

FOOD52

Grandma DiLaura's Italian Ricotta Gnocchi

By cdilaura

Editors' Comments: We're newly convinced, thanks to this recipe, that homemade gnocchi can be a weeknight dinner. And ricotta gnocchi like cdilaura's (a.k.a. our friend Christina) are especially easy to pull together, and won't weigh you down like their potato-based counterparts. We loved these nearly bare -- just sauteed in some brown butter -- so we could really taste the ricotta and speckles of nutmeg, but Christina's Grandma DiLaura's Tomato and Meat Sauce recipe (also on the site) is delicious too. To see a video of Christina making her gnocchi with us, go here: http://www.food52.com/blog/1686_grandma_dilauras_ricotta_gnocchi - A&M

I grew up going to my Italian grandmother's every Sunday for dinner. I have fond memories of handmade pasta drying on a rack, big pots of sauce simmering away on the stove and stinky hard Italian cheeses that I loved to snack on, even as a child. But my most favorite Sundays at Grandma's were the Sundays when she made her gnocchi. For many years she used potato, but then wised up to the ease and lightness of using ricotta instead. It took about 20 years before I finally pinned her down and made her write the recipe that had always been made by memory and feel. Isn't that how all Italian grandmother's cook? Since the best meals are the ones that are shared, I want to take it out of the old family box and contribute it to the food52 community. Buon Appetito! - cdilaura

Serves 4

- 1 pound fresh whole milk ricotta cheese
 - 1 large egg
 - 1 tablespoon olive oil
 - 1/4 cup finely grated parmesan cheese
 - freshly grated nutmeg to taste
 - 2 cups flour, sifted, plus extra for rolling dough
1. Add egg to ricotta cheese and oil and mix thoroughly.
 2. Add grated parmesan cheese to mixture and sprinkle with nutmeg to taste.
 3. Add sifted flour a little at a time and continue to mix thoroughly until dough comes together.
 4. Dump onto generously floured surface and work with hands to bring together into a smooth ball. Add more flour as necessary until dough is smooth and no longer sticks to your hands.
 5. Cut off slices of dough like cutting a loaf of bread and roll into ropes thumb size thick by spreading hands and fingers and rolling from center out to each edge of the rope.
 6. Line one rope parallel to another and cut 2 at a time into 1-inch pieces. Roll each piece off the back of a fork to make imprints that will help hold the sauce.
 7. Transfer gnocchi pieces to a lightly floured or non-stick baking sheet so they don't stick together and put in the freezer while making the rest of batch. If you plan to save any gnocchi for future use, allow them to

freeze entirely on the baking sheet before storing in a ziplock bag to prevent sticking together.

8. When ready to prepare, bring a large stockpot of generously salted water to a boil.
9. Add gnocchi to boiling water and gently stir once with a wooden spoon to create movement and prevent gnocchi from sticking to the bottom. As gnocchi rise to the top {a sign they are done cooking} scoop them out with a mesh strainer or a bamboo wire skimmer and immediately place in serving bowl shaking off excess water.
10. Scoop some sauce on top of each layer of gnocchi as they are placed in the bowl to eliminate the need to stir them with sauce in the end and risk damaging or smashing the pasta. Generously grate parmesan over the top and serve.