



The Fancy Pants Kitchen

By Francine Coles

The weather has turned, along with the leaves, and we are in full-blown Autumn! This calls for Autumn recipes...things to make that feel nostalgic; that include spices such as cinnamon, nutmeg and allspice; recipes that feature winter vegetables and fruits such as squash, sweet potatoes, and apples. So let me help you out!

This month, I am featuring a silky but hearty Butternut Squash Soup with Crisp Pancetta. This is a very easy soup. You simply roast the squash, add the softened squash to a broth base and simmer for a bit. Then purée and you are ready to serve it!

The second recipe that I love is Meatball Parmesan. These meatballs are beautifully flavored with the combination of three different proteins (beef, pork and veal) and then lightened with the addition of ricotta cheese. They are baked along with the sauce so that they are a little healthier than if you fried them. Pair these with a simple salad and dinner is served!

Finally, you all know that it's chocolate chip cookie season, but I've got the BEST recipe! It originated from Bon Appetit and has been my go-to recipe for years. Why? Because it starts with browned butter (don't let that worry you...it's very easy to do and once you taste these, you'll realize why you need to do this). The batter includes Heath bar pieces and dark chocolate chunks. You finish them off with flaky salt. Ok, are you with me??? These cookies are insane and the most requested recipe ever!

If you want to see photos of these recipes, go to www.thefancypantskitchen.com.

I want to wish you all a beautiful Thanksgiving celebration. I'm grateful to be able to share my recipes with you, for the feedback and love you have shown me and to be a part of such a warm and beautiful community!

Happy feasting, Munds Park!!

Butternut Squash Soup with Crisp Pancetta

Serves 12

4 medium butternut squash (6 pounds)
6 tablespoons unsalted butter, cut into 8 pieces
Kosher salt and freshly ground pepper
12 very thin slices of pancetta (3 ounces)
2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil, plus more for drizzling
1 large yellow onion, chopped
6 thyme sprigs
1 bay leaf
2 quarts chicken stock or low-sodium broth
2 tablespoons heavy cream
Optional additional toppings: Pomegranate seeds, thyme leaves, Italian parsley leaves

Preheat the oven to 400°F. Halve the squash lengthwise and scoop out the seeds. Set the squash on a rimmed baking sheet, cut sides up. Put a piece of butter in each cavity and season generously with salt and pepper. Drape the squash halves with the pancetta slices. Roast the squash for 45 to 50 minutes, or until tender.

Transfer the pancetta to paper towels to drain. Crumble and set aside. Scoop the squash out of the skins into a bowl.

In a large, heavy stockpot, heat the 2 tablespoons of olive oil until shimmering. Add the onion, season with salt and pepper and cook over moderately high heat, stirring, until softened but not browned, about 6 minutes. Add 3 of the thyme sprigs and the bay leaf. Stir in the squash and the stock and bring to a boil over high heat, stirring frequently. Reduce the

heat and simmer the soup for 15 minutes, stirring occasionally.

Pick out and discard the thyme sprigs and bay leaf. Working in batches, transfer the soup to a blender or food processor and purée until thick and creamy-smooth, about 1 minute per batch. Transfer the soup to a clean saucepan. Stir in the heavy cream and season with salt and pepper.

Reheat the soup if necessary. Ladle into 12 bowls. Garnish the soup with the pancetta, the leaves from the remaining 3 thyme sprigs and a drizzle of olive oil. You can also add pomegranate seeds for additional crunch!

Make Ahead: The soup and roasted pancetta can be refrigerated for up to 2 days. Reheat the soup and re crisp the pancetta before serving; the soup may need to be thinned with stock or water.

Meatball Parmesan

Serves 6

Sauce (see Chef's Note):

1/2 cup olive oil
1 large yellow onion, chopped (1 1/2 cups)
2 medium cloves garlic, crushed
2 tbsp chopped fresh oregano or 1 tsp dry oregano
1 bay leaf
1 tbsp tomato paste
2 26-ounce containers diced tomatoes, preferably Pomi brand
Kosher salt

Meatballs:

1 tbsp olive oil
8 ounces ground pork
6 ounces 80% lean ground beef
6 ounces ground veal
1 cup coarse fresh white breadcrumbs
1/2 cup whole-milk ricotta
2 large eggs
2 tbsp chopped fresh flat-leaf parsley
1 tbsp chopped fresh oregano or 1 1/2 tsp dry oregano
1/2 tsp fennel seed, freshly ground
1/8 tsp crushed red pepper flakes
Kosher salt

1 cup mozzarella cheese, grated
1/4 cup Parmesan cheese, grated

Make the Sauce: Heat the olive oil in a heavy-duty 4-quart saucepan over medium heat. Add the onion, garlic, oregano, and bay leaf. Cook, stirring over, until the onion is soft, 6-10 minutes.

