

Liguria

THE COOKBOOK

Recipes from the Italian Riviera
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Ripieni di Verdura

Stuffed Vegetables

Ripieni di verdura are yet another prime example of the endless Ligurian flair for stuffed foods. Depending on the area, meat or prosciutto is sometimes added to the filling but is by no means necessary. In this popular version, dried porcini mushrooms provide the umami, but you could easily substitute them with other dried mushrooms if necessary. Serve as an unexpected appetizer or as a colorful, vegetarian main course.

◆ Preheat oven to 375°F. Line 2 baking sheets with parchment paper and drizzle lightly with olive oil; set aside.

Place dried mushrooms in a small bowl and cover with warm water; set aside to soak until softened, about 15 minutes. Place bread slices in a wide, shallow dish and pour milk over. Set aside to soak.

Bring a large pot of generously salted water to boil over high heat. Meanwhile, cut the zucchini in half lengthwise (if using large zucchini, also cut them in half crosswise, to obtain 12 pieces). Boil zucchini until just tender but still al dente, 6 to 7 minutes. Transfer zucchini to a colander to cool slightly and return water to a boil. Cut onions in half crosswise and toss them into the pot. Boil until just tender, 7 to 8 minutes. Transfer onions to the colander with a slotted spoon. Clean peppers and cut lengthwise into quarters. Add them to the pot and boil until just tender, about 7 minutes.

Roughly dice 4 of the boiled zucchini pieces; set aside in a medium bowl. Use a small spoon to carefully scoop the flesh out of the remaining zucchini pieces to create little boats. Scoop the flesh into the bowl with the chopped zucchini. Transfer zucchini boats to the prepared baking sheet. Carefully hollow out the onion halves, leaving the outer two or three petals intact, to create a hollow onion half to be filled. Transfer the 4 hollow onion halves to the baking sheet. Chop the onion cores and transfer to the bowl with the zucchini flesh and pieces. Place the bell pepper quarters, skin side down, on the baking sheet. Remove mushrooms from soaking liquid, rinse and squeeze dry. Chop mushrooms and add to the bowl with the zucchini and chopped onion.

Heat 2 tablespoons of oil in a medium frying pan over medium-high heat, add garlic and zucchini mixture. Cook, stirring occasionally, until liquid has evaporated, 5 to 8 minutes. Remove from heat and let mixture cool slightly. Transfer to a food processor. Remove bread slices from milk, squeeze to wring out excess liquid and add to the food processor. Add eggs, marjoram, and ½ teaspoon salt. Pulse until well combined and almost smooth. Stir in Parmigiano-Reggiano. Spoon the filling into the vegetables on the baking sheet using a small spoon or pastry bag. Sprinkle with bread crumbs and bake until golden, about 30 minutes. Serve warm.

¼ cup dried porcini mushrooms
(or other dried mushrooms)
4 slices stale or lightly toasted white
sandwich bread, crusts removed
⅔ cup whole milk
6 small (or 3 large) zucchini
2 yellow onions, peeled
1 small yellow or red bell pepper
2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
1 clove garlic, minced
2 large eggs
1 teaspoon marjoram
3 ½ ounces freshly grated
Parmigiano-Reggiano (about
1 cup, packed)
2 tablespoons plain breadcrumbs

Serves 4 to 6