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OLIVE GARDEN INTRODUCES THREE NEW DISHES ON MENU

Cooking video shares recipe and dish inspiration

ORLANDO, Fla. – Sardinia, off of Italy’s central coast, and Emilia-Romagna, in the north, both held rich inspiration for Olive Garden chefs this year during their annual trip to Italy. The result is three new dishes, each with a unique story, added to the Olive Garden menu: Caprese Flatbread and Grilled Chicken Flatbread appetizers, and a Chicken & Shrimp Carbonara entree.

Olive Garden’s yearly chef trip brings the team to different regions of Italy with each visit. Here they spend several weeks touring local restaurants and collaborating with local chefs in their kitchens – and sometimes their homes – discovering new ingredients and techniques specific to the region.

During their most recent tour, Carbonara, a staple in Italian cuisine, was a focus. Carbonara traces its culinary roots to a hearty meal popularized by 20th-century charcoal workers in villages along the outskirts of Rome. The simple, traditional dish kept workers satisfied, and was made with ingredients typical of Italian pantries, such as egg, pancetta, black pepper, and parmesan or pecorino.

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It was during the team's travels to the island of Sardinia off the central coast of Italy, however, where they encountered a unique, cream-based version of Carbonara that ultimately inspired Olive Garden's new dish. Olive Garden's Chicken & Shrimp Carbonara combines chicken and shrimp with bucatini pasta in a pancetta and parmesan cream sauce. Baked and topped with seasoned breadcrumbs, the culinary team's innovative entrée presents an exciting twist on a classic dish.

The Caprese Flatbread and Grilled Chicken Flatbread appetizers are an interpretation of the Northern Italian sandwich made with Piadina from the Emilia-Romagna region. Piadina, literally translated to "thin bread," is a flat bread with a soft middle and slightly crispy crust; the bread is sold as street food throughout the towns of Emilia-Romagna, grilled to order and sandwiched around a variety of fillings.

The Caprese Flatbread features mozzarella cheese, tomatoes and basil on flatbread crust with a savory garlic aioli; the Grilled Chicken Flatbread features grilled chicken, mozzarella cheese, roasted red peppers and basil on flatbread crust with alfredo sauce and garlic aioli.

Guests can enjoy the new dishes at Olive Garden or prepare them in their own kitchens alongside Sr. Executive Chef Paolo Lafata. A cooking video for Caprese Flatbread and a recipe for Chicken & Shrimp Carbonara are available at www.olivegardennewfavorites.com. Interviews with the Olive Garden chef team also provide guests to the site with a glimpse of the inspiration behind each dish and the culinary journey from Italy to Olive Garden.

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In addition to the chef team trip, every year Olive Garden sends more than 100 restaurant managers to Olive Garden's Culinary Institute of Tuscany to enhance their culinary skills. This experience is designed to bring the genuine Italian dining experience alive for managers, and upon their return, to their restaurant teams and guests. Located in a restored 11th-century village in Castellina in Chianti, Olive Garden's Culinary Institute of Tuscany also provides inspiration for Olive Garden's menu.

Olive Garden is the leading restaurant in the Italian dining segment with 653 restaurants, more than 80,000 employees and \$3.1 billion in annual sales. Olive Garden is a division of Darden Restaurants Inc. (NYSE:DRI), the world's largest owned and operated full-service restaurant company. For more information, visit Olive Garden's Web site at www.olivegarden.com.

