

FROM THE MINISTER GENERAL

I prepared this during Holy Week, on Wednesday evening for Brothers Bruce-Paul and Christopher-John at the SSF Hermitage of St. Bernardine of Siena at Stroud, in New South Wales, Australia. I wanted to do something vegetarian as a way of observing Holy Week. It is autumn here, and the garden has produced an abundance of Australian Blue pumpkins. These are a really delicious, firm fleshed pumpkin, bright orange on the inside and a dusky blue-green on the outside. Having a heap of these things sitting in the kitchen, they are a challenge to the brother-cooks! How many ways can you fix pumpkin....?

I was inspired by a recipe I found on the internet, but we didn't have any of the ingredients except pumpkin. The original called for home-made pasta made from a duck egg, pine nuts and fresh garlic – ten cloves of it roasted. We had a few cloves of garlic, no pine nuts but almonds, and I wasn't about to fuss with homemade pasta made from duck egg or anything else. We did have lots of penne on hand, store bought alas, so I used that.

So, this is almost an original recipe:

PUMPKIN AND PENNE

(serves 3-4)

Ingredients:

3 Cups pumpkin diced into ½ inch cubes
2 small- to medium-sized yellow onions, skins on
5 cloves garlic, unpeeled
¾ cup butter
2 teaspoons grated nutmeg
¾ cup blanched almonds, skins removed (I used whole almonds, I don't think it matters)
Penne, enough for 4 people (the amount depends on your family's appetites!)
½ cup basil leaves
grated parmesan, served on the side
salt and pepper to taste

Directions:

1. Roast the cubed pumpkin, garlic and onions in moderately warm oven (375 degrees Fahrenheit) on a lightly greased baking sheet.

2. Be sure to remove and reserve the pumpkin before it is fully cooked as it will finish cooking in the sauce (and you don't want it to disintegrate).
3. Remove garlic when it is soft and reserve on the side.
4. Finally, remove the onions when they are soft and looking a bit caramelized. Let them cool until you can handle them, then peel and dice the onion.
5. Cook the penne according to the package directions.
6. While pasta is cooking, melt the butter in a pan, then add the nutmeg and almonds, stirring occasionally.
7. When the almonds are warmed through, add the reserved pumpkin and diced onion, and squeeze the flesh of the garlic cloves from their skins into the pan as well. Stir briefly.
8. Tear the basil into small pieces and add to the pan at the last moment.
9. Drain the pasta and transfer it to a large serving dish. Add the warm pumpkin mixture and serve with the parmesan and salt and pepper on the side.

This is a terrific vegetarian dish that is hearty and flavorful – and a good way to use those pumpkins and squashes!

~Br. Clark