Add the tomato paste and cook, stirring constantly, until darkened, 3 to 4 minutes. Add the tomatoes and their juice and 1 teaspoon salt. Bring to a boil and then simmer over low heat, stirring frequently, until the sauce has reduced by about a third, about 40 minutes. Remove the bay leaf and season to taste with salt. Keep warm, covered. (The sauce can also be refrigerated for up to 5 days or frozen for 1 month.)

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Make the Meatballs: Position a rack in the center of the oven and heat the oven to 450°F. Coat the bottom and sides of an 8x8-inch baking dish with the olive oil. Set aside.

Combine the ground meats, breadcrumbs, ricotta, eggs, parsley, oregano, fennel seed, red pepper flakes, and 2 teaspoons salt in a large bowl. Mix gently but thoroughly with your hands.

Divide the meat into 16 golf ball-size portions using a 2-ounce, 2-inch diameter ice cream scoop or your hands. Arrange the balls snugly in the baking dish. Bake the meatballs until they register about 90°F on an instant-read thermometer and are firm to the touch, 10 to 12 minutes. (If you've made the tomato sauce ahead and refrigerated it, heat it while the meatballs are cooking.)

Remove the meatballs from the oven and drain excess fat, if there is any, from the pan. Ladle the sauce over them, then top with mozzarella. Sprinkle the Parmesan over and return them to the oven and continue to bake until an instant-read thermometer inserted into one meatball reads 165°F, about another 15 minutes.

This dish can be made ahead and then reheated in the oven. It can also be frozen for a quick dinner!

Chef's Note: This recipe makes double the amount of sauce that you will need. Use it for pasta or freeze for another time.

Brown Butter & Toffee Chocolate Chip Cookies

Makes 20 cookies

1 cup (2 sticks) unsalted butter
2 cups all-purpose flour
1 tsp baking soda
3/4 tsp kosher salt
1 cup (packed) dark brown sugar
1/2 cup granulated sugar
2 large eggs, room temperature
2 tsp vanilla extract
2 chocolate toffee bars (preferably Skor or Heath), chopped into 1/4-inch pieces
1 1/2 cups chocolate wafers or chips (or a combination of them; preferably 72% cacao)
Flaky sea salt, such as Maldon

Cook butter in a medium saucepan over medium heat, stirring often, until it foams, then browns, 5-8 minutes. Scrape into a large bowl and let cool slightly.

Meanwhile, whisk flour, baking soda, and kosher salt in a medium bowl.

Add brown sugar and granulated sugar to browned butter. Using an electric mixer on medium speed, beat until incorporated, about 1 minute. Add eggs and vanilla and beat until mixture lightens and begins to thicken, about 30 seconds. Reduce mixer speed to low; add dry ingredients and beat just to combine. Mix in toffee pieces and chocolate wafers with a wooden spoon or a rubber spatula. Let dough sit at room temperature at least 30 minutes to allow the flour to hydrate. Dough will look very loose at first, but will thicken as it sits.

Place a rack in middle of oven; preheat to 375°. Using a 1 1/2-oz. ice cream scoop, portion out 10 balls of dough and place on a parchment-lined baking sheet, spacing about 3" apart (you can also form dough into ping pong-sized balls with your hands). Do not flatten; cookies will spread as they bake. Sprinkle with sea salt.

Bake cookies until edges are golden brown and firm but centers are still soft, 9-11

minutes. Let cool on baking sheets 10 minutes, then transfer to a wire rack and let cool completely. Repeat with remaining dough and a fresh parchment-lined baking sheet to make 10 more cookies.

Do Ahead: Cookie dough can be made 3 days ahead; cover and chill. Let dough come to room temperature before baking.