

HEALTHIER TRADITIONS COOKBOOK™

ITALIAN

18 Classic Italian Dishes

Cauliflower
Alfredo



TRANSAMERICA INSTITUTE®

Navigate the Future.™

HEALTHIER TRADITIONS COOKBOOKS™

FIND MORE HEALTHY RECIPES AT [TRANSAMERICAINSTITUTE.ORG](https://transamericainstitute.org)



We are pleased to share this edition of the Transamerica Institute® Healthier Traditions Cookbook™ series focused on Italian food. This book includes a wide variety of recipes that can be made any day of the week. We took traditional favorite recipes that are based in Italian culture and modified them to be more nutritious while just as flavorful. Some of these recipes are healthier twists on classic Italian recipes that are beloved here in the US (such as the Cauliflower Alfredo or Meatballs). Others are unique variations on traditional recipes (such as the Socca Pizza or Panzanella Caponata). And others have Italian roots but have been modified into the versions we commonly see made in the US (such as the Cioppino or Chicken Piccata). We added some short points about the history and cultural context for many of these recipes; you may find these spark your interest to read further into the origin of recipes and history of their ingredients, both within Italy and in the US. A couple of suggested resources to learn more about the history of Italian cuisine in America are the websites of the Italian Sons and Daughters of America and the Order of the Sons and Daughters of Italy.

To get started, you'll want to stock up on fresh extra virgin olive oil, which is so healthy for your heart and brain. Many of the ingredients (such as chickpeas, pasta, and canned tomatoes) are pantry staples. The fresh ingredients can be found easily at your local grocery store or probably even farmers market. When possible, we encourage you to substitute fruits or vegetables based on what is in season. For example, you can swap sliced oranges for the berries on the Panna Cotta in the winter. Or, you could add roasted beets or butternut squash to your Socca Pizza in the winter, when zucchini are not in season. And many of the tips and techniques that you will learn in these recipes—such as blending vegetables into a creamy pasta sauce or using oats instead of breadcrumbs in meatballs—can be easily replicated in your other favorite recipes from other cultures.

These recipes are written to be nutritious for everyone, but they can also be modified to meet different dietary needs. While not all are vegetarian, these recipes are full of vegetables and are largely plant-based. Most of the recipes that call for meat can be easily modified by using cooked lentils or quinoa in place of meat. Though not traditional, piccata could be made with tofu or tempeh. And many of the dishes that call for dairy could be substituted with vegan ingredients. For example, the Panna Cotta could be made with a plant-based yogurt and agar agar instead of gelatin. Also, the Lasagna or Cannoli could be made with a nut-based cheese.

Most of these recipes are also naturally gluten-free. The farro in the Mushroom Farrotto could be substituted with another grain of choice (such as brown rice or sorghum) and the bread (or pane) in the Panzanella Caponata could be substituted with any gluten-free bread (though we recommend a whole grain variety).

We truly hope you enjoy trying these recipes and learning from the cooking tips and cultural tidbits shared throughout the book. Please let us know if you have any feedback about this book and would like to receive copies to share with your community group, patients, or other people who might be interested.

Mangiamo!

SPECIAL THANKS

to collaborators & contributors

Dietitian | Christina Badaracco, MPH, RDN, LDN

Christina Badaracco is a registered dietitian nutritionist seeking to improve access to healthy and sustainable food for all Americans and to educate them about the connections between food and health. Christina has conducted surveys for The Lexicon and the Teaching Kitchen Collaborative, clinical nutrition education at the National Institutes of Health, menu planning and nutrition education at the Oakland Unified School District, and communications at the Environmental Protection Agency's Office of Water. She has also enjoyed contributing to children's gardens, farmers markets, and a number of organic farms. She has taught and tutored in science and writing for many years. She contributes monthly articles about nutrition to Soulful Insights, and co-wrote a book about the farm bill. Christina completed her dietetic internship at Massachusetts General Hospital. She earned her Master of Public Health degree from the University of California, Berkeley, and her bachelor's degree in Ecology and Evolutionary Biology, with a certificate in Italian Language and Culture, from Princeton University. She currently works as a healthcare consultant at Avalere Health. Learn more about her at www.christinabadaracco.com or follow her on Instagram @cbadarac.

Dietitian | Stacy Leung, RDN, DYN, CYT

Stacy is a New York-based registered dietitian nutritionist and yoga instructor focusing on mindful eating and plant-based health. She has experience working with individuals and families from a variety of cultural backgrounds, including adolescents and pregnant women. She takes a holistic approach when working with clients, looking at overall lifestyle and habits in addition to food. Stacy believes everything can fit when it's kept simple, honest, and joyful. Learn more about her at www.stacykleung.com or follow her on Instagram @stacykleungrd.



8



12



16



32



38

Table of Contents

- 7 Antipasto Salad**
- 8 Calamari**
- 10 Panzanella Caponata**
- 12 Minestrone**
- 14 Sautéed Spinach**
- 16 Italian Meatballs**
- 17 Cauliflower Alfredo**
- 18 Bolognese**
- 20 Cioppino**
- 23 Eggplant Parmesan**
- 24 Gnocchi**
- 27 Mushroom Farrotto**
- 28 Lasagna**
- 30 Chicken Piccata**
- 32 Socca Pizza with Pesto & Roasted Vegetables**
- 34 Cannoli**
- 36 Panna Cotta with Fresh Berries**
- 38 Tiramisu**

DISCLAIMER: All recipes assume that produce is washed and ready for consumption. Nutrition facts are per serving and do not include optional toppings (unless otherwise stated).



Antipasto means “before the meal” and refers to an appetizer that often includes cured meats, cheeses, and roasted vegetables. While this salad can be served as an appetizer, the addition of whole grain bread and chickpeas make it balanced and filling enough for a meal.



Dressing

- 1 tablespoon Dijon mustard
- 4 tablespoons red wine vinegar
- 4 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
- ¼ teaspoon fine sea salt
- ½ teaspoon black pepper
- 2 teaspoons fresh parsley or basil, minced
- ¼ teaspoon red pepper flakes

1. Prepare dressing by whisking ingredients together in a small bowl or shaking in a sealed jar.

ANTIPASTO SALAD

Antipasto Insalata

1 hour

Serves 6

Nutrition Facts

348 calories | 23g fat | 7g saturated fat | 631mg sodium
25g carbohydrate | 4g fiber | 4g sugar | 12g protein

Ingredients

- 2 large red peppers (or 1 12-ounce jar of whole roasted peppers, drained)
- 2 hearts of romaine lettuce, roughly chopped
- 8 ounces fresh mozzarella or sharp provolone cheese, cut into 1-inch pieces
- ½ cup olives, halved
- 1 15.5-ounce can (about 1¾ cups) cooked chickpeas
- ½ large red onion, thinly sliced
- 1 cup marinated artichoke hearts, drained and quartered
- 8 ounces whole grain sourdough bread, cut into 1-inch cubes
- 1 tablespoon extra virgin olive oil

Directions

1. Preheat oven to 400°F.
2. If using a jar of roasted peppers, skip this step. Cut peppers into halves, removing stem and seeds. Roast, face down, on glass baking sheet for 30 minutes, until soft and lightly browned. Cut into thin slices.
3. Meanwhile, combine other salad ingredients in a large bowl. Prepare dressing (see page 6). Toss bread cubes with 1 tablespoon olive oil.
4. When peppers have finished, lower heat to 350°F and bake bread cubes on a glass baking dish for 15 minutes, until browned and slightly crispy.
5. Add bread to salad bowl and top with dressing. Toss before serving.

