

Italian Recipes -

Gnocchi with Brown Butter and Sage Sauce

Gnocchi (pronounced NYA - AW - KEY) are Italian potato dumplings, and if made properly are said to be like little pillows: delicate and soft, and a delight to eat! Gnocchi are popular in northern Italy and as far south as Abruzzo. The dough is prepared with just a few ingredients - potatoes, a bit of flour, and sometimes an egg. The dough is then kneaded gently, rolled out and cut into bite size pieces. At the end of the process, ridges are created by rolling each **gnoccho** along a fork or specially carved small wooden board. These ridges are perfect for capturing the delicious butter sauce, gorgonzola sauce, pesto, or tomato sauce they are served with. Italian families commonly gather around the kitchen table and make these treats together, often on a Sunday afternoon. Make and enjoy these famous Italian dumplings one afternoon for a special treat!



Ingredients

(Serves 6-8)

For the Gnocchi:

1 large Idaho potato

1 cup flour

For the Brown Butter and Sage Sauce:

2 sticks salted butter

6 fresh sage leaves

Procedure

Method to make the gnocchi:

Place the potato on a rack in the oven and bake until soft throughout, or microwave on high for about 6 minutes.

(If you are cooking potatoes for more than one batch, wrap the extras in foil to hold in the heat until you are ready to use them.)

Don't work the potato when it is very hot. Wait until it is comfortably warm, and then mash it with a fork or use a potato ricer. The ricer is recommended, as it makes quick work of getting the potato ready to add the flour, while at the same time keeps the potato fluffy and removes all eyes and lumps. The mashed/riced potatoes should be light and loose.

Place one cup of flour on your work surface. Place your mashed/riced potato alongside in a separate pile.

Spread out the mashed/riced potatoes and then sprinkle some of the flour onto the potatoes. Start working the two ingredients together. As soon as the flour is absorbed, add more flour until the mixture starts to create workable dough.

A light hand in mixing here will yield a tender dumpling. Do not over-knead! Depending on the size of your potato, you may or may not use all of the flour; use only enough to create a workable dough. Too much dough will yield sticky, heavy gnocchi when cooked instead of light and airy gnocchi!

Gather the dough into a ball and cover for 10 minutes. This will allow the moisture from the potatoes to be absorbed by the flour. Knead the dough just enough to blend again; do not overwork.

Slice off a quarter of the dough and start rolling out to form a length of "rope" that is ½ inch thick.

Cut the rope into ½ to ¾ length pieces and then process by rolling the gnocchi beneath your finger, and then quickly pulling it toward you until it has made a full turn and curled up a bit. To create ridges, use this same movement over the back of the tines of a fork or a specially ridged wooden gnocchi board.

Method to cook the gnocchi:

Fill a large pot with water about ¾ of the way to the top and add a generous amount of salt. Cover pot and bring to a boil. While the water is boiling, prepare your sauce.

Turn heat down, uncover, add gnocchi gently and cook for about 3-4 minutes. Watch the gnocchi as they cook, and when they float to the top of the water, gently lift out with a slotted spoon.

Method to make the brown butter and sage sauce:

Melt the butter very slowly over low heat in a large, non-stick pan.

After the butter has melted, keep the heat on low, but watch it carefully. It will start to turn brown. Swirl the liquid in the pan gently to distribute heat evenly as needed. When the butter has turned a light brown color, immediately remove from heat.

Add fresh, torn sage leaves and additional salt to taste.

Immediately pour over gnocchi and mix gently to coat. Garnish with a sprig of sage and serve while hot.

-Adapted from "Cooking Around the World" at the Chillicothe Public Library, Illinois, as presented by the Italian American Society of Peoria July 14, 2014.

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