**PALATINE LIBRARY – MAKE AHEAD MEALS**

**March 8, 2024**

**Hearty Breakfast Bowls**

**Makes 6 bowls**

**Ingredients**:

1 bag frozen diced hash browns

2 TBS vegetable oil

Veggies of choice – diced or sliced

6 large eggs

2 TBS whole milk

Salt/Pepper

1 TBS olive oil

8 oz breakfast sausage – casings removed

¾ cup cheddar cheese

**Preparation:**

1. Preheat oven to 450F.
2. Place hashbrowns in a large bowl, add vegetable oil and stir to combine. Spread potatoes evenly in a single layer on a lightly greased baking sheet. Bake at 450F for 25 minutes, flipping ½ way through, until golden and crispy.
3. In a large bowl combine, eggs, milk, salt/pepper and whisk to combine – set aside to rest.
4. In a large skillet, heat olive oil over medium heat. Cook sausage until no longer pink, breaking it into small pieces. Remove sausage to a clean bowl.
5. Cook diced veggies in remaining sausage grease, until tender but not mushy. Remove to bowl with sausage
6. Re-whisk egg mixture for 20 seconds and pour into the same sausage/veggie skillet. Cook while mixing (scrambling) until eggs are set and no liquid remains.
7. Divide hash browns among 6 bowls. Evenly divide sausage, veggies and eggs on top of hash browns and mix to combine. Top each bowl with cheese.

**MAKE IT NOW:** Place individual bowls in microwave and heat on high for 1 minute. Stir and heat in 30-second intervals until warmed through.

**MAKE IT A FREEZER MEAL:** Let the bowls cool completely. Wrap bowls tightly with plastic wrap, pressing down to remove air. Cover with foil and place in freezer.

**COOK FROM FROZEN:** Remove foil and plastic wrap. Place individual bowls in microwave and heat on high for 1-1/2 minutes. Stir. Heat in 30-second intervals until warmed through.

*NOTES:*

* *Play with different combinations of ingredients: bacon, ham, Swiss cheese, green onion, zucchini, broccoli – MIX IT UP!*

**Artichoke Dip**

**Makes 6 servings**

**Ingredients**:

1 12 oz package frozen artichokes

2 TBS olive oil

Salt/pepper

4 oz cream cheese – softened

1 large egg yolk

1 batch Alfredo Sauce (see below)

1 cup shredded mozzarella cheese

½ cup FRESHLY grated Parmesan cheese

1 4 oz can water chestnuts – drained and chopped

½ cup panko breadcrumbs

**Preparation**:

1. Preheat oven to 450F.
2. In a large bowl , toss frozen artichoke hearts with olive oil and season with salt and pepper. Spread evenly on a baking sheet lined with foil. Bake for 20 minutes or until they start to brown in places. Remove from oven and let cool. Coarsely chop and set aside.
3. In a medium bowl, whisk together cream cheese and egg yolk until smooth. Add Alfredo Sauce and whisk to combine. Gently fold in ½ cup mozzarella and ¼ cup Parmesan cheese, chopped artichokes and water chestnuts until well combined. Spread mixture into and 8-inch metal or foil pan
4. In a small bowl, combine remaining mozzarella, Parmesan and panko.

**MAKE IT NOW:** Preheat oven to 375F. Evenly sprinkle panko/cheese mixture on top of artichoke mixture. Bake for 35 minutes until bubby and golden brown on top. Remove from oven and let cook for 5 minutes.

**MAKE IT A FREEZER MEAL:** Place panko/cheese mixture in a labeled quart-size freezer bag and seal. Wrap cooled artichoke dip pan tightly with plastic wrap, pressing down to remove air. Place panko bag on top of dip and wrap both (together) in foil. Label and place in freezer.

**COOK FROM FROZEN:** Preheat oven to 375F. Remove foil, plastic wrap and panko bag. Evenly sprinkle panko/cheese mixture on top of artichoke mixture. Recover with foil and bake for 30 minutes. Remove foil and bake an additional 15-20 minutes until bubby and golden brown on top. Remove from oven and let cook for 5 minutes.

**Alfredo Sauce**

**Makes about 3 cups (1 batch)**

**Ingredients**:

1/2 cup butter

2-1/2 TBS cornstarch

½ tsp xanthan gum – See below note

2 cups half-and-half (10%) cream – room temperature

1-1/2 cups freshly grated Parmesan cheese (about 5 ounces) – See below note

**Preparation**:

1. In a medium saucepan, melt butter over medium heat. Sprinkle cornstarch and xanthan gum over melted butter and cook, whisking constantly, for 2-3 minutes, until foamy and simmering (do not let it brown).
2. Add cream; cook, whisking constantly for about 3-4 minutes until sauce starts to thicken Remove from heat and add Parmesan cheese ½ cup at a time. Whisk constantly until melted and smooth.
3. Pour sauce into blender and blend on high until super smooth (you may also use an immersion blender int the saucepan). Blending the sauce will help ensure that the sauce will not separate during the freezing process.

