

Menu: Scampi Dinner

By definition, shrimp scampi is a straightforward dish: shrimp coated in a garlic-and-lemon sauce. Sounds simple, right? Maybe, but the margin of error is small. Shrimp cooks quickly and can go from tender to rubbery in a matter of seconds. To prevent this, we cooked the shrimp and garlic briefly, then added the lemon juice and parsley at the last possible minute to preserve their brightness. Serve with rice pilaf and Caesar salad for a quick weeknight meal.

Scampi Dinner Menu

Our classic shrimp scampi makes for a dinner that is simple yet satisfying, especially when paired with a basic rice pilaf and a Caesar salad. Be sure to enjoy a few, chewy brown sugar cookies for a sweet conclusion.

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Basic Rice Pilaf



Serves 4 as a side dish.

If you like, olive oil can be substituted for the butter depending on what you are serving with the pilaf. Soaking the rice overnight in water results in more tender, separate grains. If you'd like to try it, add enough water to cover the rice by 1 inch after the rinsing process in step 1, then cover the bowl with plastic wrap and let it stand at room temperature 8 to 24 hours; reduce the amount of water to cook the rice to 2 cups. For the most evenly cooked rice, use a wide-bottomed saucepan with a tight-fitting lid.

Ingredients

- 1 1/2 cups basmati rice or long-grain rice
- 2 1/4 cups water
- 1 1/2 teaspoons table salt
 - Ground black pepper
- 3 tablespoons unsalted butter
- 1 small onion, minced (about 1/2 cup)

Instructions

1. Place rice in medium bowl and add enough water to cover by 2 inches; using hands, gently swish grains to release excess starch. Carefully pour off water, leaving rice in bowl. Repeat four to five times, until water runs almost clear. Using a colander or fine mesh strainer, drain water from rice; place colander over bowl and set aside.
2. Bring 2 1/4 cups water to boil, covered, in small saucepan over medium-high heat. Add salt and season with pepper; cover to keep hot. Meanwhile, heat butter in large saucepan over medium heat until foam begins to subside; add onion and sauté until softened but not browned, about 4 minutes. Add rice and stir to coat grains with butter; cook until edges of rice grains begin to turn translucent, about 3 minutes. Stir hot seasoned water into rice; return to boil, then reduce heat to low, cover, and simmer until all liquid is absorbed, about 16-18 minutes. Off heat, remove lid, and place kitchen towel folded in half over saucepan; replace lid. Let stand 10 minutes; fluff rice with fork and serve.

Simple Shrimp Scampi

Serves 4.



Cayenne pepper replaces ground black pepper in this recipe, but use it sparingly, only to give the faintest hint of spiciness.

Ingredients

- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 2 pounds large shrimp (21 to 25 per pound), peeled and deveined if desired
- 3 tablespoons unsalted butter
- 4 medium cloves garlic, minced
- 2 tablespoons lemon juice
- 1 tablespoon dry vermouth
- 2 tablespoons minced fresh parsley leaves
- cayenne pepper

Instructions

1. Heat 12-inch skillet over high heat until hot, 2 to 3 minutes. Add 1 tablespoon oil and swirl to coat bottom of pan. Add 1 pound shrimp and cook, stirring occasionally, until just opaque, about 1 minute; transfer to medium bowl. Return pan to heat and repeat process with remaining oil and shrimp.
2. Return empty skillet to medium-low heat; melt 1 tablespoon butter. Add garlic and cook, stirring constantly, until fragrant, about 30 seconds. Off heat, add lemon juice and vermouth. Whisk in remaining 2 tablespoons butter; add parsley and cayenne, and season

to taste with salt and pepper. Return shrimp and accumulated juices to skillet. Toss to combine; serve immediately.

Best Caesar Salad

Serves 4 to 6 as a first course.

If you don't own a garlic press, chop the garlic for both the croutons and dressing by hand; sprinkle it with the salt and then continue mincing it until it is almost pureed. The garlic and anchovies in the dressing are optional but strongly recommended. Without them, the salad is a bit bland. For Grilled Chicken Caesar Salad, add two grilled boneless, skinless chicken breasts, sliced crosswise into half-inch strips, to the salad along with the cheese.

