

PAPA JOE'S FAMILY RECIPES

20 EASY-TO-MAKE ITALIAN DISHES FROM A LIFELONG CHEF



**by Joseph
"Papa Joe"
Mercurio**

**LEARN TO MAKE
HIS PIZZA TODAY!**

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Joseph "Papa Joe" Mercurio

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*To my mother and aunts, who gave me the
passion to cook, as well as to my family and friends,
who tell me I'm the greatest cook in the world.*

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P R E F A C E

As a child I always watched Mom cook and I was the one there to lick the spoon or scrape out the bowl. Before I was a teenager, I tried cooking. Besides having to clean up afterward, the only rule was “Eat what you cook.” Some of my early concoctions turned me many shades of green. At age 14, I got a job as a soda clerk and learned how to make hot dogs, hamburgers, sundaes, frappes and real milkshakes. At 15, my second job was in a hospital kitchen as a dishwasher. One night when a cook called in sick, I volunteered to cover for him. That experience led me to a job at Howard Johnson’s, where I impressed a cook who took me under his wing. Fortunately, the only action I saw in my brief military stint was in the kitchen. When I got out, I went to Boston University to study restaurant management. At BU, I met one of the world’s highest ranking executive chefs, who allowed me to train under him at the Ritz-Carlton. Years later, my wife’s Great Uncle Lou (Luigi) was expanding his pizza shop and offered me a partnership, which brought me to Pennsylvania and the house in which I have lived for 35 years. The warmth, love and happiness these recipes have brought to my family and friends, I would now like to share with the world. God first, family and loved ones second, food third: my math in life.

Joseph “Papa Joe” Mercurio
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GARLIC BREAD

INGREDIENTS

¼ cup garlic oil
½ cup Parmesan cheese,
grated
1 loaf Italian bread
Dash of paprika

DIRECTIONS

1. If you choose to make the garlic oil yourself: mince 6–8 cloves of garlic and add it and 1 teaspoon of salt to 1 quart of good vegetable or olive oil. Add the garlic/salt mixture to the oil and shake vigorously. Let sit 2-3 days.
2. Cut loaf into thick slices, or in half lengthwise. Spread generously with garlic oil and sprinkle with cheese. Top with a dash of paprika.
3. Cover with foil and bake in a 325°F oven for 20 minutes. Serve hot.

SICILIAN MUSHROOMS

INGREDIENTS

1 pound fresh
button mushrooms
¼ cup olive oil
2 cloves garlic, minced
½ onion, minced
Salt and pepper to taste
1 tbsp lemon juice
¼ cup parsley, chopped

DIRECTIONS

1. Wash mushrooms with a damp cloth and sauté in oil.
2. Add garlic, onion, salt, pepper, and cook over low heat for 10 minutes.
3. Remove from heat and add lemon juice.
4. Stick with toothpicks and arrange on a platter, then sprinkle with parsley.



SPAGHETTI SAUCE

INGREDIENTS

- 4 29oz cans tomato puree
- 4-5 tbsp olive oil
- 1 lb beef stew meat
- ½ lb cut pork or 1 pork chop
- 1 tbs fresh garlic, chopped
- 1 tbs basil
- 2 tbsp fresh parsley, minced
- 2 tbsp granulated garlic
- 2 tsp salt
- 2 tbsp sugar
- 1 tsp black pepper
- 46 oz water

DIRECTIONS

1. Pour olive oil in pan on medium heat. Add meat and brown.
2. While meat is browning, add garlic.
3. Add all other ingredients.
4. Use water to rinse out can, and then add the rest of the water.
5. Stir until ingredients are blended and cook for 15 minutes, stirring so nothing sticks.
6. Lower heat as far as possible, cover and cook for 2-3 hours stirring occasionally. Add more water if sauce is too thick.

