

Chicken Rollatini with Provola and Artichokes

Rollatini di Pollo con Provola e Carciofi

Serves 4

I am often asked, "My family loves chicken; how can I make it differently tonight?" Well, this is a little more complex recipe for chicken, full of surprises and flavor. It has a crunchy crust with a melted cheese stuffing, and can be made in advance and reheated in the oven just before serving. Top it with a salad of fresh tomato, basil, and onion, and it makes a complete meal. I love the artichokes in the filling, but you could also use chopped cooked spinach or roll in some asparagus spears.

3 ripe plum tomatoes, diced
1/2 small red onion, chopped
One 14-ounce can quartered artichoke hearts, drained, chopped
2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
2 tablespoons red wine vinegar
Kosher salt
4 medium boneless, skinless chicken breasts (about 8 ounces each)
1 cup grated Italian Provola
1/2 cup freshly grated grana
2 tablespoons chopped fresh Italian parsley
All-purpose flour, for dredging
2 large eggs
1 1/2 cups fine dried bread crumbs
Vegetable oil, for frying
1/2 cup fresh basil leaves, chopped

For the topping: Combine the tomatoes, red onion, half of the artichoke hearts, the olive oil, vinegar, and 1 teaspoon salt in a medium bowl. Toss well, and set aside to let the flavors develop while you make the chicken.

With a sharp knife, butterfly the chicken breasts open by slicing crosswise almost all the way through and opening up each breast like a book. Pound gently, just to even the pieces out to about 1/2 inch thick. Season on both sides with salt.

Combine the Provola, remaining artichokes, Grana Padano, and parsley in a small bowl, and toss to make a cohesive stuffing. Spread the stuffing on the chicken breasts, leaving a border around the edges. Roll them up, starting with the short sides, to enclose the stuffing. (The chicken roll should stay closed; you can use toothpicks if you like, but be sure to remove them when you serve.)

Spread the flour in a shallow bowl. Beat the eggs in a second shallow bowl with 2 tablespoons water, and spread the bread crumbs in a third.

Heat 1 inch of vegetable oil in a large skillet over medium heat until a few bread crumbs sizzle on contact. Dredge the rollatini in flour, then eggs, then bread crumbs, coating them completely. Carefully add the rollatini to the oil, and cook, turning occasionally, until they're crisped and browned all over and the chicken is cooked through, 8 to 10 minutes.

Remove them to a paper-towel-lined plate. Season them lightly with salt, and slice them into thick rounds. Stir the basil into the tomato topping, and serve it with the rollatini.