

The Dining Diva

Easy Italian

Culinary Countdown!

4 Days Before: Follow up on RSVPs; verify number of guests

3 Days Before: Gather and make ready all table linens, dishes, flatware, glasses, serving utensils, salt and pepper grinders; plan for or order centerpiece; decide on all beverages .

2 Days Before: Edit grocery list; shop for all items, including wines, spirits, and liqueurs.

Set the table—completely!

Make croutons for salad; store in zip-top bag.

1 Day Before: Prepare salad dressing; wash and tear romaine lettuce, store in refrigerator.

Prepare and assemble manicotti, but do not top with cheeses. Cover and refrigerate.

Wash spinach; chop the shallots, garlic, and artichokes; toast the pine nuts; refrigerate.

Prepare the Tiramisu; cover tightly and refrigerate.

Party Day! Buon appetito!

Mid-Day Slice and dip bread for Tony's Toast; refrigerate on oiled sheet pan.

1½ Hours Before: Remove manicotti from refrigerator; preheat oven to 350°; bake manicotti as directed.

Remove ingredients for the spinach dish from refrigerator.

Remove bread for toast from refrigerator; when the manicotti is finished, increase the oven temperature to 425°.

30 Minutes Before: Bake Tony's Toast; toss salad.

Sauté Spinach.

Serve dinner! Have a glass of wine for your job well done!

Serve Tiramisu.

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Shopping List

For 6-8 people

Produce

3 Large Limes
2½ lbs Fresh baby spinach
6-8 Cups Romaine lettuce
8 oz Sliced button mushrooms
9 Cloves Garlic
1 Large Onion
2 Shallots
2 Tbsp Fresh minced Italian flat-leaf parsley or fresh minced basil
1 Tbsp Fresh Italian flat-leaf parsley & fresh basil to garnish
manicotti

Dairy & Eggs

10 Tbsp Unsalted butter
1 Cup Milk (2% or whole)
10 Eggs

Cheese & Deli

4½ Cups Grated Parmesan cheese
½ Cup Shredded Parmesan cheese
1 lb Ricotta cheese
2 Cups Grated Mozzarella cheese
2 lbs Mascarpone cheese
or 1½ lbs cream cheese mixed with ½ Cup heavy cream
and ¼ Cup sour cream

Meat & Fish

½ lb Ground beef
½ lb Bulk Italian sausage, mild or spicy

Canned Vegetables & Fruits & Dried Fruits

6 Anchovy filets (canned; usually about 12 filets per can)
32 oz Tomato sauce
1 (6-oz) Jar Marinated artichoke hearts

Pasta, Grains, Cereal

8 oz Manicotti shells

Baking, Spices, & Nuts

6 Tbsp Sugar (Additional 8-10 Tbsp for Tiramisu optional)

1 tsp Pure vanilla extract

4 Tbsp Unsweetened cocoa powder

1 (1.5 oz) Pkg Spaghetti sauce mix

2-3 tsp Dried Italian seasoning

1 tsp Dried basil or 1 Tbsp fresh basil for manicotti sauce

1 tsp Dried oregano or 1 Tbsp fresh oregano for manicotti sauce

1½ tsp Anise seed, crushed

¼ Cup Pine nuts

Condiments

1 Cup Olive oil

½ Cup Canola oil

3 Tbsp Red wine vinegar

2 tsp Dijon mustard

1 tsp Worcestershire sauce

6 Dashes Hot sauce

Breads

2 Loaves Italian bread (or any sturdy bread)

3 (3-oz) Pkg Ladyfingers

Freezer

1 (10-oz) Pkg Frozen chopped spinach

Miscellaneous

⅓ Cup Brewed espresso coffee

Chocolate-covered espresso beans for Tiramisu garnish

Wine & Spirits

2 Tbsp Brandy, dark rum, or sweet marsala

Italian Barbera or a Light Chianti

(recommended wine with meal)