

Mother's Day is Sunday. How about celebrating Mom (or a special lady in your household) this year by cooking or baking something you know she'll love. Skip the restaurant tradition and treat her to something special at home. The effort will be so much more appreciated, and best of all, you'll have some awesome treats to share with the whole family. You don't need to be an experienced chef to try your hand at one of these easy sweet and flavorful recipes, so why not start Mom's special day out right? And of course, honor her the healthy way! Here are some tips to do just that...

**First idea: Chicken salad with pecans and dried cherries over a bed of romaine lettuce;** serve whole wheat rolls on the side with crisp ice water and lemon wedges or if she is a tea drinker, raspberry tea.



**#2:** The coolest idea for using muffin tins...**Asparagus-Mushroom Mini Lasagnas.** These are no joke. You use wonton wrappers to make these. They are healthy, they're vegetarian - but of course you can experiment with different fillings, and they are amazing.

Makes: 6 servings Serving Size: 2 lasagnas

### Ingredients

- Canola or olive oil cooking spray
- 1 cup low-fat milk
- 1 tablespoon all-purpose flour
- 3/4 cup grated Asiago cheese
- 1/8-1/4 teaspoon white or black pepper
- 1 tablespoon extra-virgin olive oil
- 1 large shallot, finely chopped
- 2 cups chopped baby bella mushrooms
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 2 cups thinly sliced asparagus (from 1 bunch)
- 24 wonton wrappers
- 1 cup part-skim ricotta cheese
- 1/4 cup prepared pesto

### Preparation

1. Preheat oven to 375°F. Coat a 12-cup nonstick muffin tin with cooking spray.

2. Whisk milk and flour in a small saucepan. Bring to a boil over medium-high heat, whisking constantly, until bubbling and thickened enough to coat the back of a spoon, about 3 minutes. Remove from heat and whisk in Asiago and pepper to taste.
3. Heat oil in a large skillet over medium-high heat. Add shallot, mushrooms and salt and cook, stirring occasionally, until the mushrooms release their liquid, 3 to 5 minutes. Add asparagus and cook, stirring, until just beginning to soften, about 3 minutes.
4. Place a wonton wrapper into the bottom and partway up the sides of each muffin cup. Combine ricotta and pesto in a medium bowl. Spoon about 2 teaspoons of the ricotta mixture into each muffin cup. Spread about 2 teaspoons of the Asiago sauce over the ricotta and top with about 1 tablespoon of the vegetable mixture. Place another wonton wrapper over the filling, pressing down gently to form a “cup.” The corners of the wrappers will stick up, forming 4 little points. Repeat with another layer of the ricotta mixture, Asiago sauce and vegetables. Coat the tops with cooking spray.
5. Bake the mini lasagnas until the tips of the wonton wrappers are golden brown and the filling is bubbling, 18 to 20 minutes. Let cool in the pan for 5 minutes. Loosen and remove with a paring knife. Serve warm.

**#3:** What about a midday breakfast? Try this: **French Toast Casserole**

#### Ingredients

- 1 loaf whole grain bakery bread (about 15 - 18 inches long), sliced and cut into 1-inch cubes. (discarded the ends)
- 10 large eggs
- 2 cups unsweetened coconut milk
- ½ teaspoon cinnamon
- ⅛ teaspoon nutmeg
- 1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract
- ⅓ cup pure maple syrup
- ⅓ cup sliced raw almonds
- 2 tablespoons dark brown sugar
- 1 tablespoon chilled unsalted butter, cut into small cubes
- extra pure maple syrup for serving.

#### Instructions

1. In a medium to large bowl whisk together eggs, coconut milk, cinnamon, nutmeg, pure vanilla extract, and maple syrup.
2. Lay out the bread in a 9 x13 baking dish lightly sprayed with cooking spray. Pour the egg mixture over top of the bread. Gently stir it together until all the bread is coated with the egg mixture.
3. Cover the dish with foil and place in the refrigerator overnight.
4. In the morning, remove the dish from the refrigerator and place on the counter. Preheat oven to 350 degrees.
5. In a small bowl combine almonds, brown sugar. and butter. Squeeze together with your hands until it forms a crumbly mixture. Sprinkle it over top of the French toast mixture.

6. Bake for 50 minutes. Serve hot or warm with more pure maple syrup, if desired.

## **Notes**

### **Make ahead instructions**

The recipe can be prepared the night before. Continue with almond, sugar, and butter topping, place in the oven, and continue with recipe.

After it is baked, cut into portions, and store in the refrigerator and/or freezer. Wrap in plastic wrap then place in to freezer bags. Or store in plastic containers.

I hope you find one of these recipes enjoyable for your Mother's Day. God speed.

Tammy Cowden