CALAMARI

Calamari — 45 Mins — Serves 6

Nutrition Facts

133 calories | 3g fat | 0g saturated fat
215mg sodium | 12g carbohydrate
1g fiber | 1g sugar | 13g protein

Ingredients

- 1 pound fresh calamari tubes, cut into $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch rings, or defrosted frozen calamari rings and tentacles, rinsed and patted dry
- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup cornmeal or almond meal
- $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon baking soda
- 1 teaspoon dried parsley
- $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon fine sea salt
- $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon black pepper
- 1 small lemon, cut into 6 wedges
- 2 cups marinara sauce (see page 9)

Directions

1. Preheat oven to 425°F. Line baking sheet with parchment paper.
2. Combine cornmeal or almond meal, baking soda, parsley, salt, and pepper in a large bowl.
3. In a few batches, add all calamari pieces to bowl and toss to coat evenly.
4. Bake for about 20 minutes, until golden brown and crisp.
5. Serve with a lemon wedge and $\frac{1}{2}$ cup marinara sauce per serving.



Calamari is the Italian word for squid. Although it has the same name as the classic appetizer, these calamari are baked, not fried. They keep the crispy texture and the same fresh taste as the fried version, but use cornmeal or almond meal for a more nutritious crust.

Marinara Sauce

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|--|
| 1 tablespoon extra virgin olive oil | 1 28-ounce can crushed tomatoes, no salt added |
| $\frac{1}{2}$ small onion, chopped | $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon fine sea salt |
| 2 garlic cloves, minced | $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon black pepper |
| $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon dried basil | 1 dried bay leaf |

1. In a medium pot, heat oil over medium heat. Add onion and sauté until fragrant, about 2 minutes. Add garlic and sauté for 1 minute.
2. Add tomatoes, basil, salt, pepper, and bay leaf. Cover and simmer for about 15 minutes.
3. Season with additional salt and pepper to taste. Discard bay leaf before serving.

PANZANELLA CAPONATA

Panzanella Caponata — 45 Mins — Serves 6 —

Nutrition Facts

222 calories | 13g fat | 2g saturated fat | 456mg sodium
22g carbohydrate | 5g fiber | 7g sugar | 4g protein



Caponata refers to a sweet and sour vegetable dish, similar to the French ratatouille, and comes from Sicily. This unique recipe creates a **panzanella**, or bread salad—which likely comes from Tuscany—using the vegetables found in **caponata**.

Ingredients

- 5 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil, divided
- 1 large eggplant, cut into 1-inch pieces
- $\frac{1}{2}$ red onion, chopped
- 1 large clove garlic, minced
- 1 teaspoon dried thyme or oregano
- 2 tablespoons red wine vinegar
- 2 cups fresh tomatoes, chopped
- 1 tablespoon capers
- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup green olives, pitted and chopped
- 4 cups torn whole grain sourdough bread pieces
- $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon fine sea salt
- $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon black pepper
- $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon red pepper flakes
- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup fresh parsley, chopped



Directions

1. Preheat oven to 350°F.
2. Heat 3 tablespoons of olive oil in a large pot over medium heat. Add eggplant and sauté about 5 minutes, stirring occasionally to prevent sticking. Add onions, garlic, thyme, salt, black pepper, and red pepper, cooking until fragrant (up to 3 minutes). Add olive oil if necessary to prevent sticking.
3. Add vinegar, tomatoes, capers, and olives. Simmer 10–15 minutes, until tomatoes and eggplant are soft. Remove from heat.
4. Meanwhile, place bread pieces on glass baking sheet and toss in 2 tablespoons of olive oil, coating evenly. Bake until golden brown, up to 15 minutes.
5. Add bread pieces to vegetable mixture and top with chopped parsley just before serving.



Using whole grain sourdough bread adds fiber, is easier to digest, and triggers a lesser rise in glucose than plain white bread.

MINESTRONE

Minestrone — 45 Minutes — Serves 6 —

Nutrition Facts

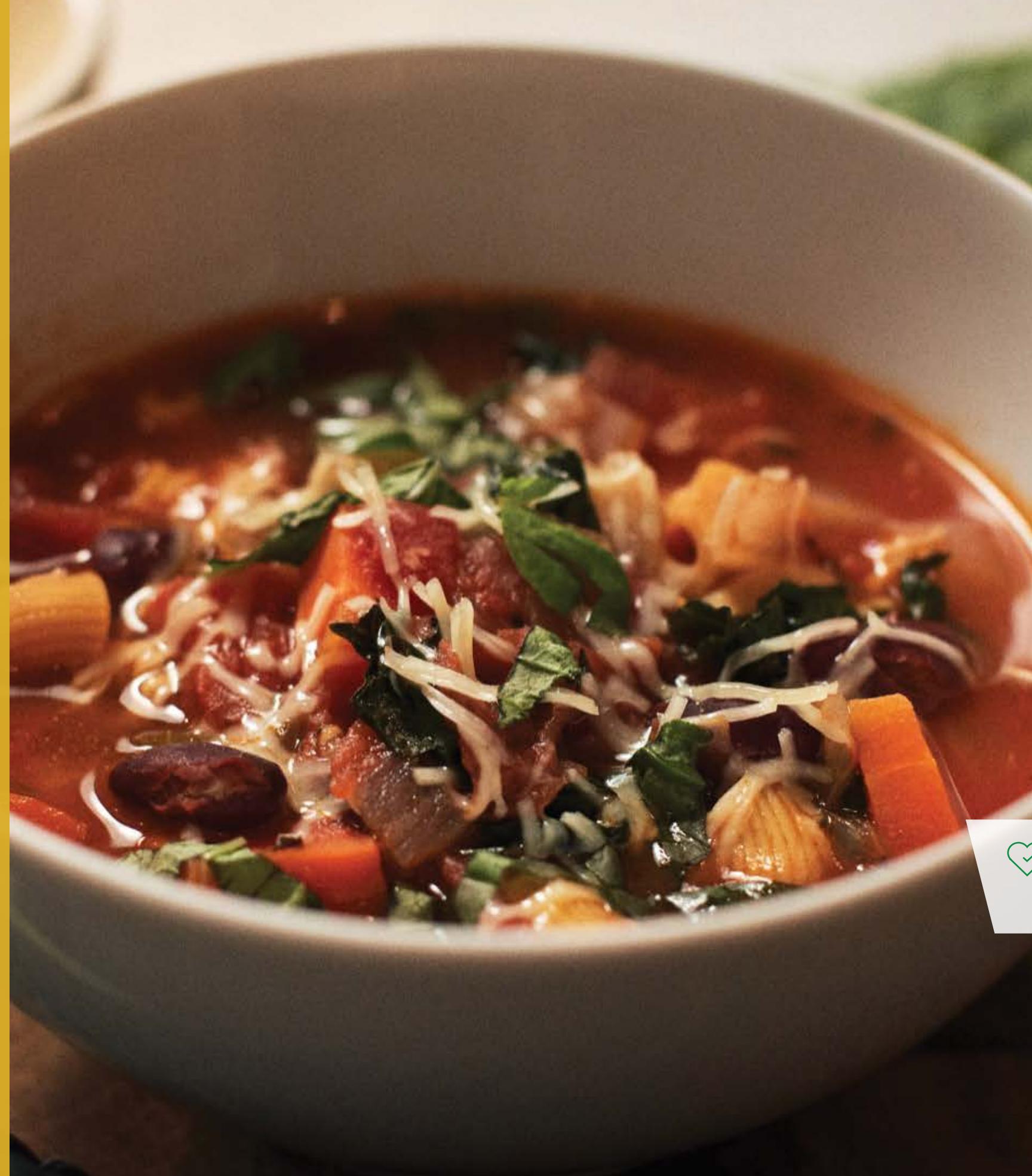
297 calories | 6g fat | 1g saturated fat | 453mg sodium
51g carbohydrate | 9g fiber | 4g sugar | 10g protein