LUIGI'S PIZZA SAUCE

INGREDIENTS

- 2 28 oz cans crushed tomatoes
- ¼ cup dry parsley
- 3 tbsp granulated or 2 tsp minced garlic
- 1 tbsp salt
- 1 tsp black pepper
- 1 tbsp dry basil
- ½ cup sugar

DIRECTIONS

1. Combine all the ingredients in bowl or pot.
2. Rinse tomato cans with ¾-can of water, add to mixture, and mix well.

Note: Sauce can be made ahead of time and refrigerated or made with dough and allowed to sit at room temperature to allow flavors to meld.

MARINARA SAUCE

INGREDIENTS

- 2 13 oz cans crushed or diced tomatoes
- 1 large green bell pepper, diced
- 1 large yellow onion, diced
- 2 tbsp granulated garlic
- 2 teaspoons dried basil
- 2 tbsp parsley
- 2 tbsp sugar
- 2 teaspoons salt (to taste)
- 1 tbsp black pepper
- 7 oz water

DIRECTIONS

1. Sauté onion and bell pepper until soft.
2. Add tomato and all other ingredients.
3. Add 7 oz water and simmer for 1–1½ hours.
4. Serve with pasta, chicken, pork, or vegetables.

BAKED EGGPLANT

INGREDIENTS

1 large Italian eggplant
Salt and pepper
3 eggs
¼ cup milk
1½ cup flour
¼ cup olive oil
1 cup mozzarella cheese,
grated or sliced
¼ cup parmesan
cheese, grated
1½–2 cups tomato sauce

DIRECTIONS

1. Peel and slice the eggplant into ¼-inch slices. Spread the pieces on paper towels, add salt and pepper, and let sit.
2. Mix the eggs in bowl with the ¼ cup milk.
3. Dredge eggplant pieces in flour and dip in egg mixture.
4. Cook eggplant in a large frying pan with ¼ cup of vegetable oil on medium heat. When the pieces are a light brown on each side, place on paper towels.
5. Cover the bottom of a 9x12 baking pan with tomato sauce. Lay down one layer of eggplant. Then sprinkle or place pieces of mozzarella on top. Add another layer of eggplant and top with the rest of sauce. Sprinkle with Parmesan cheese.
6. Cover the pan with foil and bake at 350°F for 45 minutes.
7. Remove from the oven and let sit for 10 minutes. For the last 5 minutes, uncover and put the remaining mozzarella on top. Put back in the oven until the cheese melts (about 1-2 minutes). Remove from oven and let rest before serving.

CHICKEN CACCIATORE

INGREDIENTS

- 1 chicken cut into 8 pieces
- 1 cup flour
- Dash of salt and pepper
- ¾ cup vegetable oil
- 2 cloves fresh garlic, minced
- 1–2 yellow bell peppers,
cut into strips
- 1 large yellow onion,
cut into strips
- 4–5 medium mushrooms,
sliced
- 1 large can diced tomatoes
- ½ cup sherry or red wine

DIRECTIONS

1. Dredge chicken pieces in flour seasoned with salt and pepper and fry in ½ cup vegetable oil until lightly brown. Set aside.
2. In the same frying pan, add another ¼ cup of oil, garlic, bell peppers, onion and mushrooms. Saute for 3–5 minutes.
3. Add the can of diced tomatoes and let simmer another 3–5 minutes.
4. Place chicken in the 9x12 pan and cover with the vegetable mixture. Add ½ cup of sherry or red wine, salt and pepper to taste.
5. Cover and bake at 350°F for 45 minutes. Serve on a bed of rice or with thin spaghetti.

