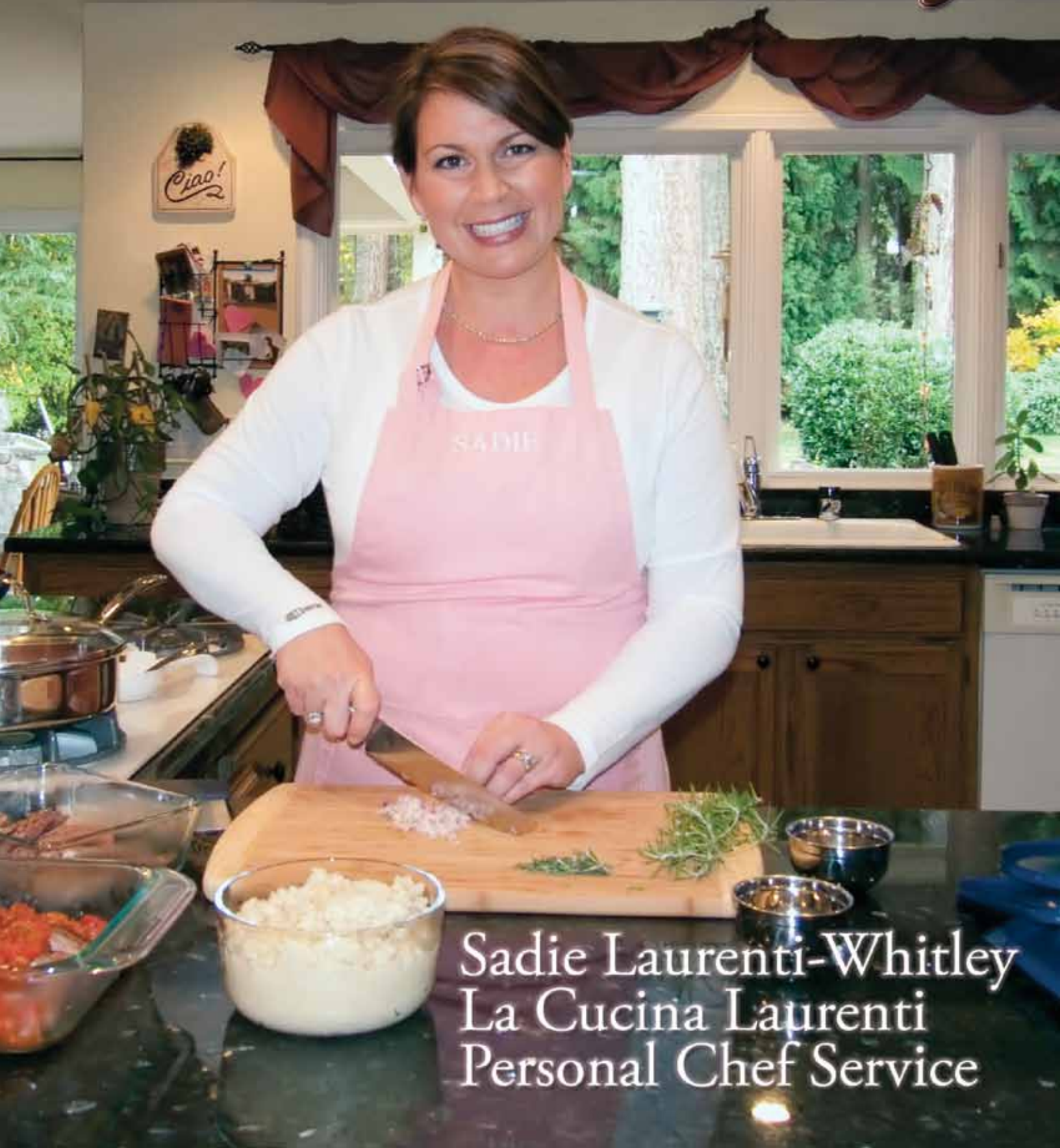


January - March 2010

Personal Chef

THE OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE UNITED STATES PERSONAL CHEF ASSOCIATION



Sadie Laurenti-Whitley
La Cucina Laurenti
Personal Chef Service



Personal Chef Sadie Whitley:

Life is Definitely Good Now!

By Carol Anderson, editor

Sadie Whitley is one of our newest personal chefs – she completed personal chef training with the January 2009 Culinary Business Academy class. At the CBA she was determined to follow her passion for cooking. Sadie was so pleased and positive about the program that she quit her professional job as a hospital administrator and enrolled in Le Condon Bleu's Kitchen Academy in Seattle. She hung out her personal chef shingle this past July. Sadie's positive attitude and enthusiasm have given her a head start on success.