Minestrone soup likely dates back to Ancient Rome, where it was originally made of simple vegetables.

Ingredients

- 2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
- ½ large onion, chopped
- 1 large celery stalk, chopped
- 1 large carrot, chopped
- 1 large garlic clove, minced
- ¾ teaspoon fine sea salt
- ¼ teaspoon black pepper
- 1 28-ounce can crushed or diced tomatoes, no salt added
- 4 cups low-sodium vegetable or chicken broth
- ⅛ teaspoon red pepper flakes
- 1 teaspoon dried basil
- ½ teaspoon dried oregano
- 1 15.5-ounce can (about 1½ cups) cooked kidney beans
- 2 cups kale, chopped
- 1 cup whole grain or legume-based small pasta (such as macaroni)
- 2 tablespoons fresh basil, chopped
- ¼ cup shredded Parmesan cheese (optional)



Directions

1. Heat olive oil in a large pot over medium-high heat. Add onion, celery, and carrot. Cook until soft, about 5 minutes. Add garlic, salt, and pepper, and cook for 1 minute.
2. Add the tomatoes, broth, and dried herbs. Bring to a boil. Reduce the heat to medium-low and simmer 10 minutes.
3. Stir in the kidney beans, kale, and pasta and cook until the pasta and vegetables are tender, about 10 minutes (depending on recommended cooking time of pasta).
4. To serve, ladle into bowls and top with Parmesan (optional) and fresh basil.



A combination of whole grain pasta, beans, and vegetables yields a balanced and light meal or a first course perfect for cold winter nights.

SAUTÉED SPINACH

Spinaci Saltati — 20 Minutes —

Serves 6

Nutrition Facts

63 calories | 5g fat | 1g saturated fat | 239mg sodium
4g carbohydrate | 2g fiber | 0g sugar | 2g protein



This versatile recipe can accompany any main dish in this cookbook. Did you know that cooking spinach actually makes some nutrients more available to our bodies? Spinach contains a molecule called oxalic acid, which blocks our absorption of calcium and iron. But this is greatly reduced by heating, so your body can use these important minerals.

Ingredients

1 pound baby spinach	$\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon fine sea salt
2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil, plus more for optional garnish	$\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon black pepper
3 large garlic cloves, minced	1 lemon wedge
$\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon red pepper flakes	3 tablespoons shredded Parmesan cheese

Directions

1. Rinse the spinach well and dry with a towel or in a salad spinner.
2. Heat olive oil over medium-low heat in a large, deep pan. Add the red pepper and garlic, cooking for 1 minute.
3. Add the spinach, salt, and black pepper. Cover with a lid and cook for 1-2 minutes.
4. Take the lid off, stir the spinach, and cook, stirring, for 1-2 minutes or until wilted.
5. Use a slotted spoon to transfer the spinach onto a serving dish. Squeeze lemon juice, garnish with cheese, and drizzle with olive oil, if desired.



ITALIAN MEATBALLS

Polpette

45 Minutes

Serves 6

Nutrition Facts

162 calories | 8g fat | 3g saturated fat | 351mg sodium | 5g carbohydrate | 1g fiber | 1g sugar | 17g protein

Ingredients

½ cup whole milk	½ small onion, finely chopped	¼ teaspoon black pepper
½ cup rolled oats	2 garlic cloves, minced	2 cups marinara sauce (see page 9)
1 pound ground beef (90% lean or other ground meat of choice)	1 large egg, lightly beaten	fresh parsley, chopped (optional)
	¼ cup fresh parsley, minced	
	½ teaspoon fine sea salt	



Using ground oats instead of traditional breadcrumbs increases the B vitamins and minerals, such as magnesium and phosphorus, in this family favorite.



In Italy, **polpette** are not consumed with pasta, but rather as a dish served solely in sauce.



Directions

- Preheat oven to 400°F. Mix oats and milk in small bowl and soak for at least 10 minutes.
- In a large bowl, combine beef, onion, garlic, egg, parsley, salt, and pepper. Mix in soaked oats. Use hands to mix evenly.
- Shape into 1½-inch balls. Arrange on glass baking dish and bake for 20–25 minutes, until browned.
- Serve in warmed sauce and garnish with parsley, if desired.

*Note:

Before adding to sauce, meatballs can be cooled and stored in an air-tight container or freezer-safe bag for up to 3 months.

CAULIFLOWER ALFREDO

Alfredo di Cavolfiore

45 Minutes

Serves 6

Nutrition Facts

283 calories | 7g fat | 1g saturated fat | 111mg sodium | 49g carbohydrate | 4g fiber | 2g sugar | 9g protein

Ingredients

12 ounces whole grain or legume-based pasta	4 garlic cloves, chopped	⅛ teaspoon black pepper
4 cups cauliflower, cut into florets	½ cup whole milk	⅔ teaspoon red pepper flakes
2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil, plus a small amount for pasta	¼ cup shredded Parmesan cheese	¼ cup fresh parsley, finely chopped
	⅛ teaspoon fine sea salt	



The original recipe for **Fettuccine Alfredo** was created in Rome by famous chef Alfredo di Leido. In Italy it is more often called **pasta al burro**.



This fettuccine dish uses cauliflower instead of cream to create a rich and delicious pasta dish with much less fat and sodium, and a boost of vitamins, fiber, and antioxidants.

