

Sage brown butter sauce accents fall flavors in this gnocchi dish



Photo Susie Iventosch

Gnocchi with Roasted Pumpkin and Cranberries in Sage Brown Butter Sauce

By Susie Iventosch

This is a fun dish to make, especially at this time of year when cranberries and pumpkins are in season and the fall flavors are all the rage. We love brown butter in almost anything, but this sage brown butter complements the pumpkin and cranberries so well, I couldn't resist using it for this recipe. Browning butter takes a little extra time, but it's so worth it, and you can brown a whole pound of butter at one time, and refrigerate it for other uses like cakes or cupcakes, sauces, and for dipping French bread.

All you need to brown the butter is a saucepan, low heat on the stove and about 10-15 minutes. You want to brown it slowly, because otherwise you could run the risk of burning

it. We make vanilla cake with buttercream frosting using brown butter and it makes vanilla cakes so much more interesting and tasty.

When I first set out to create this gnocchi recipe, I attempted to make my own pumpkin gnocchi, but after mine turned out rubbery and not all that tasty, I decided to start over with pre-packaged gnocchi. They really know what they are doing and it was perfect for this dish. There are a lot of companies that package gnocchi, but I was at Trader Joe's, so that is the one I used. Even though it seemed a bit dry when I first opened the package, it cooked up beautifully fluffy and soft and it only took about 3 minutes to cook in boiling water. This makes the recipe guaranteed to turn out and is so much easier than making your own gnocchi!

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(Serves 4)

INGREDIENTS

Gnocchi:

1 lb. packaged gnocchi (Trader Joe's make a really good one that is slightly bigger than 1 lb., but you can also find packaged gnocchi at your local grocer.)

Sage Brown Butter:

4 tablespoons butter, cut into pieces
1 teaspoon fresh thyme leaves
2 sage leaves, finely minced
1/2 cup dried cranberries

Roasted Pumpkin:

1 sugar pumpkin, stem and seeds removed and cut into 3/4-inch wedges
2 tablespoons olive oil
Several grinds of sea salt
Several grinds of pepper

Garnishes:

1/2 cup dried cranberries
2 oz. goat cheese, crumbled
1/2 cup grated Parmesan
Minced sage leaves and fresh thyme leaves

DIRECTIONS

To make the brown butter, place butter in a saucepan with a light colored bottom if possible, and if not just use a regular saucepan. Add minced sage and thyme and cook over medium-low heat until the butter begins to sizzle and bubble and eventually you will see little brown solids around the edges and at the bottom of the pan. This should take anywhere from 10-15 minutes, depending upon the water content in your butter and the temperature of your burners. I've seen it take 5 minutes and I've seen it take 25 minutes, but do keep your eye on it, because the butter can go from beautifully brown to burned in a heartbeat! Once it's brown, add 1/2 cup of dried cranberries to the herbed butter and cook over low heat for about 5 minutes longer. Remove butter from the heat and set aside.

To roast the pumpkin, preheat the oven to 400 F. Line a baking sheet with parchment paper, or spray with cooking spray. Lay the pumpkin wedges out on the baking sheet and brush both sides of each wedge with olive oil and season with salt and pepper. Bake for about 20 minutes, or until the edges start to brown and a knife can be easily inserted into the flesh of the pumpkin.

Remove from oven. When cool enough to handle, remove skins (or if you like them you can keep them on ... they are edible and add extra color), and cut all but four of the wedges into bite-sized pieces. If you have enough, save the wedges to use one for a garnish on each plate.

Cook gnocchi according to instructions on the package. Meanwhile reheat the sage brown butter on low heat. When the gnocchi are cooked (probably about 3 minutes in boiling water) strain them through a colander and then add them to the saucepan with the sage brown butter and cranberries. Add the cubed pumpkin pieces and toss all together well.

Serve on plates and garnish with extra dried cranberries, goat cheese crumbles, grated Parmesan, snipped sage leaves and thyme leaves. If you have extra roasted pumpkin wedges, place one on each plate when you serve it.



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. Or visit <https://treksandbites.com>



COVID, colleges, and your student

By Elizabeth LaScala, PhD

Most colleges planned on fall 2021 being a time to return to in-person education. Yet the sudden explosion of COVID's Delta variant threw these plans into question. Schools adopted a range of approaches to re-open while trying to keep their students, faculty, and staff safe. What will "normal with Delta" (or another variant) look like for your student when they are ready to go off to college? Get ready for lots of variety and seemingly endless divisiveness.

Vaccination is a hot topic for colleges. For around 600 colleges across the U.S., vaccination is mandatory with more coming on board. While these requirements have been met with both support and resistance by students and staff, private schools are within their rights to make these mandates.

Other colleges, both private and public, are not re-

quiring vaccines. In some cases, statewide mandates or local policies have influenced or restricted the introduction of vaccine mandates. In Texas, for example, public universities can't require vaccination, although private ones can.

An overwhelming majority of the colleges that do not require vaccines still think they are a good idea. These schools encourage students to get vaccinated through incentives or disincentives. Incentives that schools have used include discounted tuition, housing, and meal plans, with some colleges giving away free computers, gift cards or campus apparel to those who get the jab. Disincentives are often related to fees or testing frequency. Rice University – which does not have a vaccine mandate but does have a testing mandate – offers vaccinated students the convenience of being tested less frequently. Rhodes College in Tennessee also requires

testing. Testing is free to vaccinated students, but unvaccinated students must pay for their own.

