

Asparagus, Ham and Swiss cheese Stromboli

With a Cream of Asparagus Soup

Not sure what to do with asparagus that hasn't been done, or will be done during this Battle.

So I decided to go with some form of sandwich. I first baked it in bread dough that worked well, and the hollandaise sauce for dipping went really great with it. Still something was lacking. I came to the conclusion it needed to be wrapped with pizza dough - a Stromboli. The Stromboli is also topped with coarse salt and freshly grated Parmigiano Reggiano.

The Pizza Dough

This dough can be made the same day, but better flavor develops with a retard rise/fermentation in the refrigerator overnight, or store bought can be used. This dough is a New York style pizza dough adapted from Peter Reinhart's American Pie.

20 oz AP flour
10 grams Dry Active Yeast
2 Tbsp Sugar
3 Tbsp Extra Virgin Olive Oil
½ Tsp Herbes De Provence
14 oz warm water

In 3 oz of warm water (100-110°F) add the sugar and yeast, stir and allow proofing for 10 minutes until foamy.

In a stand mixer with the dough hook add in the proofed yeast and sugar mixture, and the remainder of the ingredients. On low, mix until a coarse ball is formed (2-3 minutes). Rest the dough for 5 minutes to allow the flour to fully absorb the liquids. Continue mixing at med low for 4 -5 minutes until the dough pulls away cleanly from the sides of the bowl and sticks to the bottom center of the bowl. The dough at this stage should be tacky but not sticky. If it is too dry/stiff add a Tbsp of water at a time, or if it is too wet add a Tbsp of flour at a time to achieve the right consistency.

Dust your work surface with flour and dump the dough out and knead it for 5 minutes or so, the surface should be smooth and glossy. Form a ball and brush Olive Oil and let it rest for 15 minutes. Once the dough has rested, place the ball into a bowl, cover and place into the refrigerator for the overnight rise. I use large freezer zip lock bags for the convenience, removing most of the air to allow the dough to rise. The dough will release enough gas to inflate the bag. Again the dough will develop more flavors if it is allowed an overnight retard/fermentation. The next day, remove the dough from the refrigerator and allow it to come up to room temperature (1.5-2 hours).

Using approximately half of the dough, roll out into a 15" x 18" rectangle on a floured surface, re-dust the work surface as needed to prevent sticking. If you envision this rectangle with 3 sections each 5"x18", the two outer sections are rolled out thinner than the middle section. This allows for a thicker base and since I was going to braid the dough I wanted the outer edge thinner so it would end up with a similar thickness to the bottom.



Assembly

8 pcs of steamed Asparagus (woody ends discarded)
2-3 slices of your favorite ham
4 slices of Swiss Cheese
¼ to ½ Cup Chunky Marinara Sauce (Homemade or store bought, I use homemade)
1 Tsp Herbes De Provence
1 Tbsp Extra Virgin Olive Oil
Grated Parmigiano Reggiano
Coarse Sea Salt
2 Tbsp Melted Butter

Preheat the oven to 450°F, (preferably with a pizza stone)
Assemble on parchment paper for an easy transfer to the oven.

Apply a Tbsp of Extra Virgin Olive Oil in the base (middle section). A coating of oil help keep the sauce from making the base soggy, I do this each time I make pizzas. Sprinkle the Herbes De Provence on the base, spread the marinara sauce. Lay the ham, asparagus (I seasoned the asparagus with salt) and cheese on the base.

With a dough cutter cut strips about 1" wide in each of the 2 outer sections. Cut the strips so they are about ½" - ¾" from the base. You should have an equal number of strips on each side. Braid the strips of dough on a 45 degree angle. When you get to the last couple strips to braid, trim off the excess dough to complete the braid.

Brush the top of the Stromboli with the melted butter, apply the coarse sea salt, and grated Parmigiano cheese to your taste. Place the Stromboli and the parchment paper in the oven for approximately 20-25 minutes, until golden brown. Cool on a rack for 5 minutes, and serve with chunky marinara sauce for dipping.



Having several pounds of asparagus left over I was asked to make some soup. We could go healthy, but decided to rich instead.

Start with a Béchamel base

Roux

6 Tbsp Butter

6 Tbsp Flour

Melt butter in sauce pan, whisk in the flour and cook for 1-2 minutes, medium heat until the roux is a nice blond colour. Over cooking a roux (dark or brown) lessens its' ability to thicken sauces.

Béchamel

1C Milk

1C Cream

1C Chicken broth

½ tsp Herbes de Provence

Bay Leaf

Salt and Pepper to taste



Whisk in the cold milk, cream, and chicken broth and continue to stir until a smooth consistency is achieved. Reduce heat to low, add in Herbes de Provence, Bay leaf, salt, pepper to taste, continue to cook until reduced to coat the back of a spoon (about 10-15 minutes).

16 pcs of steamed Asparagus (Reserving a few Asparagus tips)

3 Cloves of chopped Garlic

1 medium Grated Onion

1Tbsp Olive Oil

1 Tbsp Butter

Sauté the onion and garlic in the olive oil and butter until soft and transparent. Place the chopped asparagus and onion and garlic in a food processor or blender to puree. Add puree to the béchamel, and stir over low heat. Adjust the thickness to your tastes with milk, water or in my case I used the reserved water from the steaming process.

Tempura Batter - Lightly whisk the ingredients, lumps are OK, don't over mix.

1 Egg lightly beaten

½ Cup of Flour

½ Cup of Ice Cold Water

I did not dig out the deep fryer for this little amount of tempura, I simply add 1/3 of a cup of cooking oil into a small frying pan, weighted the frying pan handle down so the pan was at about a 30° angle and poured the oil into the corner of the pan. Heat the oil on medium high. Dip the Asparagus tips into the batter to lightly coat, fried until light golden brown, season with salt. Plate and garnish. There will be left over tempura batter, batter and fry up and vegetables left over, great side garnish or dish.