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Recipes from ***Pasta Sfoglia*** by Ron and Colleen Suhanosky. Copyright © 2009. Reprinted by permission of John Wiley & Sons, Inc., Hoboken, NJ.

Gnocchi, Sausage, Tomato, Peas, Smoked Mozzarella

A few years ago, Colleen (pregnant with our son, Roman); the girls, Vivian and Marcella; and I spent Christmas on the Aeolian Island of Salina, just off the coast of Sicily. One of the dishes that we were served at a local restaurant was called Rigatoni alla Fantasia. The fat, tubular pasta was dressed with an eggplant puree, peas, and smoked scamorza – a soft cheese that's something like a cross between provolone cheese and mozzarella. I've always wanted to use smoked mozzarella in a dish. I recalled the Roman habit of cooking sausage with peas and thought those ingredients would be just the right combination with smoked mozzarella. When the smoky, soft cheese melts over the gnocchi, sausage, and peas, a fantasia is realized.

Serves 4-6

1 recipe Potato Gnocchi (see below)
1 tablespoon grape seed oil
1 pound sweet Italian sausage, casings removed
1 clove garlic, thinly sliced
2 cups peeled whole San Marzano tomatoes, crushed
1 cup water
1 cup fresh shelled or frozen peas
1 teaspoon kosher salt
1/4 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
1/2 pound smoked mozzarella, cut into 1/4-inch cubes

1. Heat the grape seed oil in a 10-inch skillet over medium-high heat. When the oil is hot, add the sausage. Use a wooden spoon to break it up. Move the sausage around and cook until the pink disappears and it's browned, about 7 to 8 minutes. Add the garlic, tomatoes, water, peas, salt, and pepper.
2. Bring a large pot of salted water to a boil. Add the gnocchi to the boiling water and cook until they float to the top. Cook for 1 more minute.
3. While the gnocchi are cooking, evenly distribute the mozzarella over the sauce.
4. Use a wire-mesh skimmer to remove the gnocchi from the pot and place them directly into the skillet. Use a wooden spoon or spatula to carefully fold together the gnocchi and sauce.
5. Serve immediately.



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Gnocchi, Sausage, Tomato, Peas, Smoked Mozzarella, (continued)

Potato Gnocchi

One day while I was still in high school, I read a recipe for potato gnocchi in a food magazine and decided I would try to make them for my family for dinner. The night I served them, with a simple tomato sauce, I remember that my father called them sinkers, because they just dropped into his stomach and stayed there.

After that embarrassing meal, I continued to make these little dumplings until I finally found the right formula. I realized that in order to make really good gnocchi, it is important to feel the dough with my hands. The idea is to incorporate the flour into the potatoes just enough so the resulting dough is light and fluffy, not elastic, as it would be if it were made in a food processor or stand mixer.

Another thing that is essential for good gnocchi is the temperature of the potatoes when they are passed through a food mill. The potatoes should be warm to the touch, not hot and not cold.

These delicate gnocchi have become a signature on the Sfoglia restaurant's menus, where we change their sauces with the seasons.

Makes 2 pounds gnocchi

3 pounds unpeeled Idaho potatoes
1 cup all-purpose flour
2 teaspoons kosher salt
1 egg
Rice flour for dusting

1. Gently boil the potatoes in their jackets in a large pot of water over medium heat until a tester passes easily through the thickest part. Remove the potatoes from the pot and let cool to the touch; they shouldn't get completely cold.
2. Wrap the potatoes in a kitchen towel or cotton napkin and rub to remove the skins. Pass the potatoes through a food mill fitted with a medium-hole disk, or through a ricer, into a large mixing bowl.
3. Spread the all-purpose flour on a clean, dry work surface. Place the potatoes on top of the flour. Add the salt and egg. Use your hands to gather the ingredients together and gently knead the dough into a 10 by 8-inch log. Let rest for 2 minutes.
4. Lightly dust a clean, dry work surface with rice flour. Cut the log into 4 equal pieces. Roll each piece into a 1-inch-thick rope. Cut each rope into 1/2-inch-wide gnocchi. Store the gnocchi on a rice flour-covered baking sheet until ready to use. Dust with rice flour.