BOLOGNESE

Ragù Bolognese

45 Minutes

Serves 8

Nutrition Facts (using dry white wine)

503 calories | 13g fat | 3g saturated fat | 259mg sodium
69g carbohydrate | 11g fiber | 7g sugar | 27g protein

Ingredients

1 pound ground beef (90% lean)	1 15-ounce can crushed tomatoes, no salt added
½ teaspoon fine sea salt	½ cup whole milk
3 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil, plus more for pasta	½ cup dry white wine*
1 medium onion, finely chopped	¼ teaspoon black pepper
1 large carrot, finely chopped	1½ cups water (more as needed)
1 small zucchini, finely chopped	½ teaspoon red pepper flakes
1 cup mushrooms, finely chopped	¼ cup fresh parsley, chopped
3 garlic cloves, minced	¼ cup shredded Parmesan cheese
1 cup dry red lentils	1 pound whole grain spaghetti (or pasta of choice)
2 tablespoons tomato paste	

Directions

1. Cook beef in large saucepan over medium heat, crumbling into small pieces. Add salt and cook about 5 minutes, until lightly browned. Transfer to plate.
2. Heat oil in same saucepan over medium heat and add onion, carrot, and zucchini. Cook for 5 minutes or until beginning to soften. Add mushrooms and garlic, cooking for 1 minute.
3. Add lentils, tomatoes, tomato paste, milk, wine (or broth), black pepper, pepper flakes, and water. Cover and simmer for 20 minutes or until sauce has thickened.
4. Meanwhile, bring a large pot of water to a boil. Cook pasta according to instructions on package. Drain pasta and drizzle with oil to prevent sticking.
5. Add beef to lentils and vegetables, adding more water to thin sauce, if desired.
6. To serve, divide spaghetti between serving dishes, ladle sauce onto spaghetti, and top with Parmesan and parsley.

***Note:**
To make this recipe without wine, substitute with equivalent amount of chicken or beef broth.



Bolognese sauce hails from the region of Bologna and is traditionally known as **ragù**. Using lentils in place of some of the meat in this recipe adds protein and fiber, while maintaining the traditional flavors of the beef, cheese, and wine.

CIOPPINO

Cioppino — 1½ Hours — Serves 6 —

Nutrition Facts (using dry white wine)

352 calories | 9g fat | 2g saturated fat
687mg sodium | 18g carbohydrate | 4g fiber
8g sugar | 39g protein

Ingredients

- 3 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
- 1 large fennel bulb, cored and thinly sliced (frond tips set aside)
- 1 large sweet onion, chopped
- 3 shallots, chopped
- ½ teaspoon fine sea salt
- 4 large garlic cloves, minced
- ¾ teaspoon red pepper flakes
- ¼ cup tomato paste
- 1 28-ounce can crushed tomatoes, no salt added
- 1½ cups dry white wine*
- 4 cups fish stock
- 1 cup water
- 1 bay leaf
- 1 pound clams, cleaned
- 1 pound mussels, cleaned
- 1 pound uncooked large shrimp, peeled and deveined
- 1½ pounds firm white fish (such as haddock), cut into 1½-inch pieces
- ½ cup fresh parsley, chopped
- ¼ cup green fennel fronds (from the fennel bulbs), chopped

*Note:

To make this recipe without wine, substitute with equivalent amount of fish stock or vegetable broth, plus 1 tablespoon white wine vinegar.



Directions

1. Heat the oil in a large pot over medium heat. Add the fennel, onion, shallots, and salt and sauté until translucent, about 10 minutes.
2. Add the garlic and red pepper flakes; cook 2 minutes.
3. Add tomato paste, crushed tomatoes, wine (or stock and vinegar), stock, water, and bay leaf. Cover and bring to a simmer.
4. Reduce the heat to medium-low. Cover and simmer for about 30 minutes.
5. Add the clams and mussels to the pot. Cover and cook until they begin to open, about 2 minutes.
6. Add the shrimp and fish. Turn up heat to simmer gently until fish and shrimp are barely cooked through and clams are completely open, stirring gently, about 4-5 minutes longer. Discard any clams and mussels that do not open.
7. To serve, ladle the soup into bowls and add parsley and ¼ cup fennel fronds to garnish.



Cioppino is a seafood stew that actually originated in San Francisco, California. The name is derived from “ciuppin,” meaning small soup, originally made in Genoa to use chopped, leftover vegetables and seafood. This traditional recipe is full of heart-healthy seafood and vegetables.



EGGPLANT PARMESAN

Parmigiana di Melanzane — 1½ Hours — Serves 6 —

Nutrition Facts

244 calories | 11g fat | 4g saturated fat | 480mg sodium
29g carbohydrate | 9g fiber | 9g sugar | 11g protein

Ingredients

2 large eggplants (3-4 pounds)	½ teaspoon dried basil
1 large egg	¼ teaspoon fine sea salt
2 tablespoons water	⅛ teaspoon black pepper
¾ cup oats, coarsely ground (or oat flour)	1 cup shredded mozzarella cheese
½ cup + 2 tablespoons grated Parmesan cheese, divided	6 cups marinara sauce (see page 9)
½ teaspoon dried oregano	fresh basil or parsley, for garnish

Directions

1. Preheat oven to 375°F. Brush 2 baking sheets with oil or line with parchment paper.
2. In a wide, shallow bowl, whisk together egg and water. In another bowl, combine oats, ½ cup Parmesan, oregano, basil, salt, and pepper.
3. Dip each eggplant slice in egg, letting excess drip off, then coat with breadcrumb mixture. Place on baking sheet. Bake until golden brown on bottom, about 20 minutes. Flip and continue baking until browned on other side, 20 minutes more. Remove from oven and raise heat to 400°F.
4. In a 9x13-inch baking dish (not baking sheet), spread 2 cups of marinara sauce. Arrange half the eggplant slices; cover with 2 cups of sauce, then ½ cup mozzarella. Repeat with remaining eggplant, sauce, and mozzarella. Sprinkle with remaining 2 tablespoons Parmesan. Bake about 15-20 minutes until sauce is bubbling and cheese is melted. Let stand 5 minutes before serving and add fresh parsley or basil, if desired.



Eggplant Parmesan likely comes from the south of Italy, taking advantage of the local **Parmigiano Reggiano** (Parmesan) cheese. While traditional **Parmigiana di Melanzane** requires pan-frying or deep-frying to create a crispy crust, the eggplant slices are here baked in an oat and Parmesan crust, creating a crunchy coating that does not require frying or white flour.

GNOCCHI

Gnocchi 🕒 1½ Hours ✖ Serves 8

Nutrition Facts

340 calories | 7g fat | 2g saturated fat | 311mg sodium
62g carbohydrate | 10g fiber | 7g sugar | 9g protein

Ingredients

2 large sweet potatoes (~3 pounds)	2 tablespoons unsalted butter
2½ cups whole wheat or spelt flour	2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
¾ teaspoon fine sea salt, divided	15 sage leaves, thinly sliced

Directions

1. Preheat oven to 400°F. Prick sweet potatoes several times with a fork and bake for about 50 minutes, until completely soft and a fork can be poked all the way through. Remove from oven and let cool.
2. Remove skins and mash sweet potato flesh (saving skins to make chips, to avoid wasting them). Form a small mound with a hole in the middle and fill with flour and salt. Knead to combine, being careful to not overwork the dough to avoid making it tough. Add more flour as necessary to prevent sticking, but avoid adding too much to keep gnocchi light and tender.
3. Roll into a ball and divide into four small balls. Use your fingers to roll out each into a rope, roughly 1 foot long. Use a knife to cut each into 1-inch nuggets. Then create classic ridges in each by quickly rolling across the back of a fork.
4. Boil the gnocchi in a large pot of boiling water in 3 or 4 batches, giving a quick stir after adding them to the pot. Gnocchi will rise to the top when done cooking, 1-2 minutes. Use a slotted spoon to transfer to a plate or colander to drain and repeat with subsequent batches.
5. Heat the butter in a large sauté pan over medium-high heat. Allow the butter to melt. When the butter is just beginning to turn a light golden color, add the olive oil and heat for about 30 seconds, and then brown. Add sage and fry until fragrant, about 1 minute. Add gnocchi and ¼ teaspoon salt. Cook, tossing to combine, for about 3 minutes. Serve immediately.