LEMON CHICKEN

INGREDIENTS

- 4 whole chicken breasts, boned and skinned
- 4 eggs
- 1¼ cups vegetable oil
- ⅓ cup parmesan cheese, grated
- Salt and pepper
- 1–2 cups flour
- 2 14 oz cans chicken stock
- ¼ cup lemon juice
- ½ cups white or sherry wine
- 2 fresh lemons (sliced)
- Granulated garlic

DIRECTIONS

1. Take each chicken breast and cut it down the center. Butterfly each half and slightly pound to set shape. Set aside.
2. Wisk the eggs to a froth and add ¼ cup oil. Add ⅓ cup grated parmesan, mix well.
3. Add 1 cup of oil to a large frying pan and bring to a moderate heat.
4. Sprinkle salt and pepper over a chicken breast, then dredge it in the flour and dip in the egg mixture.
5. Place it in the hot frying pan and repeat for each chicken section. Fry until golden brown on both sides then drain on a paper towel.
6. In a saucepan, combine chicken stock, lemon juice and wine. Let simmer hard (not a full rolling boil) for about 10 minutes, until the liquid is reduced by half.
7. If the sauce needs to be thicker, add “slurry” (1 tablespoon cornstarch dissolved in 2 tablespoons ice water) and then whisk it into the lemon sauce. If sauce is too thick, add a little water.
8. Place chicken in a 9 x 13 pan and sprinkle granulated garlic to taste. Place the sliced lemon on the chicken then pour the sauce over the top.
9. Cover with foil and bake at 350°F for 40 minutes.



PIZZA FISH

INGREDIENTS

- ½ pound of butter, melted
- 2–4 lbs white fish (Cod, Haddock or Pollack)
- 1 cup seasoned bread-crumbs (or 2 cups crumbled crackers)
- 1 tbsp granulated garlic
- 3 tbsp parsley flakes
- 1 cup parmesan cheese, grated
- Salt and pepper to taste
- 2 cups marinara sauce
- 12 oz sliced or shredded mozzarella cheese

DIRECTIONS

1. Line the bottom of pan with butter and place the fish in skin side down. Set aside.
2. In a mixing bowl combine the bread crumbs, the rest of butter, the garlic, the parsley, and half the parmesan cheese. Salt and pepper to taste. Mix to a coarse paste and put on top of fish.
3. Ladle the marinara sauce on top of the mixture and sprinkle the remaining parmesan cheese on top of the sauce.
4. Cover and bake at 350°F for 40 minutes.
5. Remove cover and add mozzarella on top. Cover and bake 10 more minutes.
6. Remove from oven and let sit for a few minutes. Then cut and serve.

BAKED LASAGNA

INGREDIENTS

- 1/8 cup oil
- 1 lb ground beef (or substitute mild sausage)
- 1 lb green pepper
- 1 small onion, finely chopped
- 1 lb dry lasagna noodles
- 3 cups ricotta cheese
- 3 tsp granulated garlic
- 3/4 cup parmesan cheese
- 3 eggs
- Salt and pepper to taste
- 2 cups of marinara sauce
- 1 cup sliced mozzarella cheese
- 3 tbsp chopped parsley

DIRECTIONS

1. Place ground beef or sausage, pepper and onion in a large frying pan and brown in oil. If using sausage, cut it into thin slices.
2. Cook the lasagna in a large pot with 3 quarts water, according to the directions on the box.
3. In a large bowl, combine the ricotta cheese, garlic, half the parmesan cheese and the eggs. Mix the salt and pepper in thoroughly to taste.
4. Spread some of the marinara sauce on the bottom of the baking pan. Cover with a layer of noodles close together or slightly overlapping. Spread the meat mixture over this and cover it with mozzarella cheese. Add a layer of noodles. Then put the ricotta mixture on top of the noodles, followed by another layer of noodles. Cover noodles with the rest of the sauce. Sprinkle the rest of the parmesan cheese on top and cover with foil.
5. Bake at 350°F for 1 hour or until hot on top of the foil. Remove from oven, uncover, and let sit for 10 minutes. Cut and serve.