Ingredients

Garlic Croutons

- 2 large cloves garlic , peeled and pressed through a garlic press
- 1/4 teaspoon table salt
- 3 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
- 2 cups 1/2-inch white bread cubes (from a baguette or country loaf)

Caesar Salad

- 1 large egg
- 3 tablespoons lemon juice from 1 medium lemon
- 1 teaspoon Worcestershire sauce
- 1/4 teaspoon table salt
- 8 grindings ground black pepper
- 1 small clove garlic , pressed (1/4 teaspoon)
- 1 teaspoon anchovy paste (or 4 flat anchovy fillets, minced)
- 1/2 cup extra-virgin olive oil
- 2 medium heads romaine lettuce (large outer leaves removed) or 2 large romaine hearts; washed, dried, and torn into 1 1/2-inch pieces (about 10 cups, lightly packed)
- 1/3 cup grated Parmesan cheese

Instructions

1. **1. For the croutons:** Adjust oven rack to center position and heat oven to 350 degrees. Mix garlic, salt, and oil in small bowl; set aside for 20 minutes. Spread bread cubes out over small baking sheet. Drizzle oil through fine-mesh strainer evenly onto bread; toss to coat. Bake until golden, about 12 minutes. Cool on baking sheet to room temperature. (Croutons can be stored in airtight container for up to 1 day.)
2. **2. For the dressing:** Bring water to boil in small saucepan over high heat. Carefully lower whole egg into water; cook 45 seconds. Remove with slotted spoon. When cool

enough to handle, crack egg into small bowl with all other dressing ingredients except oil; whisk until smooth. Add oil in slow, steady stream, whisking constantly until smooth. Adjust seasonings. (Dressing may refrigerate in airtight container for 1 day; shake before using.)

3. Place lettuce in large bowl; drizzle with half of dressing, then toss to coat lightly. Sprinkle with cheese, remaining dressing, and croutons; toss to coat well. Divide among individual plates; serve immediately.

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Brown Sugar Cookies



Makes 2 Dozen Cookies.

The most efficient way to bake these cookies is to portion and bake half of the dough. While the first batch is in the oven, the remaining dough can be prepared for baking. Avoid using a nonstick skillet to brown the butter. The dark color of the nonstick coating makes it difficult to gauge when the butter is sufficiently browned. Use fresh brown sugar, as older (read: harder and drier) brown sugar will make the cookies too dry.

Ingredients

- 14 tablespoons unsalted butter (1 3/4 sticks)
- 1/4 cup granulated sugar (about 1 3/4 ounces)
- 2 cups packed dark brown sugar (14 ounces)
- 2 cups unbleached all-purpose flour plus 2 tablespoons (about 10 1/2 ounces)
- 1/2 teaspoon baking soda
- 1/4 teaspoon baking powder
- 1/2 teaspoon table salt
- 1 large egg
- 1 large egg yolk
- 1 tablespoon vanilla extract

Instructions

1. Heat 10 tablespoons butter in 10-inch skillet over medium-high heat until melted, about 2 minutes. Continue to cook, swirling pan constantly until butter is dark golden brown and has nutty aroma, 1 to 3 minutes. Remove skillet from heat and transfer

browned butter to large heatproof bowl. Stir remaining 4 tablespoons butter into hot butter to melt; set aside for 15 minutes.

2. 2. Meanwhile, adjust oven rack to middle position and heat oven to 350 degrees. Line 2 large (18 by 12-inch) baking sheets with parchment paper. In shallow baking dish or pie plate, mix granulated sugar and 1/4 cup packed brown sugar, rubbing between fingers, until well combined; set aside. Whisk flour, baking soda, and baking powder together in medium bowl; set aside.
3. 3. Add remaining 1 3/4 cups brown sugar and salt to bowl with cooled butter; mix until no sugar lumps remain, about 30 seconds. Scrape down sides of bowl with rubber spatula; add egg, yolk, and vanilla and mix until fully incorporated, about 30 seconds. Scrape down bowl. Add flour mixture and mix until just combined, about 1 minute. Give dough final stir with rubber spatula to ensure that no flour pockets remain and ingredients are evenly distributed.
4. 4. Divide dough into 24 portions, each about 2 tablespoons, rolling between hands into balls about 1 1/2 inches in diameter. Working in batches, toss balls in reserved sugar mixture to coat and set on prepared baking sheet, spacing them about 2 inches apart, 12 dough balls per sheet. (Smaller baking sheets can be used, but it will take 3 batches.)
5. 5. Bake one sheet at a time until cookies are browned and still puffy and edges have begun to set but centers are still soft (cookies will look raw between cracks and seem underdone; see photo below), 12 to 14 minutes, rotating baking sheet halfway through baking. Do not over bake.
6. 6. Cool cookies on baking sheet 5 minutes; using wide metal spatula, transfer cookies to wire rack and cool to room temperature.

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Technique

Checking Doneness



Achieving the proper texture—crisp at the edges and chewy in the middle—is critical to this recipe. Because the cookies are so dark, it's hard to judge doneness by color. Instead, gently press halfway between the edge and center of the cookie. When it's done, it will form an indent with slight resistance. Check early and err on the side of underdone.

Recipe Testing

Building Big Brown Sugar Flavor Dark brown sugar was an obvious place to begin our efforts to create a cookie with a bold, nutty, butterscotch flavor. A whole tablespoon of vanilla helped, but everyone in the test kitchen was surprised how much impact browning the butter had on the flavor of these cookies.



DARK BROWN SUGAR



LOTS OF VANILLA



BROWNEB BUTTER

Source Cooksillustrated.com