Gnocchi are named after either **nocca**, meaning knuckle, or **nocchio**, meaning a knot in wood. The earliest version of these dumplings likely arose during the Renaissance, but the potato-filled version was probably developed by the 17th century, after explorers brought potatoes back from the New World.



These **gnocchi** are made with sweet potatoes instead of white potatoes, providing a greater source of beta-carotene, which our bodies convert into vitamin A. Using whole wheat flour provides more fiber, vitamins, and minerals than a recipe using refined wheat flour.

MUSHROOM FARROTTTO

Farrotto ai Funghi

1 Hour

Serves 6



Farro is an ancient variety of wheat that is more nutrient-dense than those commonly grown today.

***Note:**

To make this recipe without wine, substitute with equivalent amount of vegetable broth plus 1 tablespoon of white wine vinegar.

Nutrition Facts (using dry white wine)

181 calories | 11g fat | 4g saturated fat | 191mg sodium
14g carbohydrate | 3g fiber | 2g sugar | 4g protein

Ingredients

3	cups low-sodium vegetable broth	¼	teaspoon fine sea salt
2	tablespoons + 1 tablespoon extra virgin olive oil, divided	⅛	teaspoon black pepper
10	ounces cremini mushrooms, sliced	2	sprigs fresh thyme, destemmed
½	cup chopped onion	1	clove garlic, minced
1	cup dry farro, rinsed	1	tablespoon unsalted butter
1	cup dry white wine*	¾	cup frozen green peas, thawed
		½	cup shredded Parmesan cheese

Directions

1. Add vegetable broth to a small pan and hold over low heat.
2. In a heavy saucepan, add 2 tablespoons olive oil over medium heat. Add mushrooms and cook until liquid is released and mushrooms are tender, 8-10 minutes. Use a slotted spoon to move from the pan to a plate and drain the pan.
3. Heat another 1 tablespoon of olive oil in the same heavy saucepan and add the onions, cooking until softened and translucent, about 3 minutes. Add garlic and cook for 30 seconds. Add farro and toast, stirring occasionally, up to 3 minutes. Add the white wine (or broth and vinegar) to deglaze the pan and continue to cook until it is almost absorbed.
4. Lower heat to medium-low. Add 1 cup of broth from step 1 and cook until absorbed, stirring often. Continue to add 1 cup of broth at a time, stirring often, as the farro cooks. Continue cooking until the farro is tender but still slightly chewy, 30 to 40 minutes.
5. Season with salt, pepper, and thyme. Add mushrooms and butter, stirring to combine.
6. Remove from heat. Add Parmesan and peas, stirring to combine.



This healthy take on mushroom risotto cuts down on the amount of butter used in a traditional risotto recipe, relying on pungency from the mushrooms and wine, and creaminess released by the starch in the farro following continuous stirring.

LASAGNA

Lasagne —  1¾ Hours —  Serves 8

Nutrition Facts (using whole milk ricotta)

351 calories | 16g fat | 8g saturated fat | 355mg sodium
34g carbohydrate | 4g fiber | 2g sugar | 19g protein

Bulk Sausage

1 tablespoon extra virgin olive oil
½ pound ground dark meat turkey
1 small garlic clove, minced
¼ teaspoon fine sea salt
½ teaspoon dried oregano leaves
½ teaspoon fennel seeds
¼ teaspoon dried marjoram or thyme leaves
¼ teaspoon red pepper flakes
⅛ teaspoon black pepper

Lasagna

8 ounces whole grain lasagna noodles, broken into thirds
1 tablespoon extra virgin olive oil
½ pound sausage, recipe above
3 cups marinara sauce (see page 9)
2 cups whole milk or part-skim ricotta cheese
1 large egg
½ pound baby spinach
1 tablespoon fresh parsley, chopped
¼ cup fresh basil, chopped
10 ounces cremini mushrooms, chopped
2 cups shredded mozzarella cheese
3 tablespoons shredded Parmesan cheese



Lasagna is likely named after the Greek word **laganon**, named after its flat pasta sheets, and then transitioned into its own version known as **pastitsio**. The current version involving layers of tomato sauce likely originated in Naples. Using chopped mushrooms adds flavor, while reducing the amount of meat in this recipe. The addition of spinach adds moisture as well as vitamin K, folate, and other vitamins and minerals.

Directions

1. Preheat oven to 350°F.
2. In a large bowl, add ground turkey, garlic, and spices. Use your hands to mix thoroughly, ensuring spices are distributed evenly.
3. Heat 1 tablespoon olive oil in a large pan over medium heat, add turkey, and stir frequently to cook until beginning to brown, up to 5 minutes. Add chopped mushrooms and cook until tender and water has evaporated, about 8 more minutes. Add spinach and remove from heat.
4. If using no-boil noodles, skip this step. Bring a large pot of water to a boil. Add noodles and cook until not quite tender, about 2 minutes less than the package directions. Drain; return the noodles to the pot, cover with cool water and set aside.
5. To assemble lasagna:
 - Spread ½ cup of the tomato sauce in the prepared baking dish.
 - Arrange a layer of noodles on top, trimming to fit, if necessary.
 - Spread half the ricotta over the noodles.
 - Top with half of the sausage mixture, ½ of the remaining tomato sauce and one-third of the mozzarella.
 - Continue with another layer of noodles, the remaining ricotta, the remaining sausage, half the remaining tomato sauce, and half the remaining mozzarella.
 - Top with a third layer of noodles and the remaining tomato sauce.
6. Cover with aluminum foil and bake for 50 minutes.
7. Remove foil, add remaining mozzarella and Parmesan, and bake for 5 minutes. Let cool for 10 minutes before serving.

CHICKEN PICCATA

Pollo alla Piccata — 45 Mins — Serves 4

Nutrition Facts (using dry white wine)

222 calories | 11g fat | 3g saturated fat
501mg sodium | 7g carbohydrate | 1g fiber
1g sugar | 22g protein

Ingredients

2 tablespoons arrowroot flour (can substitute cornstarch if needed)
 $\frac{3}{8}$ teaspoon fine sea salt, divided
 $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon black pepper, divided
1 pound boneless skinless chicken thighs
1 tablespoon extra virgin olive oil
 $\frac{1}{2}$ small onion, thinly sliced
1 medium garlic clove, minced
1 tablespoon lemon juice
 $\frac{1}{4}$ cup dry white wine*
 $\frac{1}{2}$ cup low-sodium chicken broth
2 tablespoons capers
 $\frac{1}{2}$ tablespoon unsalted butter
2 tablespoons fresh parsley, chopped



Piccata means larded or embellished in Italian, and refers to the style of preparation involving sautéing and serving in a sauce with lemon juice, butter, and capers.



