

Comfort Food – The Best Thing I Ever Ate – Kosher Connection Monday Round-Up

This month's theme for our Kosher Connection round-up is, as stated above, the best thing I ever ate. This one was a doozie for me. There's so much associated with taste. It goes beyond the texture, the flavor combination, the exoticness of the dish. For me, it also has so much to do with positive memory. I remember the first time I had a hot wing. I remember mom coming home from dinner and giving me her leftover for me to taste even though I was supposed to be going to bed. I remember sitting at the kitchen counter and taking my first bite and the subsequent burning sensation of my lips and tanginess on my tongue. I remember thinking, "I need to eat this ALL THE TIME". I also remember the first time I had real Italian drinking chocolate while living in Milan in the summer of 1999 (I was supposed to be there to model but come on, who puts the modeling capital of the world in Italy for crying out loud!? More on that in a future post). I remember the first time I had real Italian espresso and chocolate croissant (again, seriously, if we're not supposed to eat then put the fashion capital of the world in like, I don't know, NOT Italy). I was living abroad for the first time, trying all the food I came into contact with--tasting freedom and fresh, Italian cooking. It was heaven. The first time I took a sip of that drinking chocolate I thought to myself, "Yes. Just, yes."



You can see it in my 19 year-old eyes. I want a chocolate croissant and I want it now! P.S. There was some serious air-brushing that went on here

So for this round-up, I didn't go complicated. Instead, I went with a memory of a dish that was rich, creamy, delicious; all my favorites. It combines my love of cheese, garlic and chicken—but kosher, of course. This dish also sprung to mind because the memories associated with it are pretty yummy as well. In 2001 I was a senior in college. My boyfriend was studying abroad to get his Master's degree, I was living in the dorm next door to some dudes who decided it would be OK to have band practice in their room at 11PM at night and I was itchin' to get out of college. I went to college in a small town in the middle of Ohio called The College of Wooster. By the time I was a senior I believe there were roughly 1700 students on campus. So yes, 3 years into that kind of

smallness and you're ready to get. My senior year started out about 2 weeks before 9/11. Everything that happened on that fateful day pretty much set the tone for the rest of my senior year. We felt isolated and alone in the middle of nowhere Ohio. We were partly chomping at the bit to get out of there and partly terrified to see what the 'real world' was like. I was blessed to have a wonderful and loving group of girl friends, thank Gd, who did everything together. One very cold winter day, our little group piled in our cars and headed to our girl, Kristen's mom's house. Kristen lived the quintessential Ohio life. She grew up on a farm and her neighbors, who were miles down the dirt road, were mostly her relatives. It was a far cry from the suburban Atlanta neighborhood I grew up in. Anyway, the plan was to get away for a bit and have a taste of home. I remember that during this time I was especially feeling anxious and scared about the future so a little time at home, even someone else's home, was exactly what I needed. The minute we walked in the front door, I didn't want to leave. The place smelled like everything 'home' should smell like. For dinner that night, Kristen's mom served us a classic "the college kids are coming to dinner" meal of stuffed chicken breast. It was breaded, baked and stuffed with cream cheese and spinach. Now, this was during my 'BK' years--Before Kosher, so please don't freak out here. The following recipe includes Tofutti cream cheese. Anyway, the point is that though it wasn't culinary genius, it was perfection. It was warmth and home and love served on an ooey, gooey plate.



The college crew. I'm fairly confident I'm wearing overalls in this picture. #2002



Cooking the Greens

**Chicken Breast Stuffed with Tofutti
Cream 'Cheese', Spinach and**

Zucchini

Ingredients:

3 Chicken breasts, pounded flat
3 TBSP of Coconut Oil
1 Small yellow onion, diced
3 Cloves garlic OR 1 shallot, diced
1 Zucchini, diced
1 Big handful of spinach
1/2 Cup of Toffuti cream cheese
Handful of fresh dill and thyme, washed and cut small to be incorporated into cream cheese for added flavor

Additional Supplies:

Poultry twine

or

Toothpicks



Stuffing the Flattened Chicken

How:

Put boneless, skinless chicken breasts in a large Ziploc freezer bag and seal it up tight. Using a mallet (or in my case the bottom of another cooking pan), pound those little breasts down until about 1/2 inch thick. The thinner the better (but not too thin that the stuffing would seep through). Once flattened, put to the side. Using a large, deep skillet, about 2 -3 inches at the sides, heat your coconut oil on a medium high level. Add your onions and sautee until translucent, about 2 minutes. Add garlic and sautee for another minute. Next, add your zucchini and sautee until just beginning to brown. Finally, add your fresh spinach (you can use frozen as well just make sure everything else has browned by now as the moisture in the frozen spinach will stop the browning process). Spinach wilts quickly so make sure not to overcook. Add your spices while sauteeing and adjust to your liking. Once spinach is nice and bright green and incorporated into the rest of the vegetables, turn the heat off. At this point, add the toffuti cream cheese and herb mix to the pan and stir all together until you've got a nice, creamy mixture of cream cheese, herbs and vegetables. Once that's combined, dish out into a separate bowl and clean your pan out to be used to cook the chicken (why do MORE dishes, right?).





Lay out chicken breasts on a flat surface. Place a heaping spoonful of the cream cheese mixture onto a little left of the middle of each piece of chicken. If you put it right in the middle, it'll make the 'sandwiching' of the chicken a bit difficult. Next, fold the chicken in half so that the cream cheese mixture is sandwiched between the same chicken (see image above). Take your poultry twine and wrap the chicken up tight like a nice little chicken present so that the filling

stays in while cooking (you can also use a toothpick at the ends of the chicken to hold it together but then it should be roasted). After you've done that with all three, put 2 more TBSP of coconut oil into the pan at a medium high level. Add the chicken to the pan and let brown on each side about 7 – 8 minutes or until the chicken juices run clean and enjoy.



Happy Little Chicken Campers



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