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Ricotta Gnudi with Asparagus & Mushrooms

Makes about 50 gnudi - Serves 4-6

Have you ever tried gnudi? Similar in nature to gnocchi, gnudi are simply dumplings made with ricotta, semolina flour, egg yolks, salt, and Parmesan cheese. They are light, pillowy pockets of flavor that pair wonderfully with a simple sauce and fresh springtime ingredients. We recommend that you become familiar with these delicious dumplings sooner than later!

Ricotta Gnudi Ingredients:

1 lb ricotta cheese
1 cup finely grated Parmesan cheese
2 egg yolks, beaten
1 teaspoon Kosher salt
1 to 1-1/4 cups semolina flour, plus extra for rolling out

Veggies:

1 bunch asparagus, trimmed, cut into 1-inch pieces on the bias
8 oz small button mushrooms
2 tablespoons butter (for cooking the mushrooms)

Sauce Ingredients:

1/4 cup shallots, minced
2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
4 tablespoons butter
1 cup dry white wine
1/2 cup chicken broth

Garnish:

Chives, minced
Parmesan cheese, grated

Directions:

1. Prepare the ricotta gnudi. Strain the ricotta with a piece of cheesecloth, or with a paper towel lining a strainer. Squeeze out any excess moisture, and place in a large bowl.
2. Add the Parmesan cheese, egg yolks, and salt to the ricotta, and stir until evenly combined.
3. Add 1 cup of the semolina flour into the ricotta mixture, and stir to combine until a loose dough ball is formed. If the dough appears too wet, add additional tablespoons of the semolina flour, up to a 1/4 cup, to reach a workable dough. (The consistency of the drained ricotta impacts how much flour is needed.

Continued on Page 2

Page 2, continued

4. On a semolina-floured work surface, divide the dough in half. Gently form each piece into a rope, about 1" in diameter. Cut each rope into 1" long pieces. Place the cut gnudi on a parchment-lined baking sheet and refrigerate for at least one hour, or up to overnight.
5. While the gnudi are resting, prepare the asparagus by cutting on an angle into 1-inch pieces. Place the asparagus in a baking dish, drizzle with olive oil, and sprinkle with salt and pepper; toss to coat. Roast in a 375 degree F oven for 15 minutes, or until just crisp tender.
6. Sauté the mushrooms in a large pan by melting 2 tablespoons of butter in a broad pan or skillet. Generously space the mushrooms in the pan with about 2 inches between each mushroom. Cook until they start to "squeak" and brown, turning as needed, until just browned on all sides.
7. Prepare the sauce. Sauté the minced shallots in the olive oil and butter until translucent. Add the wine, and simmer until the wine reduces by about half. Add the chicken broth, and continue to simmer on low while the gnudi cook.
8. To cook the gnudi, use a large pasta pot and bring generously salted water to a boil. Gently add the fresh gnudi, and boil for 2 minutes. Boil the gnudi in small batches taking care not to overload the pot. Avoid overcooking the gnudi -- they may begin to fall apart if cooked too long. Carefully scoop out the cooked gnudi with a slotted spoon or spider, and place directly into the waiting sauce.
9. Finish the pasta by adding the roasted asparagus and mushrooms to the gnudi and sauce, toss gently to coat all of the ingredients.
10. Serve with a garnish of chives, and a generous grating of Parmesan cheese.