*Note:

To make this recipe without wine, substitute with equivalent amount of chicken broth plus 1 teaspoon lemon juice.



Serve this chicken over a whole grain and/or vegetable of choice for a complete meal. For a thinner sauce, remove the arrowroot flour entirely and skip step 2.



This recipe uses much less butter than a traditional version but maintains all of the moisture and other sources of flavor."

Directions

1. Place arrowroot flour, $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon salt, and $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon pepper in a wide shallow bowl and set aside.
2. Pat chicken dry and coat each piece in the arrowroot flour, shaking off excess.
3. In a large pan over medium-high heat, heat 1 tablespoon oil. Add chicken, working in batches if needed, to brown on both sides, about 3 minutes per side. Transfer to a plate and set aside. Add more oil between batches, if necessary.
4. Once chicken is finished, reduce heat to medium. Add onion and garlic to pan and sauté until soft, about 3 minutes.
5. Add lemon juice, wine, broth, capers, $\frac{1}{2}$ tablespoon butter, and $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon pepper to the skillet and bring to boil, scraping up any browned bits and stirring to combine.
6. Reduce heat to simmer and return chicken to pan, cooking until sauce has thickened, about 5 minutes.
7. Turn off heat and add parsley just before serving.

SOCCA PIZZA WITH PESTO & ROASTED VEGETABLES

Socca al Pesto e Verdure — ⏳ 1 Hour Active | 1½ Hours Total — 🍽 Serves 2 —

Nutrition Facts

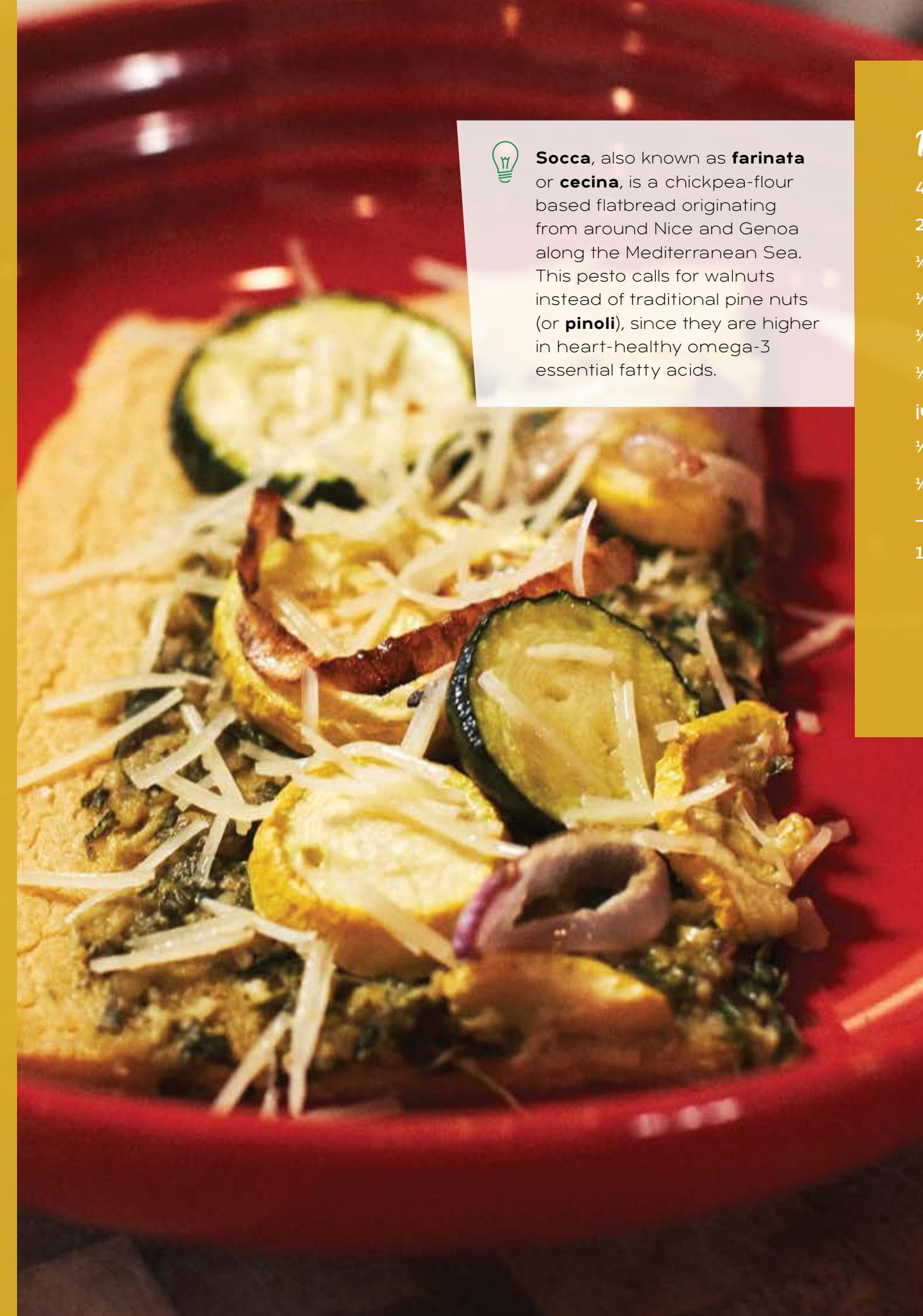
376 calories | 18g fat | 3g saturated fat | 457mg sodium | 41g carbohydrate
8g fiber | 14g sugar | 15g protein

Ingredients

1 cup chickpea flour (also known as garbanzo bean flour)	¼ teaspoon fine sea salt
1 tablespoon + 1 teaspoon extra virgin olive oil, divided	1 small summer squash, sliced into ¼-inch thick circles
1 cup water	¼ cup red onion, thinly sliced
1 garlic clove, minced	⅓ cup pesto (see page 33)
1 small zucchini, sliced into ¼-inch thick circles	butter, for greasing dish
	2 tablespoons shredded Parmesan cheese (optional)

Directions

1. For socca batter, whisk together chickpea flour, 1 tablespoon olive oil, water, minced garlic, and salt. Let rest for 1 hour.
2. While waiting, prepare pesto ([see page 33](#)).
3. Preheat oven to 400°F.
4. Lightly coat vegetables on both sides with 1 teaspoon olive oil and roast on glass baking dish until lightly browned, about 15 minutes.
5. Line 9x13-inch baking sheet with parchment paper, greased with butter. Pour on batter, spreading evenly. Return to oven and bake until browned on the edges and beginning to pull away from paper, up to 20 minutes. Remove from oven.
6. Spread pesto over cooked socca and top with roasted vegetables. Return to oven to bake for an additional 4–5 minutes. Before serving, garnish with 1–2 tablespoons Parmesan cheese, if desired.



