Summer Roman-Style Rice Tomatoes. Diabetes-friendly too!

Amy Riolo (July 03, 2019)

If you think Italian food is off-limits for people with diabetes, think again. My motivation for writing this book was to change the way Italian cuisine is viewed abroad and to demonstrate ways in which traditional Italian food can be part of a diabetes-friendly eating plan. While thoughts of the bel paese ("beautiful country") generally conjure up the image of platters of carbohydrate-rich pastas and fat-laden sauces, authentic Italian cuisine is both healthful and delicious.

The inspiration for this book came to me years ago **[2].** I was 15 years old when I began preparing many of these recipes for my family after my mother's diabetes diagnosis. Since I didn't want to create two separate meals for our family, I strove to make the recipes that fit into my mother's eating plan delicious enough for the whole family to eat. Who knew that it would turn into a career?

When I visited our ancestral hometown of **Crotone** [3], Italy, for the first time, I was struck by how much healthier our Italian family members were than our American ones. While we share the same genes, it is the diet and lifestyle of our southern Italian relatives that make the difference to their health. While living in Rome, I was struck by how fit even the elderly citizens were. Belying the stereotypical figurines, even most Italian chefs are in good shape. Ever since that stay, it has been my goal to demonstrate that fantastic food and good health don't have to be mutually exclusive.

The secret to my success with cookbooks, teaching, and lecturing has been to focus on what people with diabetes can eat, instead of what they can't. Vegetables, fruits, grains, beans and legumes,

nuts, dairy, seafood, poultry, lean meats, and wholesome baked goods can all be part of a healthful lifestyle. Fortunately, each of these food groups offers scores of ingredients to choose from—many of which include nutrients that are particularly beneficial to people seeking optimal health. Best of all, preparing these foods in a traditional Italian fashion helps to coax the ultimate flavor, texture, and aroma out of them. May you enjoy these recipes as much as I do. Buon appetito a tutti!

Roman-Style Rice and Herb Stuffed Tomatoes – Pomodori di riso alla romana

Serves: 4

Serving Size: 1 tomato

Prep Time: 5 minutes

Cooking Time: 45 minutes

Stuffed tomatoes are one of the ultimate delicacies of the Roman diet and the pride of many home cooks—some of whom bake tiny, matchstick-size pieces of potato along with the tomatoes. Simple and delicious, they are a great accompaniment for grilled seafood and meat. Save this recipe for summer, when tomatoes are at their peak.

1/2 cup arborio rice or calrose rice

1 cup Homemade Chicken Stock (page 289), low-sodium chicken stock, or water

4 beefsteak tomatoes, approximately 6–8 ounces each

4 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil, divided

1/4 cup minced basil

1/4 cup minced mint

1/8 teaspoon unrefined sea salt

1/4 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper

1. Preheat oven to 350°F.

2. Place rice and chicken stock in a saucepan. Bring to boil over a high heat. Cook, stirring constantly, for 20 minutes, or until rice is tender but firm (al dente). Add more water, 1/4 cup at a time, if rice begins to stick to the bottom of the pan. When rice is finished cooking, set aside.

3. Meanwhile, wipe off the tomatoes, discard the stem without damaging the skin, and lay the tomatoes stem side down. Cut a round slice from the side opposite to the stem; you will be using it as a lid. With a melon scoop, scrape out the flesh of the tomato, being careful not to break the skin. Reserve the pulp and the juice.

4. Chop the pulp and mix it with the juice (you can use a food processor). In a bowl, combine the pulp and juice with the rice, 3 tablespoons olive oil, basil, mint, salt, and pepper.

5. Stuff hollow tomatoes with the rice mixture. Cover with the tomato lids and arrange in a greased baking dish, standing the stuffed tomatoes with the lid side up. Drizzle with the remaining 1 tablespoon olive oil and bake for 20–30 minutes, or until the tomatoes are cooked through. Serve hot or at room temperature.

Italian Living Tradition

Roman and Italian cooks love using a variety of mint called mentuccia instead of menta, which is the word for regular mint. The English name for mentuccia is lesser calamint. I highly recommend growing some on your own. The beautiful shrub produces leaves with the aroma of both mint and oregano combined, and they are known to attract butterflies. Mentuccia is a wonderful addition to tomato- , vegetable- , and egg-based dishes. Regular mint, oregano, or a combination of the two are all perfect substitutions.

Wine
Frascati [4]

Choices/Exchanges 1 1/2 Starch, 1 Vegetable, 2 1/2 Fat

Calories 250 | Calories from Fat 130

Total Fat 14g | Saturated Fat 2.0g | Trans Fat 0.0g

Cholesterol 0mg

Sodium 100mg

Potassium 505mg

Total Carbohydrate 28g | Dietary Fiber 3g | Sugars 5g

Protein 4g

Phosphorus 85mg

To order a copy of Italian Diabetes Cookbook click here **[2]**

Visit the website of Award-winning, Best-Selling Author, Chef, Television Personality, Amy Riolo **[5].**

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