

# Cooking Corner

Tips To Help You

## Quick Tips For Fast-But-Fabulous Weeknight Meals

(NAPSA)—Last year, more people discovered the joys of dining at home—the first year in nearly a decade that Americans ate more meals at home than they did the previous year.

The number of meals eaten at home rose during the beginning of 2001 and rose even higher during the last few months when many people became more focused on home and family.

Not only are people staying closer to home these days, but they are enjoying more wine at home with their meals. According to AC Nielsen/Adams Business Research, total table wine sales were up 7 percent in 2001 compared to 2000.

As a result, more people are looking for fuss-free recipes and simple wine selections to enhance their meals.

To help, Sam Gugino, award-winning cookbook author, offers recipes prepared in 30 minutes or less matched with everyday wines on wineanswers.com, a Web site offering busy Americans concise information about wine.

“The general rule of thumb is to drink what you like with the foods that you like,” said Gugino. “If that means enjoying a glass of red wine with chicken fajitas or a glass of white wine with beef stir fry, go for it.”

Gugino suggests these timesaving and flavor-enhancing tips:

- Reheat and recork—Cook a little extra. Many meals, such as hearty soups, freeze well for another fantastic meal in minutes. An open bottle of wine can be recorked and will keep in the refrigerator for three to five days.

- Stock the pantry—From capers and beans to canned tomatoes, cheeses, olive oil and flavored vinegars, keeping the refrigerator, freezer and cupboard stocked will ensure you have great flavors and textures on hand and prevent many last-minute trips to the supermarket.

- Stock the wine pantry—Select wines that will pair nicely with almost any meal for under \$15. Good versatile wines include Sauvignon Blanc, Riesling, Pinot Noir, Sangiovese and Syrah.

- Use the microwave to cook foods such as vegetables and rice.



**Pasta with Rapid Ratatouille Sauce, with its melange of vegetable flavors, is best paired with a crisp Sauvignon Blanc.**

By following these tips, you may have enough time to actually enjoy your meal with a glass of wine.

The melange of vegetable flavors in this Pasta with Rapid Ratatouille Sauce and its touches of basil and garlic are best paired with a crisp Sauvignon Blanc.

### Pasta With Rapid Ratatouille Sauce

#### Ingredients:

- 1 medium onion, about 8 ounces
- 3 cloves garlic
- 3 tablespoons olive oil
- 1 green bell pepper
- 10 to 12 ounces eggplant (about 2 Japanese or baby eggplants)
- 2 small to medium zucchini, 10 to 12 ounces
- Two 14.5-ounce cans diced tomatoes
- 2 teaspoons salt plus more to taste
- 12 ounces dried capellini (angel hair) or any fresh unstuffed pasta shells
- 20 large basil leaves
- ½ cup pitted black oil-cured olives
- Freshly ground black pepper
- Red pepper flakes to taste
- Grated Parmesan passed at the table

#### Directions:

- 1) Run the hot-water tap and put 2 quarts hot tap water in each of 2 pots (one large enough to eventually hold all the water and pasta). Cover and bring both pots to a boil over high heat, 8 to 10 minutes.
- 2) Meanwhile, put a 12-inch

sauté pan or Dutch oven over medium heat. Peel the garlic. Drop the garlic down the chute of a food processor with the motor running to finely chop. Stop the motor, then peel and quarter the onion. Add the onion to the food processor. Pulse just until chopped. (Or chop the garlic and onion by hand.) Add the oil to the sauté pan and increase the heat to high. Add the garlic and onion and stir.

- 3) Cut the eggplant into ½-inch cubes. (Do not peel.) Add to the sauté pan and stir. Cut the top from the bell pepper. Stand it upright and cut down inside the four walls, separating the walls from the center core and seeds. Then cut the walls and top into thin strips. Add to the sauté pan and stir. Trim the ends of the zucchini. Cut into quarters, lengthwise, then crosswise into ½-inch wide pieces. Add to the sauté pan and stir. Open the cans of tomatoes and add to the sauté pan. Stir and cover.

- 4) As soon as the pasta water boils, pour the water from the smaller pot into the larger pot. Add 2 teaspoons salt and the pasta. Stir well, cover, and return to a boil. Stir well again, partially cover, and cook for about 4 minutes, stirring at least one more time, or until the pasta is done to your taste.

- 5) While the pasta cooks, stack the basil leaves, roll in cigar fashion, and cut crosswise into thin ribbons. Coarsely chop the olives. Add all but 2 tablespoons of the basil, the olives, and salt, black pepper, and hot pepper flakes to taste to the sauté pan. Lower the heat to medium, stir well and cook, uncovered, until the pasta is done.

- 6) When the pasta is cooked, drain, and divide among 4 individual soup plates or pasta bowls. Spoon the ratatouille sauce over each and sprinkle with the remaining chopped basil. Serve with grated Parmesan at the table.

Serves 4