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Olive Garden's Caprese Flatbread

At-Home Recipe

Serving: 6 as an appetizer, 4 as a meal

Enjoy with a crisp, white wine, such as a Pinot Grigio

INGREDIENTS

8 Roma or plum tomatoes, diced	1 garlic clove
3 garlic cloves, chopped	¾ cup mayonnaise
½ tsp salt	½ tsp garlic powder
¼ tsp black pepper	2 cups shredded mozzarella cheese
10 medium fresh basil leaves, stemmed and chopped (about ½ cup)	¼ cup grated Parmesan cheese
7 Tbsp extra virgin olive oil, divided	
11 oz container of refrigerated thin crust pizza dough	

DIRECTIONS

- PREHEAT oven to 350°F.
- DICE tomatoes into small pieces. Transfer to a mixing bowl.
- ADD chopped garlic, salt, pepper, ½ of chopped basil (about ¼ cup), and 4 Tbsp of extra virgin olive oil.
- SET aside and allow the mixture to marinate for 10 minutes.
- FLATTEN pizza dough into rectangle pan as indicated on package, reaching to the edges of the pan.
- DRIZZLE dough with extra virgin olive oil and brush it over the surface.
- BAKE dough in oven at 350°F for 10 minutes on center rack.
- REMOVE from oven and allow to cool slightly, about 2 minutes.
- CUT garlic clove in half and rub, cut side down, onto the surface of the bread. The slight warmth of the bread will help extract the garlic flavor.
- ALLOW bread to cool completely, about 10 more minutes.
- INCREASE oven temperature to 450°F.
- COMBINE mayonnaise and garlic powder in a mixing bowl. Evenly spread onto the surface of the bread.
- TOP with shredded mozzarella to evenly cover surface.
- DRAIN the Caprese mixture, as the salt will have extracted water from the tomatoes, and spread the bread mixture evenly over the bread.
- SPRINKLE with grated Parmesan cheese.
- RETURN flatbread to oven for 5-7 more minutes or until golden, crisp and bubbly.
- GARNISH with remaining chopped basil.
- SERVE immediately and enjoy!

Olive Garden's Chicken or Shrimp Carbonara

At-Home Recipe

Serving: 8

Enjoy with a light, crisp wine, such as a Pinot Grigio

INGREDIENTS

Marinated Chicken or Shrimp

1 cup extra virgin olive oil
1 cup hot water
1 Tbsp Italian seasoning
1 Tbsp chopped garlic
3 lbs chicken strips *or large shrimp,*
peeled and devained

Sauce

1 cup butter
1 ½ tsp chopped garlic
3 Tbsp bacon bits
3 Tbsp flour (all purpose)
1 cup Parmesan cheese (grated)
4 cups heavy cream
4 cups milk
¼ cup bacon base
½ tsp black pepper
¼ tsp salt

Topping

3 Tbsp Romano cheese, grated
3 Tbsp Parmesan cheese, grated
1 ¾ cups mozzarella cheese, shredded
½ cup panko breadcrumbs
1 ½ tsp chopped garlic
1 ½ Tbsp melted butter
2 Tbsp parsley, chopped

Chicken (or Shrimp)

Marinated chicken strips (or Shrimp)
from step 1
1 ½ cups roasted red peppers, cut into
small strips
¼ cup bacon bits

Cooked Pasta

2-14 oz boxes of any long pasta
(spaghetti, linguine, etc.) cooked using
instructions on package

DIRECTIONS

Preheat oven to 350°F.

Marinated Chicken (or Shrimp)

- WHISK extra virgin olive oil together with hot water, seasoning and chopped garlic.
- ADD the chicken strips (or shrimp).
- COVER and refrigerate for at least 30 minutes

Sauce

- MELT butter in a large saucepan over medium heat. Add garlic and bacon bits.
- SAUTÉ for 5 minutes, stirring frequently.
- ADD flour, Parmesan cheese, heavy cream, milk bacon base pepper and salt.
- USE a wire whisk to whip all ingredients together.
- BRING to a boil. Reduce heat and allow to simmer.

Topping

- COMBINE Romano, Parmesan, mozzarella, panko, chopped garlic, melted butter and chopped parsley in a mixing bowl.
- STIR until well blended. Set aside.

Chicken (or Shrimp)

- PREHEAT large skillet. Add chicken (or shrimp) to pan. Add red peppers and bacon bits.
- COOK for 3 more minutes or until cooked on both sides and internal temperatures reach 165°F for chicken and 155°F for shrimp.
- ADD sauce (from above) Stir until well blended.

