

ZIATA

Napa Valley

Wild Nettle Cannelloni with Roast Chicken, Chanterelles and Pancetta by chef Eric Webster

(will make about 12 cannelloni...enough for 6 people)

Ingredients:

whole chicken legs	2 each
lemons	2 each
thyme	1 bunch
artichokes	2 large globes, or 6 baby
chanterelles	1/4 pound
leeks	1 large
heavy cream	1 pint
parsley	1/2 bunch, chopped
parmesan, grated	1/4 cup, plus a little for the top
fontina, grated	1/4 cup
extra virgin olive oil	as needed
whole butter	as needed
salt/pepper	to taste

The Bechamel:

whole butter	4 tablespoons
All-purpose flour	1/4 cup
whole milk	2 cups
nutmeg, fresh	grated, to taste

The Pasta:

nettles, cooked, water removed	1/4 cup
All-purpose or "oo" flour	2 cups
eggs	2 whole eggs + 3 yolks

The Garnish:

prosciutto or pancetta, cut thin	4 slices
thyme leaves	1 tablespoon
olive oil	1/4 cup

Notes on the Dish:

While this dish involves a many steps, they are all very simple and straightforward and everything can be completed the day ahead (except the garnish). When it is time to cook the cannelloni there is very little to do, which makes it ideal for entertaining. The variations are endless, which allows you to make this with many different seasonal ingredients, though I do consider it more of a cold-weather dish. As far as its pairing with the delicious Ziata Pinot Noir, I think the important elements that help make the dish and the wine such a great match are the crispy skin from the chicken and the prosciutto or pancetta used to garnish it.

ZIATA

Napa Valley

For the Chicken:

Choose a baking dish that will hold the chicken legs in one layer with a small amount of space, about 1 inch, between each. Place two thin slices of lemon and a few sprigs of thyme in the bottom of the dish for each chicken leg to rest on. Season both sides of the chicken legs with salt and pepper and place on top of the lemon and thyme (skin side up). Coat the top of each leg with a liberal pour of extra virgin olive oil and place the baking dish in a 250 degree oven. The legs will cook VERY SLOWLY and may take between two and three hours. Resist the urge to turn the oven up...your patience will be rewarded with succulent chicken resembling more of a confit than a roast. Baste the legs regularly as they cook (every 15 to 20 minutes). They are done when the joint of the leg bends VERY easily. Remove from the oven and allow to cool. Pull the skin from the legs off in one piece and return to the oven and allow to darken to a medium brown.

The skin will become very crispy once it has cooled a bit. Crumble it into small pieces...they will go into the filling along with the meat. Once the legs have cooled to room temperature, remove the meat from the bones and give it a rough chop.

For the Artichokes:

Fill a bowl with cold water, squeeze the juice from a lemon into the water and toss in the squeezed lemon halves. Pull and discard the leaves from the artichokes until only about the top third of the remaining leaves are green. Cut off the top of the artichoke just below where the green begins and also cut about a half inch from where the artichoke was cut from the plant. With a paring knife, remove the dark green from the base of the chokes and the outer fibrous layer from the stems. Depending on the size of the artichokes, you may also need to remove the choke from the inside. Cut them in half lengthwise and cut out the purple thistle from the inside. As you finish each artichoke place it in the lemon water to keep it from browning. Thinly slice lengthwise all of the artichokes.

Just before sautéing the artichokes, lay them out on a clean kitchen towel to remove any excess moisture. Heat a large sauté pan with a generous amount of olive oil. When the oil begins to shimmer in the pan, add the artichokes and a few sprigs of thyme and sauté until golden brown and crispy at the edges. Season with salt and pepper just as they begin to turn brown (about halfway through the cooking). When done, remove them from the pan and allow to cool.

For the Chanterelles:

Clean the mushrooms with a brush or cloth, and slice them thin. Heat a large sauté pan with a generous amount of olive oil. When the oil begins to shimmer in the pan, add the mushrooms in one layer along with a sprig of thyme...do not crowd the pan with too many mushrooms or they will boil in their own liquid rather than sauté. Do not add any salt until they are well browned. Season to taste and allow to cool.

For the Leeks:

Remove the tops (dark green) from the leeks. Cut them in half lengthwise and remove the outer one or two layers, which are a bit tough. Keeping the root end intact, make a few lengthwise cuts, depending on the size of the leeks. Now make crosswise cuts to make a rough dice. Place the leeks in a large bowl and fill with enough

ZIATA

Napa Valley

water so the leeks float well above the bottom. Agitate the leeks enough to remove the dirt. Remove the floating leeks to a strainer. If the water is very dirty you may want to wash them again in a fresh bowl of water.

In a straight-sided saucepan, heat equal parts of butter and olive oil over low to medium heat and add the leeks. Add salt to the leeks at the very beginning to encourage them to “sweat.” Cook them until they are very tender and sweet, then remove and allow to cool.