CREAM OF TOMATO SOUP

INGREDIENTS

- 1 small onion
- 2-5 whole cloves
- 4 cups of milk or light cream
- ½ cup dry white bread crumbs
- 1 teaspoon parsley or sprigs of fresh parsley
- 1 small bay leaf
- 2 tbsp of sugar
- 2 cups chopped fresh or canned tomatoes
- ¼ tsp of baking soda
- 4 tbsp butter
- Salt & Pepper to taste

DIRECTIONS

1. Poke several small holes into the onion with a knifepoint and insert a clove in each hole.
2. In a pot or pan, combine milk, bread crumbs, onion, parsley, bay leaf and sugar. Simmer gently for 5 minutes.
3. Remove and discard the onion with the cloves and the bay leaf.
4. Add the tomatoes and the baking soda and simmer gently for 15 minutes.
5. Drain through a strainer. Add butter and salt and pepper to taste.
6. Reheat, stirring until butter melts and serve.



LUIGI'S PIZZA DOUGH

INGREDIENTS

2 packets yeast
(rapid rising or regular–
or 4 oz of the cake type)
4 lbs all-purpose
or self-rising flour
1 tsp salt
½ cup sugar
¼ lb butter or margarine
(or a scoop of Crisco)
¼ cup vegetable oil

DIRECTIONS

1. Activate the yeast by combining in a bowl with 1½ cups of tepid water. Stir.
2. In large bowl, combine flour, salt and sugar. Melt or soften the butter and add to bowl.
3. Add the yeast/water mixture. Mix by squeezing water into the flour mixture. Add another ½ cup water.
4. Continue mixing until all water is absorbed and dough is slightly moist.
5. Form dough into a ball and knead until it is soft and elastic enough to punch.
6. Pour oil over dough to mix in and coat. Cover with towel and place in cool oven or somewhere dark and cool with no drafts.
7. Let dough rise for 45-60 minutes, until it has doubled in volume. Punch down and repeat rising for another 45-60 minutes. Note: If using rapid rising yeast, cut both the times in half.

Note: To make bread, punch down dough twice as above, then make loaves.

LUIGI'S PIZZA

INGREDIENTS

- Shortening
- Pizza dough (see page 29)
- Pizza sauce (see page 14)
- Parmesan or Romano cheese, finely grated
- Oregano
- Mozzarella cheese, shredded
- Toppings as desired

DIRECTIONS

- Grease cookie sheets or pizza pans with shortening. Depending on the size sheets or pans, divide the dough as follows:
12” round pan – 1 lb
16” round pan – 1½ lb
16” x 11” sheet – 1½ lb
- Do not punch dough down but form each portion into loose balls. Let sit 10 minutes.
- Form dough into discs: You should be *stretching* the dough to do this. In desired pan, first flatten ball with knuckles, then *push* dough firmly into all corners using two fingers or by *pulling* into corners with all fingers. Push dough up onto sides of pan. Pinch any holes that form shut with fingers. Push dough down into all corners of pan with two fingers.

Note: For a thinner crust, prick dough several times with a fork, add sauce and bake immediately. For a thicker crust, let dough rest 5 minutes in pans.

Note: To hold dough to cook later in the day, put in freezer. Dough will keep a maximum of two days, preferably less than 1 day.

- Pour sauce (see page 14) over the dough with a ladle. Tilt pan to get sauce into corners, then shake pan side to side to distribute evenly. Adjust amount of sauce to personal preference. Aim for a generous coating, approximate ⅛-inch.

- Sprinkle oregano and grated cheese over sauce.
- Toppings that need to cook such as onions and peppers should be placed onto layer of sauce before sprinkling the oregano. Those that do not need to cook, such as pepperoni, should be placed on top of the mozzarella cheese just before pizza is returned to oven. (See below.)
- Place pizza on middle rack and bake 12–15 minutes at 450–500°F. In a home oven, you must only bake one pizza at a time. Pizza stones are helpful. Watch as it cooks. If dough bubbles form, puncture with the tip of knife and they will deflate by themselves. To check doneness, lift a corner of pizza with a spatula. Bottom crust should be stiff when done and lifting corner should lift much of crust off the pan. If several pizzas are being prepared, you can hold them at this stage, waiting until nearly ready to serve to add cheese.
- After crust and sauce has baked, add a generous coating of shredded mozzarella cheese. (Top with pepperoni at this point if desired.)
- Reduce temperature of oven to “warm.” (If preparing only one pizza, you can turn oven off at this point. It will stay warm enough to melt cheese.) Return pizzas to oven to melt cheese. You can do several at one time at this stage. When cheese is melted, serve.