Colleges are planning for many elements of the standard college experience to be in place when your student attends, whenever that may be. The school schedule, which was interrupted during 2020, has returned to the usual semester or quarter system with regularly scheduled breaks around Thanksgiving, winter and spring. For many colleges, dining halls and libraries are open, as well as on-campus housing.

However, even for schools mandating vaccines, spaces like dorms and dining halls have changed. Many campuses have allotted more room for dining, so students can maintain safe distances from one another. On-campus housing options have also decreased capacity, upping the numbers of single-occupancy rooms to

allow for social distancing in personal spaces. Masking and social distancing rules for classrooms, on campus and in the community have been written into school policies and student codes of conduct.

These extra measures may have been viewed as unnecessary in the past, but with Delta the breakthrough infections are alarmingly common. While these cases generally are not as severe, and often even asymptomatic, many colleges see it as their duty to protect the unvaccinated members of the college community as well as the broader community in which the college operates.

The only thing that can be said for certain for students considering college in the U.S. in future years is that everything could change tomorrow. It's important that we help our students navigate these challenges and grow their resilience as they boldly venture into an uncertain global future.



Elizabeth LaScala, PhD personally guides each student through each step of selecting and applying to well-matched schools for undergraduate and graduate school study. Over the past two decades, Elizabeth has placed hundreds of students in some of the most prestigious colleges and universities in the U.S. The number of clients taken is limited to ensure each applicant has personalized attention. Contact Elizabeth early in the process to make a difference in your outcomes. Write elizabeth@doingcollege.com; Visit www.doingcollege.com; or Call: 925.385.0562.

'Plant It Forward' program shares fresh produce with friendship school



Photo provided

Submitted by Cathy Chang

"Plant It Forward" is a new hands-on service project that matches those with the space and desire to grow food with families who need it. How it

works: Camino Pablo Elementary School families were given free, edible plant seedlings to grow nutritious plants for their own use during summer break. In return, the families agreed to give back surplus from those crops to communities in need.

The pilot program was organized by the Camino Pablo Elementary PTA Community Services Committee. Some seedlings were donated by the local volunteer-run farm, and the rest were from community members' private greenhouses in Moraga.

All told, students and families adopted about 60 edible plants before the 2020-21 school year, and grew food at home during the summer break. Each family was then called on to give back a pint-sized container (or more, if

they wished) of fresh produce from their gardens in September when school started again. The produce was dropped off and collected on campus, and was then shared with community friendship school, Meadow Homes Elementary School in Concord.

Over 650 students at Meadow Homes Elementary receive free or reduced-price lunch daily, and the Camino Pablo Elementary PTA has been donating washed gently used clothes and shoes since 2018.

"I don't eat a lot of tomatoes, but I want to grow tomatoes for the families at Meadow Homes," said seventh-grade student, Brian Harrison. "We adopted eggplants, but as it turned out our eggplants didn't grow very well. But we had a lot of herbs

and kale in our garden to give back, and we were so excited to share! We love 'Plant it Forward,'" said Leslie Nuccio, whose daughter Abby Nuccio is in fifth grade. "It's a really fun way to engage the kids in volunteer work, and it's also a great way to encourage people who haven't taken the leap yet to grow food at home - but do have the space and sunshine - to go ahead and give it a try."

Beyond the fresh produce from "Plant It Forward," the local farm also donated over-ripen tomatoes after their summer harvest to be processed into jarred tomato sauce for Meadow Homes families. This, too, was a fun community affair: three fifth-grade students from Camino Pablo Elementary volunteered to help jar the sauce and make labels for all the jars and pro-

duce for the delivery. "We're delivering what's good from our gardens to their families because we care, so every label has to look nice!" said the fifth-graders.

In the end, the pilot year of "Plant It Forward" was a great success. Beyond the vegetables, the program sent friendship and warmth from one community to another. Coordinators would love to see this program expand to other Lamorinda schools. So dear readers, what would you plant this next season to share?

For questions about "Plant it Forward" or to run the program at your own school, please contact hwchang3@gmail.com at the Camino Pablo Elementary School PTA Community Services Committee.

Marquee talent for Park Theater fundraiser

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The Trust's model of a non-profit ownership with a for-profit operator means that the current capital campaign is a one-time ask of the community. Any subsequent fundrais-

ing will be minimal and only necessary to maintain TPTT's nonprofit status.

The vision of the Park Theater Trust is to make the spot be more than just a place to watch movies. "We see a lot of alignment with the schools, other nonprofit organizations,

and location institutions such as the library and Town Hall Theatre," says Farrell. "There are so many things we hope to do to bring the Park Theater back to life for everyone in our community."

Once the building is purchased, the renovations and

restorations will take about a year. The plan is to have the theater open in 2023.

The neon show currently at the Jennifer Perlmutter Gallery focuses attention on the art of neon, the historical significance of the Park Theater, and the value of saving

and bringing it back to life for everyone in the community. The show runs through Nov. 6 and is open Wednesday to Saturday from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. Masks are required for entry, and private showings are available by appointment.