-trimmed mirrors flanked in green shutters. The emerald trim is flaking and worn, a little like Italy itself, where you'll find more character and care than you will sleek shellac or stuck-up service. Opened by owner Jeff Assadi and Sicily-native Andrea Ditta in 1999, La Finestra is the sort of restaurant that has a banquet room rather than a lounge and an ambiance that calls for classic piano.

There are other throwbacks as well – servers clad in white shirts and black pants, Lucinda script menus and white-clothed tables. It is a respectful sort of formality that is consistent throughout the service. Now open seven days a week, with the recent addition of a weekend brunch, La Finestra features a happy hour that lasts the length of the afternoon, starting at 2 p.m. and running until 5:30 p.m. All beer, wine and cocktails are discounted by \$2, from a cold bottle of Stella to a spicy glass of Toscolo Chianti. Cocktails are simple, but clean – no home-made lavender syrup, smoked bourbon, or fruit-infused spirits to be found. A tart, crisp cosmo is made with cranberry, vodka and triple sec, while the house mimosa (only \$6 during happy hour) features fresh-squeezed orange juice whose pulp dances on bubbles.

Drinks can be enjoyed throughout the restaurant, on the mosaic tables out front, or in the glints of sunlight found on the quaint side patio. "We don't have a bar or a television," says Assadi. "To me when you have food and wine and cocktails, you don't want distraction." Happy hour is strictly for drinks, though if you're feeling a bit peckish, Assadi recommends the scalene, an abalone and sea scallop patty served in garlic cream sauce, or the jumbo prawns sautéed with pine nuts and raisins and served on a crostini. There is also the restaurant's trademark wild mush-

room and sun-dried tomato polenta.

Close the keyboard and put away your phone. Order yourself an afternoon mimosa or pre-dinner drink and take a trip back to the classic simplicity of cocktail hour.



When: 2-5:30 pm, Monday-Sunday

Where: 100 Lafayette Cir #101, Lafayette

Drinks: \$2 off all beer, wine and cocktails

Recommended: \$8 Cosmopolitan and \$6 Fresh-squeezed Mimosa

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