PIZZA ROLLS

Roll out small ball of dough. Spread with slices of pepperoni and layer of mozzarella cheese. Roll up. Pinch ends. Bake, approximately 15 minutes at 400°F.

CALZONES & STROMBOLI

To make calzones or Stromboli—make like a turnover; crimp edges with a fork. Suggested fillings: pepperoni, sausage, onions, peppers, spinach, broccoli, cheese, mushrooms, or anything you think would be tasty.

BLUE CHEESE

INGREDIENTS

1 pint mayonaise

1 pint sour cream

¾ cup blue cheese,
crumbled

Dash of salt

2 tbsp Worcestershire sauce

1 tbsp of granulated garlic

1 tsp white pepper

4 dashes hot sauce

DIRECTIONS

Mix all ingredients until well blended.

ITALIAN

INGREDIENTS

1 pint vegetable or
virgin olive oil

½ cup red wine vinegar

1 tsp black pepper

½ tsp dried tarragon

½ tsp dried thyme

1 tbsp of granulated garlic

DIRECTIONS

Mix all ingredients until well blended.
Shake or mix again just prior to serving.

RANCH

INGREDIENTS

1 quart buttermilk

1 30 oz jar mayonnaise

1 pint sour cream

2 tbsp of granulated garlic

1 tsp thyme

2 tsp white pepper

Salt to taste

DIRECTIONS

Mix all ingredients until well blended.

RED FRENCH

INGREDIENTS

½ cup oil

¼ cup cider vinegar

½ cup sugar

1 tsp dry mustard

¾ tsp white pepper

1 tsp onion salt

1 tsp granulated garlic

1 tsp salt

1 cup condensed tomato
soup (or 6–7 ozs, to taste)

DIRECTIONS

Combine oil, vinegar, and sugar in a mixer and mix on a slow speed while adding the mustard, pepper, onion salt, garlic and salt. Once these ingredients are full blended, slowly add tomato soup and continue mixing until blended.



APPLE PIE

CRUST INGREDIENTS

- 2 cups sifted flour
- 1 tsp salt
- $\frac{2}{3}$ cup Crisco
or shortening
- $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp baking powder
- $\frac{1}{3}$ cup cold milk

FILLING INGREDIENTS

- 1 cup sugar
- $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp salt
- 1 teaspoon cinnamon
- $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp nutmeg
- $1\frac{1}{2}$ tbsp flour
- 6 large apples (Granny
Smith or Cortland)
- 2 tbsp of butter

DIRECTIONS FOR CRUST

1. Combine flour, salt and baking powder. Add Crisco, and using pastry blender or a pair of knives mix until it looks like coarse cornmeal.
2. Add milk and stir into the shortening/flour mixture until dough is formed. Make a ball and flatten slightly. Roll half the dough between two sheets of wax paper, $\frac{1}{8}$ -inch thick.
3. Makes two 8 or 9-inch pie shells or one two-crust pie.

DIRECTIONS FOR FILLING & PIE

1. Preheat the oven to 425°F.
2. Line the pie pan with half the dough. In a separate bowl combine the sugar, salt, cinnamon, nutmeg, flour and mix thoroughly.
3. Peel, slice and core apples. Toss them in the sugar mixture, coating them well.
4. Place apples in the bottom pie shell, and dot with the butter.
5. Roll out the top crust and drape it over the pie. Crimp the edges and cut four slits in the top to vent.
6. Bake for 10 minutes, then lower the heat to 350°F and bake for another 30-40 minutes, until apples are fork-tender and the crust is brown.