**MAKE IT NOW:** Season to taste with salt and pepper. Serve as desired. Store in airtight container in the refrigerator for up to 3-4 days. Reheat as directed below.

**MAKE IT A FREEZER MEAL:** Let sauce cool completely at room temperature, uncovered, stirring occasionally. Pour cooled sauce into a labeled quart-size freezer bag. Seal, removing as much air as possible (the more the better!) and freeze flat.

**COOK FROM FROZEN:** Place bag in refrigerator for at lease 12 hours or up to 24 to thaw. (If you are in a hurry, you can place the bag in a sink full of lukewarm water until thawed enough to pour. Do not use hot water – heating the sauce too quickly will cause it to separate. Ideally you want to thaw the sauce slowly and reheat it slowly.) To reheat on the stovetop, pour sauce into a small saucepan and heat over medium-low heat, stirring often, for 4-5 minutes or until warmed through. To reheat using the microwave, pour sauce into a small microwave-safe bowl, cover and microwave on LOW for 5-6 minutes, stirring every 2 minutes Season to taste with salt and pepper and serve as desired.

*NOTES:*

* *Step 2 of Artichoke Dip is optional – The dip is still delicious without roasting the artichokes but this step adds a extra depth of flavor.*
* *Do not use pre-made Alfredo Sauce as it will break with thawed.*
* *Do not use pre-grated parmesan cheese while making the Alfredo Sauce as it contains anti-clumping fillers that impacts texture with melting into the sauce and the freezing process.*
* *Do not skip the xanthan gum – it is needed to ensure the sauce does not break while freezing. Can be found easily on Amazon!*

**Lemon Tarragon Chicken**

**Makes 8 servings**

**Ingredients:**

2 pounds boneless, skinless chicken breasts – about 4 breasts in total

½ tsp garlic salt

1 cups chicken stock

¼ cup freshly squeezed lemon juice

1 TBS honey

1 TBS cornstarch

1 tsp minced garlic

2 tsp dried tarragon

1 TBS melted butter

1 TBS olive oil

1 lemon – thinly sliced

Fresh tarragon – optional for garnish

**Preparation:**

1. With the blade of a sharp knife parallel to the cutting board, cut chicken breasts in half horizontally. Place chicken pieces between two pieces of plastic wrap and, using a mallet or heavy skillet, pound to ¼” thickness. Yields 8 cutlets.
2. Sprinkle both sides of chicken with garlic salt.
3. In a small bowl, whisk together chicken broth, lemon juice, honey, cornstarch, garlic, dried tarragon and melted butter. Set aside.

**MAKE IT NOW:** Preheat oven to 350F. In a large skillet, heat olive oil over medium-high heat Add chicken, in batches, and cook for about 2 minutes on each side, until lightly golden brown. Transfer chicken to a 9x13 baking dish, overlapping as necessary and pour the lemon sauce overtop. Arrange lemon slices on top of chicken. Cover with foil and bake for 20-25 minutes until sauce is slightly thickened and chicken is no longer pink inside (internal temp = 165F). Let stand outside of oven for 5 minutes, uncover, and if desired, garnish with fresh tarragon.

**MAKE IT A FREEZER MEAL:** Place chicken cutlets in a labeled gallon freezer bag Place lemon sauce in a quart freezer bag. Seal bag, removing as much air as possible. Place sliced lemon in another quart freezer bag; seal. Place lemon sauce and sliced lemon in the gallon bag with the chicken. See together as a kit and freeze.

**THAW AND COOK:** Place bags in the refrigerator for at least 12 hours or up to 24 to thaw. Preheat oven to 350F. In a large skillet, heat olive oil over medium-high heat Add chicken, in batches, and cook for about 2 minutes on each side, until lightly golden brown. Transfer chicken to a 9x13 baking dish, overlapping as necessary and pour the lemon sauce overtop. Arrange lemon slices on top of chicken. Cover with foil and bake for 20-25 minutes until sauce is slightly thickened and chicken is no longer pink inside (internal temp = 165F). Let stand outside of oven for 5 minutes, uncover, and if desired, garnish with fresh tarragon.

*NOTES:*

* *Try substituting different herbs – thyme, parsley, rosemary!*
* *Try different protein/sauce combinations – chicken and barbeque sauce, pork chops and teriyaki sauce – Be creative with your meal kit flavors!*
* *Just remember, do not combine proteins with sauce and freeze. This will “cook” the protein and change the texture.*

***COOKBOOK: Seriously Good Freezer Meals – 150 Easy Recipes To Save Your Time, Money & Sanity***

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