

MENU

Chicken Scaloppini

Baked to perfection in a Marsala base with creamy mushrooms

Green Beans and Artichoke

Sprinkled with parmesan cheese

Garlic Mashed Potatoes

Creamy blend of garlic with a hint of chunky potatoes

Chocolate Chip Cookies

Served hot to melt with chocolaty ease

PURPOSE:

The purpose of our meal selection was to turn this mandatory project into a joyous semiformal dinner where friends could gather for a night to immerse themselves and their taste buds into the decadent Italian cuisine culture.

Considering most people greatly enjoy Italian dinning and being of heavy Italian descent I was firmly advocating an Italian dinner for our guests. Marsala, one of my favorite wines to cook with, is a sweet or dry white wine of Sicilian origin. Its sautéed blend with moist, tender chicken breasts and soaked, creamy mushrooms creates a flavor one will never forget. This famous dish is commonly served with pasta, pilaf or potatoes. My partner, Bryan Clarke and I, graciously chose to serve alongside this entrée, mashed potatoes with a hint of garlic, for a sweet yet tangy flavor. And as we all know, no fine meal is complete without a vegetable. To add color as well as some nutritive value to our plates, green beans and artichoke hearts which had been baked in olive oil and sprinkled with parmesan cheese to be served in large portions. Homemade chocolate chip cookies were served as a warm, easy and scrumptious dessert that everyone would enjoy.

EVALUATIONS:

Principles-

Some basic principles I noted during the baking of the chicken was that the dry heat of baking changed the form of the starches, or in our case the flour on the chicken, causing its outer

surface to brown and giving the chicken an attractive appearance and taste. This also allows some moisture to be obtained. Because moisture cannot be completely obtained, our poultry was put in a broth medium which when put in a dry heat setting like the oven allows steam to help cook and moisturize the poultry. This method is also known as braising or slow baking.

Special Prep-

Prior to baking our Chicken Scaloppini entree, the chicken needed to be thinly sliced which further needed to be floured and sautéed into cutlets. Also, in order to complete this dish, we had to melt beef bouillon in a cup of water which was to be mixed with the Marsala wine to add flavoring and tenderness to the chicken. Before mashing could commence, the potatoes needed to be halved and boiled until a fork could fairly easily pierce them. Similar to the potatoes, the fresh green beans were also boiled to provide a crispy tender crunch with its antagonist, the soft, palpable artichoke hearts. The cookies required that we preheat the oven but other than that, they did not require any special preparations.

Critical Points-

There were a few critical points I noticed during the process of creating this meal. The first important detail I noticed was that the green beans needed to be boiled for about five minutes in order to be cooked fully. The water needed to be brought to a gentle boil before adding the green beans and from there, the vegetable needed to sit for about five minutes. Had the green beans been boiling for too long they would have been soft and lacking a crunch which would be incredibly undesirable.

Very similar to the vegetable, the starch in our meal (the potatoes) needed also to be boiled. Again, the water needed to be brought to a boil and then the potatoes could be added and checked periodically. I noted from the recipe that it was important that the potatoes were not in the boiling water for too long because they could become too mushy and not have the same desired fluffy whip. I would say that the specific duration of the boiling time for the potatoes was my second critical point and it is important to note that the time varies for the type and size of the potato so be sure to read instructions carefully and constantly check up on the potatoes (even if the time is not fully up yet).

More critical points I observed during this project were during the preparation on the chicken cutlets. First, in order to make sure the flour would stick to the chicken it was crucial that I dipped the raw chicken cutlet into egg whites and then immediately into the flour. Had I skipped the egg whites the flour would not have stuck as well and the chicken would not have fried with the same delicious results. Another point was to be sure to have quick hands when frying the chicken cutlets. If I were too slow, one, I would have been burned by the grease and two; the chicken cutlets would have burned. Pan frying is a very speedy process that requires full attention of the cook.

The last critical point was simply to watch how long the cookies were baking for. They needed to be on a baking sheet which has flat edges so that the heat and air can flow on the pan and around each cookie evenly. It is important to keep an eye on the cookies because they are ready to be taken out of the oven as soon as the edges become golden brown. Before that, they

will be undercooked and much longer after the golden brown coloring appears, they will be burnt in no time at all.

Reflections-

This dinner turned out extremely well in my opinion. It was the first time my partner or I had made any of the dishes we prepared that night and from the looks of our guest's plates and the smiles on their faces I would say everyone came out of the dinner satisfied. This is absolutely a meal I would prepare again; it was fairly complicated to pull together and had simply delectable results. If I were to try it again I think might take on the task of making veal scaloppini instead of chicken scaloppini, just to try something new. The change in meat would probably bring to the plate a whole new flavor that I would really like to experience. I would also change up the dessert item and try something with chocolate and fruit. I love the combination of chocolate and fruit, not only is it explosive for my taste buds but both bring nutritious value to the dessert.

FEEDBACK:

Each item we cooked had positive feedback from all of our guests. The most informative evaluation we received, in my opinion, was that the green beans tasted a little undercooked. They were still ranked a fairly high number because the guests said they would rather have their green beans slightly undercooked and still crispy than overcooked and on the softer side. I would like to agree with this note, I also thought the green beans tasted undercooked and would have liked

them to be boiled just a few more minutes. I believe in order to prevent this for the next time I prepare green beans (or any vegetable for that matter) I should pay closer attention to not only the time but also that each green bean is covered by the water in the pot. If the vegetable is not covered there is no way it can cook!

Every other item on the menu received very high scores and affirmations from our friends. I later received oral feedback from our friends that they were impressed and surprised at how well we cooked the dinner. They said they had come over expecting something mediocre but that they left excited to schedule the next dinner!

EXPERIENCE:

The most important aspect I learned from this meal preparation project was that cooking is no easy task. First, it takes time and money, then, it makes you work up a sweat trying to time each dish so that everything can finish around the same time, and lastly, it was very nerve racking for myself. From the time I pulled the last dish from the oven and set everything on the table I was incredibly nervous that nothing would turn out right and that I would seem like a horrendous cook in front on my peers. Bryan could tell I was nervous so he tried to comfort me by telling me not to worry, that no matter what we know how hard we worked and that they would be grateful for a free meal. In the end, everything turned out splendid but I can conclude that I do not know if I could handle the pressures of being a cook- always serving to guests in the hopes that they enjoy what we've created.

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11/20/10
Meal Preparation

Overall, I did enjoy this experience and am quite sure everyone else did as well. We all agreed to switch off houses and menus and planned regular dinner dates together every month from now on.