

Dinner and A Book Episode 610

Menu:

Hash Brown Potatoes
Noodles Sort of Thai
Spaghetti Carbonara
Matzo Brie

Hash Brown Potatoes

8 small waxy potatoes (new potatoes), *2-1/4 pounds*
6 Tablespoons unsalted butter
1/2 small onion, very finely diced
Salt and pepper
Coarse salt for sprinkling on top

Bring a saucepan of water to a boil, add the potatoes, and boil about 10 minutes, or until they are cooked about halfway through. Drain, and allow them to cool to warm; then cool and chop into about 1-inch squares. Melt the butter over medium heat in a well-seasoned 8 x 10 inch cast-iron skillet. Remove about a quarter of the butter and set aside. Add the potatoes to the skillet, forming them into a flat cake and pressing down on it with a spatula. Cook, uncovered, over medium heat for about 6 minutes, until a good crust has formed on the bottom. Keep pressing with the spatula, and run it around the edges a bit so the potatoes don't stick.

Sort-of -Thai Noodles

1/2 pound very thin rice noodles (I prefer Thai rice sticks, but Dynasty noodles are acceptable).
1/4-cup Asian fish sauce
1/4 cup white vinegar or unseasoned rice vinegar
2 Tablespoons peanut oil
12 pounds medium shrimp, shelled
2 cloves garlic, minced
1/2-pound ground pork
4 scallions, sliced into 1/2 inch lengths
2 eggs
1 teaspoon dried, crushed red pepper flakes
1/4-cup fresh lime juice (about 2 limes)
1/2 cup salted peanuts, ground
1 lime, cut into 6 wedges
Chili sauce

Soak noodles in hot water to cover for about 20 minutes. Drain and set aside. Mix the sugar, fish sauce, and vinegar together and set aside. Heat the oil in a wok or skillet until

it is very hot, and sauté the shrimp just until they change color, about 1 minute. Remove them and set aside. Add the garlic to the wok, and as soon as it starts to color and get fragrant, add the pork and half of the scallions. Sauté just until the pork loses its redness; then add the drained noodles and mix quickly. Add the reserved fish sauce mixture, reduce the heat to medium and cook until the noodles have absorbed all the liquid. Move the noodles aside and break 1 egg into the wok, breaking the yolk. Tilt the wok so you get as thin a sheet of egg as possible and scramble until set. Mix the egg into the noodles. Do the same with the remaining egg. Add the shrimp, remaining scallions, and red pepper flakes and mix thoroughly. Add the lime juice and cook, stirring for another minute. Transfer the noodles to a platter and top with a sprinkling of peanuts. Serve the lime wedges, remaining peanuts and chili sauce alongside.

Spaghetti Carbonara

1-pound spaghetti

1/4 to 1/2 pound thickly sliced good-quality bacon

2 cloves garlic, peeled

2 large eggs

Black pepper

1/2 cup grated Parmigiano cheese, plus extra for the table

Bring a large pot of salted water to a boil. When it is boiling, throw the spaghetti in. Most dried spaghetti takes 9 to 10 minutes to cook, and you can make the sauce in that time. Cut the bacon crosswise into pieces about 1/2 inch wide. Put them in a skillet and cook for 2 minutes until fat begins to render. Add the whole cloves of garlic and cook 1 minute, until the edges of the bacon just begin to get crisp. Do not overcook; if they get too crisp, they won't meld with the pasta. Meanwhile, break the eggs into the bowl you will serve the pasta in, and beat them with a fork. Add some ground pepper. Remove the garlic from the bacon pan. When it is cooked, drain the pasta and immediately throw it into the beaten eggs. Mix thoroughly. The heat of the spaghetti will cook the eggs and turn them into a sauce. Add the bacon with its fat, toss again add cheese and serve.

Matzo Brie

2 matzo crackers

2 eggs

Salt

3 tablespoons unsalted butter

Set a colander inside a bowl and break the matzos into little pieces, dropping them into the colander. Remove the colander from the bowl and hold it beneath running water until the matzos are damp. Allow them to drain; then put the damp matzos into a bowl. Break the eggs into the bowl and stir with a fork just until mixed. Add salt to taste. Melt the butter in a small skillet over medium heat. When the foam subsides, add the matzo-egg mixture and cook, stirring constantly, for about 4 minutes, or until the egg is cooked and there are a few crispy little bits. Put on plates and serve at once.