Socca, also known as **farinata** or **cecina**, is a chickpea-flour based flatbread originating from around Nice and Genoa along the Mediterranean Sea. This pesto calls for walnuts instead of traditional pine nuts (or **pinoli**), since they are higher in heart-healthy omega-3 essential fatty acids.

Pesto

4 cups fresh basil, lightly packed
2 large garlic cloves, chopped
¼ teaspoon red pepper flakes
½ teaspoon fine sea salt
½ teaspoon black pepper
¼ cup shredded Parmesan cheese
juice of 1 small lemon
½ cup chopped walnuts
¼ cup extra virgin olive oil

1. Make pesto by combining basil, garlic, spices, ¼ cup Parmesan cheese, lemon, and walnuts in a food processor. Blend to combine while streaming in ¼ cup olive oil, stopping before forming a smooth puree.



While summer squash can be found most abundantly during the warm summer months, you can substitute more seasonal vegetables, such as butternut squash or broccoli, in the winter.

CANNOLI

Cannoli —— 2 Hours Active | 10 Hours Total —— Serves ~10 ——

Nutrition Facts (using whole milk ricotta)

203 calories | 9g fat | 5g saturated fat | 133mg sodium

22g carbohydrate | 2g fiber | 9g sugar | 5g protein

Cannoli Shells

1 tablespoon safflower or coconut oil	1 cup whole wheat pastry or spelt flour, plus a small amount for dusting
2 tablespoons granulated sugar	
$\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon cinnamon	1 teaspoon cocoa powder
$\frac{1}{3}$ cup Marsala wine	$\frac{1}{8}$ teaspoon fine sea salt

1. At least 8 hours before preparing cannoli, line a strainer with a coffee filter or cheesecloth and suspend over a bowl. Add ricotta cheese and allow liquid to drain.
2. To make dough, combine the flour, sugar, cinnamon, cocoa powder, and salt together in a large bowl. Add oil and mix until it resembles large pebbles. Add wine and mix until dough barely begins to hold together. Transfer the dough to a floured surface and knead until smooth, up to 5 minutes. Wrap in wax paper and refrigerate for at least 1 hour, until firm.
3. Meanwhile, make filling (see page 35). Preheat oven to 350°F.
4. When dough for shells is chilled, coat with additional flour and use a rolling pin to roll out to $\frac{1}{8}$ -inch on a lightly floured surface. Use a 4-inch round cookie cutter to cut circles from the dough. Repeat with the excess dough, kneading it back together and cutting it until about 10 circles are formed.
5. Wrap each circle of dough loosely around a cannoli form* with at least $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch overlap and press down to seal. Repeat with remaining circles.
6. Arrange seam side-down on a parchment-lined baking sheet and bake for approximately 15 minutes or until pastry is golden and firm. Let cool completely before removing tubes and adding filling.
7. Just before serving, place the filling in a pastry bag with a large tip or zip-top bag and cut a $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch diameter piece off the end/corner. Insert the tip into 1 end of a shell and pipe the filling in halfway, then pipe to fill from the other end. Repeat with the remaining shells. Garnish with chopped pistachios and/or chocolate, if desired.



*Note:

A piece of dry manicotti pasta, lined with greased parchment paper, will also work, but may be more difficult to remove or may require breaking the pasta.

Filling

1½ cups whole milk or part-skim ricotta cheese

3 tablespoons honey

$\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon vanilla extract

$\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon orange zest

$\frac{1}{4}$ cup (about 1½ ounces) dark chocolate, chopped, for garnish (optional)

$\frac{1}{4}$ cup unsalted pistachios, chopped, for garnish (optional)

1. Make filling by combining ricotta, honey, vanilla, orange zest, and chocolate. Mix until evenly distributed.

Cannoli are named after the diminutive of **canna**, meaning cane or tube. They originated in Palermo, Sicily, initially eaten during the celebration of Carnevale (preceding Lent). **Cannolis** are traditionally deep-fried, yielding a product higher in calories. Particularly problematic is the creation of trans fats through the heating process.

PANNA COTTA WITH FRESH BERRIES

Panna Cotta con Bacche — ⏳ 30 Mins Active | 2½ Hours Total — ✨ Serves 6 —

Nutrition Facts

177 calories | 4g fat | 2g saturated fat | 139mg sodium
30g carbohydrate | 1g fiber | 28g sugar | 7g protein

Ingredients

2 cups whole milk	2 cups low-fat plain yogurt (or plain yogurt of choice)
1 $\frac{1}{4}$ -ounce pouch (2½ teaspoons) unflavored gelatin powder	$\frac{1}{8}$ teaspoon fine sea salt
$\frac{1}{4}$ cup raw sugar	2 cups fresh berries, such as raspberries or blueberries
2 tablespoons honey	Honey, for garnish
1 teaspoon vanilla extract	

Directions

1. Pour 1 cup milk into a small bowl and sprinkle gelatin over top. Let sit for 5 minutes to soften the gelatin, then stir to combine.
2. Pour remaining milk, sugar, and honey in a small pan. Simmer over medium-high heat, stirring constantly. Remove after 1 minute and stir in gelatin mixture.
3. Transfer to a medium bowl and whisk in yogurt, vanilla, and salt.
4. Pour into 8 6-ounce small cups. Cover each with plastic wrap and chill until firm, at least 2 hours.
5. To serve, spoon berries over top and drizzle with honey.

 **Panna cotta** means “cooked cream” in Italian and is thought to have originated in the Piedmont region. It is similar to the more famous French **crème brûlée**, but is cooked on the stove and then chilled, rather than cooked in the oven, and doesn’t include eggs. While traditionally made with heavy cream, this lighter version uses whole milk and yogurt, which provides beneficial live probiotics because heat is not added.



TIRAMISU

Tiramisu

⌚ 1½ Hours Active | 9½ Hours Total

✖ Serves 16

Nutrition Facts

210 calories | 9g fat | 4g saturated fat | 273mg sodium

27g carbohydrate | 2g fiber | 15g sugar | 6g protein

Sponge Cake

2 large eggs, beaten	1 teaspoon vanilla extract	1 teaspoon honey
½ cup whole milk (or milk of choice)	2 cups oat flour	1 cup raw sugar
	1 tablespoon baking powder	1 teaspoon fine sea salt

1. Preheat the oven to 350°F. Line 1 8x8-inch or 2 loaf pans with parchment paper, and grease with butter.
2. To make the sponge cake, whisk the eggs, milk, honey, sugar, and vanilla together in a large bowl. In a separate bowl, mix together the oat flour, baking powder, and salt. Add the oat mixture to the egg mixture and stir to combine. Let rest for 10 minutes.
3. Pour into pan(s) and bake for 20–25 minutes, until firm to the touch and pulling away from sides. Transfer to a wire rack and set aside to cool. Once the sponge cake has cooled, cut into 2 layers and then into 1-inch rectangles (resembling traditional ladyfinger cookies).