CHERRY CREAM CHEESE PIE

CRUST INGREDIENTS

- 1½ cups graham cracker crumbs
- ½ cup sugar
- ⅓ cup butter, melted

FILLING INGREDIENTS

- 8 oz package of cream cheese
- 14 oz can condensed milk
- ⅓ cup of lemon juice
- 1 tsp vanilla extract

TOPPING INGREDIENT

- 1 can cherry pie filling

DIRECTIONS FOR CRUST

1. Preheat oven to 350°F.
2. Mix the sugar, butter and crumbs in a bowl. Press and pat into a 9 inch pie pan.
3. Bake 8–10 minutes in oven until golden brown.

DIRECTIONS FOR FILLING & PIE

1. Beat cream cheese until light and fluffy. Beat in milk, lemon juice and vanilla. Blend well.
2. Pour into crust and chill for one hour.
3. Top with cherry pie filling.



CHEESECAKE

FILLING INGREDIENTS

- Graham Cracker Crust
(see previous recipe
and double it)
- 1 pound of ricotta cheese
or cottage cheese
- 2 cups sugar
- 2 8 oz packages of cream
cheese
- 1 tbsp vanilla
- 3 egg yolks
- 1 pint sour cream

DIRECTIONS

1. Make a graham cracker crust per the previous recipe and fill the bottom of a 9x12 pan or two 12-inch pie pans.
2. In a large mixing bowl, beat the ricotta or cottage cheese on medium speed, gradually adding 1½ cups of sugar. Beat until smooth.
3. Gradually add the cream cheese and beat until smooth.
4. Add the egg yolks one at a time until mixed in. Add the vanilla.
5. When the mixture is smooth, pour in the pan or the pie shells.
6. Preheat the oven to 350°F.
7. Reduce heat to 320°F and bake for 1 hour. Then shut the oven off and let the cake sit for two hours (no peeking!).
8. Remove the cheesecake from the oven and let cool.
9. In another bowl, combine the sour cream and rest of the sugar. Whip until all sugar is dissolved. Spread on top of the cake. Let sit and cool before serving. Top with resh fruit.

PIZZELLES

INGREDIENTS

2 cups flour
1 cup sugar
6 eggs
1 cup vegetable oil
1 tbsp baking powder
1 oz lemon or anise extract

DIRECTIONS

1. In a mixing bowl, combine 1 cup flour with the rest of the ingredients and mix thoroughly.
2. Slowly add the rest of the flour and if batter gets too thick, depending on the humidity, use only half a cup or so.
3. Cook in pizzelle iron. If pizzelles stick to pizzelle iron, lightly brush an oil-dampened paper towel over the surface of the irons and wipe off any excess oil.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Joseph “Papa Joe” Mercurio was born and raised in Somerville, Massachusetts, many moons ago. If the love of cooking is an inherited trait, then Joe hit the jackpot: he was born into two families who loved to cook, in which family dinners were delicious feasts that nourished the body and the soul. His aunt, at age 92, still cooks for her children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren every Sunday and every holiday. He hopes to do the same when he’s that old. He is semi-retired, but still satiates appetites here and there in Western Pennsylvania. If you want to hire him for a private affair, he ain’t cheap, but he promises that when he leaves, your kitchen and your stomach will be in better shape than when he got there.



Carb-counting, calorie-crunching and low-fat substitutes?
Not in this book. Unlike those celebrity chef yahoos you see on TV, Papa Joe gives you no fluff. Only the substance. If you love eating food—REAL FOOD—these recipes are for you. His recipe for his Uncle Lou's "Luigi's Pizza" has fans all across the country from Maine to Los Angeles but has never been made public before. This recipe alone is worth the price of the book!