For the Bechamel:

Heat the whole butter in a saucepan. Wait until the butter stops sizzling but has not yet browned...this assures all of the water has cooked out and will not form lumps when the flour is added. Add all of the flour and cook the roux over medium heat for about 5 minutes...it should remain very pale in color. Add the cold milk and bring to a boil, reduce to a simmer and cook slowly for about 20 minutes. Stir often to keep the bottom from scorching. When done cooking, season with salt, pepper and a small amount of freshly grated nutmeg to taste. Pour into a shallow bowl and place plastic wrap directly on the surface to keep a skin from forming.

For the Nettle Pasta:

Nettles can be tricky to find and this recipe works equally well with spinach as a substitution. Nettles grow wild and more farmers have been harvesting them and bringing them to the farmers markets lately. As they are also referred to as “stinging nettles” a word of caution: Before they are cooked they will “sting,” but once they are blanched this is no longer an issue.

A note about fresh pasta: fresh, uncut sheets of pasta have become increasingly available both in specialty stores and in higher-end grocery stores. If you don't have a pasta machine at home, you can substitute another fresh cut pasta.

Blanch the nettles in a large pot of boiling salted water until they are tender (check the stems...should only take about a minute of cooking) shock in ice water, then squeeze as much water from the nettles as possible. Spread them out on a few layers of paper towel, roll it up and squeeze to get that last bit of water out that won't come out from squeezing alone. The more water you remove, the better the pasta will be.

Spread out the blanched nettles and pick out any of the larger stems (save these to chop and add to the filling). You should end up with enough nettles to make the pasta and also to add to the filling (about 1/4 cup of cooked nettles for each). Don't remove any of the stems for the filling.

Place the blanched nettles for the dough in a food processor with the flour and run the machine for a few minutes to grind the nettles as fine as possible into the flour.

Place the flour/nettle mixture in the bowl of a stand mixer with the paddle attachment.

Turn on the machine at its lowest speed and gradually add half the eggs, allow the mixer to run for a minute, then continue adding the eggs slowly until the mixture looks like wet sand but has not come together as a ball of dough. Test the dough by squeezing some together in your hand...if it stays together, there is enough egg, if it falls apart, continue.

ZIATA

Napa Valley

If you add egg until a ball of dough forms, the dough will have far too much moisture and never have any body to it. The correct dough will likely seem too dry, but as it rests the moisture from the eggs will spread through the flour. Form the dough in balls about the size of a baseball and wrap tightly in plastic. Allow to rest at room temperature for about 20 to 30 minutes.

After the dough has rested, run it through your pasta roller...I stop about one setting from the thinnest on my machine. Cut the sheets of pasta to manageable lengths (say, the width of your cutting board)

Completing The Filling and Assembly:

In a bowl, mix the nettles, artichokes, mushrooms, leeks, chicken, crispy chicken skin and chopped parsley. Once cold, the bechamel may be a bit too thick—it should be a little thicker than buttermilk—so you may need to whisk in a bit of whole milk before you add it to the filling, adjust the seasoning when you do. Add enough of the bechamel to the rest of the filling to bind everything together when it cooks. The filling should be roughly 2 parts of the cooked ingredients to 1 part bechamel by volume. Add the parmesan and fontina. Once well mixed, taste for seasoning. When making stuffed pasta like this it is very important to season the filling very well. It should be on the verge of tasting a bit too salty, but when it is baked it will be just right.

Blanch the sheets of pasta when your filling is ready to go. In a large pot of boiling salted water, cook the sheets of pasta for about 1 minute at the most, then submerge in a bowl of ice water to stop the cooking. Wipe off excess water with your fingers and lay flat on a cloth napkin. Place a line of the filling along the edge of the pasta closest you and roll the pasta around it making sure to overlap the pasta by at least an inch so it will hold together during cooking. Cut the rolled pasta into the desired length for cooking (I make mine about 4-5 inches long).

The Garnish:

Place the olive oil in a sauté pan and heat over medium heat. Add the slices of prosciutto or pancetta, cook slowly until they just begin to crisp, then remove from the pan. Pour the heated olive oil into a bowl and add the thyme leaves while the oil is still hot, then crumble the crispy prosciutto/pancetta into the oil and allow the mixture to cool to room temperature.

To Cook the Cannelloni:

Choose a pan that will hold the cannelloni in one layer without much space around them. Pour in the cream about a half-inch deep and season it lightly with salt and pepper. Add the cannelloni and turn each in the cream to coat, making sure the seam side is facing down. Bring the cream to just a simmer on the stove, then place in a 350 degree oven for about 10 minutes or until the filling is heated through. Switch your oven to the broiler, dust the tops of the cannelloni with parmesan and place the pan under the broiler until the tops are golden brown.

Allow the cannelloni to cool for 5 to 10 minutes to set a bit...the flavors will be much better than if eaten piping hot right out of the oven.

When ready to serve, place the cannelloni in the center of a warm plate and spoon a bit of the warm cream from the pan around. Garnish the top of the cannelloni with the thyme/prosciutto olive oil.