Cream

2 large eggs, yolks separated	1 tablespoon raw sugar
¼ cup oat flour	1 cup whole milk
4 teaspoons vanilla extract	1 cup mascarpone cheese

1. Whisk together the egg yolks, flour, vanilla, sugar, and milk. Pour into a medium saucepan over low heat and cook for 10 minutes, whisking constantly. Be sure to not let the eggs curdle.
2. Remove from heat, pour the egg mixture into a bowl, and set aside to cool completely. Then add the mascarpone and mix until combined.
3. In another bowl, beat the egg whites and sugar until they form soft peaks. Carefully stir into the cooled cream.



Tiramisu means “pick me up” in Italian (from the verb **tirare**, meaning ‘to pull’), named appropriately for the coffee and other strong flavors in this traditional dessert. This version contains more fiber, protein, and less saturated fat by using oat flour to make a sponge cake, rather than using ladyfinger cookies.

Coffee Sauce

½ cup strong coffee
¼ cup brandy

1. Whisk the coffee and brandy together in a shallow bowl.

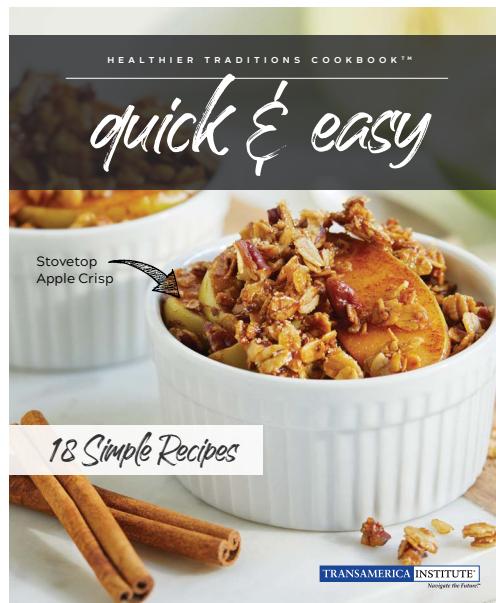
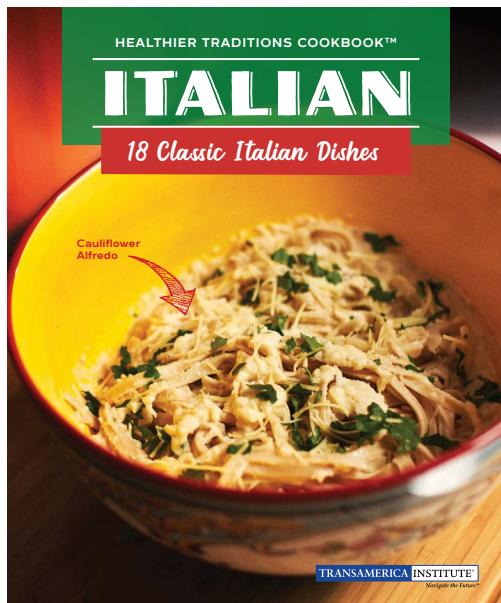
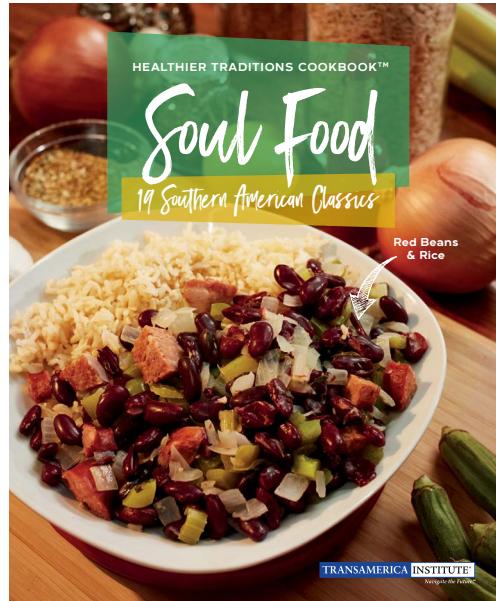
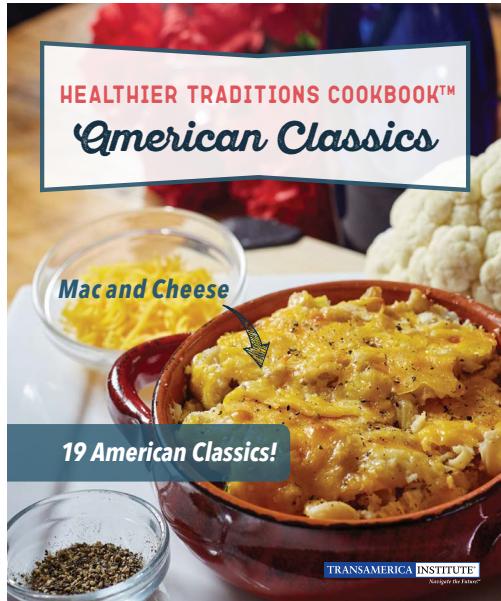
Assemble

cinnamon, for garnish

1. Line a loaf pan (roughly 9x5-inch) with wax paper or plastic wrap, leaving an overhang on at least 2 opposite sides.
2. Dunk each piece of sponge into coffee sauce and add a layer to the dish. Pour over half of cream, ensuring even distribution.
3. Repeat with second layer.
4. Cover and leave in refrigerator to set, at least 8 hours.
5. When ready to serve, use wax paper to gently invert tiramisu onto serving dish and dust with cinnamon to garnish.

HEALTHIER TRADITIONS COOKBOOK™

FIND MORE HEALTHY RECIPES AT TRANSAMERICAINSTITUTE.ORG



This document and trademark(s) contained herein are federally registered or otherwise protected by law. This representation of Transamerica Institute (TI) intellectual property is provided for noncommercial use only and this work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International License. To view a copy of this license, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/> or send a letter to Creative Commons, PO Box 1866, Mountain View, CA 94042, USA. Unauthorized posting of this publication online is prohibited. Permission is required from TI to reproduce, or reuse this work, in any form, or any of TI's research or other proprietary documents for commercial use.

Transamerica Institute® is a nonprofit, private foundation dedicated to identifying, researching, and educating the public about retirement security and the intersections of health and financial well-being. **Transamerica Center for Retirement Studies®**, an operating division of Transamerica Institute, conducts one of the largest and longest-running annual retirement surveys of its kind. Transamerica Institute is funded by contributions from Transamerica Life Insurance Company and its affiliates. The information provided here is for educational purposes only and should not be construed as insurance, securities, ERISA, tax, investment, legal, medical, or financial advice or guidance. Please consult independent professionals for answers to your specific questions. www.transamericainstitute.org

Visit Transamerica Institute's website for more on health, personal finance, and retirement security resources, including its health care guides, cookbook series, podcast, academic collaborations on workplace wellness and age-friendly employers, and the 21st Annual Transamerica Retirement Survey. Follow Transamerica Institute on Twitter @TI_insights and Facebook.