Plating

- PLACE hot, precooked pasta on a larger serving platter. Top with chicken (or shrimp) and sauce.
- EVENLY distribute topping over top of chicken (or shrimp).
- PLACE in broiler until top is golden brown.
- SERVE immediately and enjoy.



OLIVE GARDEN CORPORATE FACT SHEET

Olive Garden is committed to its purpose of *Hospitaliano!* – providing 100 percent guest delight through a genuine Italian dining experience. This passion continues to advance Olive Garden’s leadership position in the highly competitive, full-service Italian segment of the casual dining industry. Here are some facts about our family of local restaurants:

BACKGROUND:

Founded in 1982, Olive Garden is owned by Darden Restaurants, Inc. (NYSE:DRI), the largest casual dining restaurant company in the world. Olive Garden currently operates 653 restaurants in the United States and Canada and employs more than 80,000 people.

GUEST EXPERIENCE:

Italians have a passion for sharing genuine hospitality with family and friends. So, at Olive Garden, “When you’re here, you’re family,” is more than a tag line. It is the brand promise to delight more than 3.8 million guests every week with fresh, simple delicious Italian food; award-winning wine and beverage choices; service in a comfortable home-like Italian setting; and the experience of being treated like family.

EMPLOYEE CULTURE:

Olive Garden attributes much of its success to its commitment to educating, training and developing restaurant team members with initiatives, such as weeklong manager visits to Olive Garden’s Culinary Institute of Tuscany in Italy and ongoing food and wine education.

AWARDS:

Olive Garden’s award-winning culinary, beverage and training teams have garnered national recognition for their innovation, program execution and industry leadership from top trade publications and food service organizations.

FINANCIALS:

The achievement of 55 consecutive quarters of same restaurant sales increases far out-paces the casual dining industry.

Sales of \$3.1 billion in FY08.

Average annual sales of \$4.9 million per restaurant.

LEADERSHIP:

Dave Pickens, President

Valerie Insignares, Executive Vice President of Operations

John Caron, Executive Vice President of Marketing



OLIVE GARDEN CULINARY INSTITUTE OF TUSCANY FACT SHEET

BACKGROUND:

For nine years, Olive Garden has held an unprecedented culinary and cultural partnership with Sergio and Daniela Zingarelli, owners of the Italian winery of Rocca delle Macie, one of Italy's leading producers of Tuscan wines. This partnership consists of two elements: Olive Garden Riserva di Fizzano, a restaurant in Castellina in Chianti, Italy, specializing in Tuscan cuisine; and the Olive Garden Culinary Institute of Tuscany, (CIT) where more than 100 Olive Garden managers and team members gain an even greater appreciation for and knowledge of Italian cooking techniques, food, wine and culture every year. Both serve as the inspiration for many of the flavorful dishes featured on Olive Garden's menu.

LOCATION:

Both the CIT and the Olive Garden restaurant are located in a restored 11th-century village on the 450-acre Riserva di Fizzano, a property owned by Rocca delle Macie that also includes a 21-room inn.

CULINARY INSTITUTE OF TUSCANY:

Every year, more than approximately 100 Olive Garden managers and team members travel to Italy to enhance their culinary skills as part of an ongoing education and training program designed to bring the genuine Italian dining experience alive for managers and, upon their return, to their restaurant teams and guests.

Under the direction of Head Chef Romana Neri and Olive Garden's chefs who travel with each class, attendees learn more about selecting and cooking with only the freshest ingredients, how to properly layer sauces, perfect *al dente* pasta, and pair sauces and pasta to create the most flavorful meals.

Managers visit the Rocca delle Macie winery and are introduced to Italy's illustrious history of winemaking and enhance their knowledge of food and wine pairings.

Time is also spent in the al fresco markets of Florence and dining and sightseeing throughout Tuscany and Rome.

To date, more than 800 managers have trained at Olive Garden's Culinary Institute of Tuscany and enjoyed weeklong immersions in Italian food, wine and culture.