

Cornmeal-Crusted Crostata with Wilted Greens and Ricotta

This recipe combines my favorite savory pastry with a scrumptious combination of sautéed dark leafy greens known to Italians as *preboggión*. In Italy such a tangle of greens makes its way into all sorts of savory tortes prepared at Easter time. This version calls for leek, Swiss chard, dandelion greens, and arugula, but feel free to substitute watercress, spinach, kale, or whatever combination you prefer. The crumbly crust is adapted from a recipe from my colleague Frances Wilson. I've added coarsely ground cornmeal here. This easy dough freezes well, so I often make a double batch and freeze half.

Serves 4

Crust

3.75 ounces (3/4 cup) all-purpose **flour**
1.25 ounces (1/4 cup) fresh **coarsely ground cornmeal** (see note)
1/4 teaspoon **fine salt**
4 ounces (1 stick) **cold unsalted butter**, cut into 1/4-inch-thick slices (no thicker), then chilled
1-1/2 teaspoons **apple cider vinegar**
3 tablespoons **ice water**

Filling

1 medium **leek**
2 tablespoons **extra-virgin olive oil**
1/2 teaspoon **fine salt**, divided
About 3 large **Swiss chard** leaves (about 1 bunch), stems removed and reserved for another use, leaves cut crosswise to yield 4 cups (packed) ribbons
1 small bunch **dandelion greens**, tough stems trimmed, roughly chopped to yield 2 cups packed
1/2 cup (packed) **baby or micro arugula**
1/4 cup (packed) **Italian parsley** leaves
1 tablespoon roughly chopped **fresh basil leaves** or 1 **teaspoon dry basil**
2 cloves **garlic**, minced
1/8 teaspoon **crushed red pepper flakes** or **Aleppo pepper**
1 large **egg**
1/2 cup **whole milk ricotta**, drained of any excess liquid
1/4 cup **milk** (low-fat is fine)
2 ounces shredded **Gruyère** (3/4 cup, lightly packed)
3 tablespoons freshly grated **Pecorino Romano**, divided
1/2 teaspoon freshly ground **black pepper**
1/8 teaspoon ground **nutmeg**

Make the dough:

1. In a food processor, pulse the flour, cornmeal, and salt to combine and aerate. Add the cold butter pieces, then pulse 8 to 10 times, just until the butter has broken down into pieces no larger than peas. To ensure tender pastry, do not over-process. Combine the water and vinegar. With the machine running, add the liquids through the feed tube and process just until the mixture combines into a shaggy mass.
2. Place a 12-inch sheet of wax paper on the counter. Dump the dough into the center and press it into a disc about 1/2-inch thick. Wrap the dough in the wax paper and refrigerate while you make the filling. (The dough may be prepared, wrapped, and chilled up to 1 week ahead.)

Make the filling:

1. Trim both ends of the leek, then cut it crosswise at the point where the dark green leaves begin. Keeping the white and green parts separate, cut each part in half lengthwise, then cut each crosswise into 1/2-inch slices. Place each color in a separate bowl, cover with tepid water, and swish the leeks, allowing any sand to fall to the bottom of the bowls. Use your fingers to lift the leek pieces into separate strainers, then rinse each color. Repeat soaking and swishing until no sediment falls to the bottom of the bowl. Set aside to drain.
2. Place a high-sided 12-inch skillet over medium heat and add the oil. When the oil is hot, add the leek greens, sprinkle with a little of the salt, and sauté, stirring occasionally, until tender, about 5 minutes. If the leek leaves start to darken, reduce the heat.
3. Add the leek whites and the chard, along with any water clinging to the leaves, sprinkle with a little more salt, and continue sautéing, stirring occasionally, until tender, about 5 more minutes. If the pan becomes dry, add a little water, 1 tablespoon at a time.
4. Add the dandelion greens and arugula. Sauté until tender, about 5 minutes.
5. Reduce the heat to the lowest setting. Add the parsley, basil, garlic, and red pepper flakes and stir constantly for 1 minute. Transfer the mixture to a medium bowl and set aside.
6. In the meantime, in a large bowl, lightly beat the egg until no streaks remain. To make an egg wash to be used later, in a small bowl, stir together 1-1/2 teaspoons of the beaten egg and 1/2 teaspoon water; set aside.
7. Add the ricotta to the large bowl (that contains the majority of the beaten egg) and stir to combine. Add the milk, Gruyère, 1 tablespoon of the Pecorino, the pepper, and nutmeg. Add the reserved cooked greens and stir to combine; set aside.

Roll out the dough, assemble the crostata, and bake:

1. Place a rack in the center of the oven and heat the oven to 400°. Place a sheet of parchment on a flat counter. Unwrap the chilled dough, place in the center of the parchment sheet, cover with another parchment sheet, and use a rolling pin to shape the dough into an 11-inch round. To prevent the parchment from imbedding into the dough, periodically peel off each piece of parchment and reposition it onto the dough. If the room is warm, transfer the dough, with both sheets of parchment attached, to a rimmed baking sheet, refrigerate for 10 minutes, and then transfer the parchment and dough to the counter.
2. Gently peel off the top piece of parchment. Scrape the filling mixture into the center of the dough and spread to an even thickness, leaving a 1-1/2- to 2-inch border of empty dough around the edges. To form the crostata, use a bench scraper to lift a small edge of the dough off the parchment and onto the filling. Repeat, pleating the dough as you make your way around the circle of dough. When finished, there should be a roughly 5-inch circle of exposed filling in the center. Brush the top of the dough (not the filling) with the reserved egg wash, then sprinkle the entire crostata with the remaining 2 tablespoons of Pecorino.
3. Transfer the crostata (attached to the parchment) to a baking sheet. Bake in the heated oven for 15 minutes, then rotate the pan. Continue baking until the crust is evenly golden brown and cooked through, 10 to 15 more minutes.

4. Transfer the pan to a wire rack. Let stand for 5 minutes to set. Cut into wedges and serve warm or at room temperature. Wrap and refrigerate any leftovers; reheat in a 325° oven until warmed through.

—Linda Carucci, 2024

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