Sadie's previous career

Working in the medical field suited Sadie for a number of years. She's a people person and loves to teach and watch employees succeed in their career paths. So what motivated a change? "I basically got burned out in management and wanted to do something less stressful, something to afford me more time at home with my teenage daughters and to use my creativity," said Sadie. "I've wanted to retire from the medical field for more than four years and this finally came to fruition."

Husband Dave has always been Sadie's biggest advocate. He has wanted her to do something that made her happy and fulfilled. Her girls also were advocates. Sadie says, "They disliked it when I worked at the hospital, because sometimes I did not get home until past dinner time and only had time with the girls for an hour before their bedtime." Sadie knew a change was needed for many reasons, including her sanity.

So, she set out to pursue a dream – one that would give her flexibility, creativity and most importantly, less stress and more time with her family.

Although she had taken many cooking classes through the years, Sadie always talked about going to culinary school. But she says, "I never found the time to seriously do this while I was working."

Enter the USPCA

She first heard about the USPCA and personal cheffing on a trip to Italy. "A friend and I hired Judy Witts-Francini, owner of Cucina Divina, to take us on a culinary tour of Chianti," Sadie said. "While on this trip, Judy was very interested in what I wanted to do when I left the hospital. I could not stop talking about cooking, food, restaurants and my dream to have my own Bed and Breakfast Inn and to also have a small cooking school where I can teach and have local chefs teach and have wine pairing events. Judy asked if I had heard of Mark Tafoya, who was a personal chef."

Upon returning home, Sadie looked up Mark's website and sent him an e-mail. In Mark's response, he raved about the USPCA and told Sadie that "if cooking made her happy and if she had the skill to cook fine foods, she should give it a go and become a personal chef to make other people happy as well."

Two months later, Sadie was enrolled in the CBA and ready to head out to New Mexico for training. Besides being pleased with her personal chef training, she also loved every moment of the Kitchen Academy classes she took. "I was learning from excellent chef instructors and it certainly has helped me hone my skills in the kitchen," she said.

Go for it, Sadie

"My husband and children are extremely supportive of my decision to be a personal chef," Sadie says. "Our girls love to watch me in the kitchen cooking up a storm. They pretend they don't like to cook, but they bake delicious things all the time." Friends were very excited for Sadie and they are still on her cheerleading team. She gets lots of e-mails and phone calls from friends saying they would taste test anything she makes. This inspired Sadie to continue working toward her new career. And no one discouraged her.

Old Career vs. New Career

When asked to compare her life then and now, Sadie responded, "It is completely different. I loved working in hospitals, but I just needed to make a change as I got older. This new career has brought out a creative Sadie and I dream about my next creations all the time."

Even her dreams are different. Her dreams of stress and hospital issues are gone. Now she wakes up and thinks about foodie things. "I think about what I can make with the chocolate ganache that I made the night before, the salmon in the freezer that was given to me that our friend Tom caught and knew that I would love to make something out of (salmon croquettes and salmon pate), or that beautiful leg of lamb that my butcher set aside for me because he knew I would love to make something delicious for my family," Sadie wrote.

Start-up challenges

Sadie says that the biggest challenge in starting a personal chef business was getting the confidence that she could do it. She relied on friends and acquaintances – and her website – to spread the word. She has not spent any money on marketing, partly because she does not want to work full time yet. Her goal is to have five solid clients to cook for, because she needs the time to continue to study about foods, nutrition and to support the local non-profit sustainable farm.

"I've had a lot of ups – and very few, if any, downs – during my first year in business," Sadie said. "I've had very good outcomes with personal chef and catering clients." This is partly because she does a lot of homework before getting herself into situations, studies what has worked well for others, and maintains a positive attitude.

Sadie credits USPCA members for sharing what works well for them via the magazine and the Message Board. At the CBA, Sadie learned the importance of the 30-second marketing spiel, and is working to perfect it.

Current challenges

Finding space for all her supplies and taking care of paperwork are Sadie's current challenges. As to storage, she prefers using Pyrex glass containers and they take up a lot of space. And for paperwork,

The Personal Side of Sadie Whitley

Family: Both Dave and I married for a second time, combining children – four of his, three of mine and none together. Five children are grown and living on their own. At home are my two youngest daughters Nadia (16) and Suraya (14). The grown kids live in California and in Seattle. Both of my parents and grandparents have passed on and I am the eldest in my generation.

Advice for the children: Life is too precious not to follow your dreams.

Pets: A beautiful and sweet Golden Retriever named Sally

Hobbies, sports: Two of my greatest hobbies (outside of cooking) are racing fast cars (no, I am not a tomboy, I am a girlie girl, but love fast cars) and riding my Italian scooter around Redmond when it is not raining (gee, I miss California). Also, we love to hike as a family. Computers are a hobby of mine (I can spend hours on my computer). If traveling is considered a hobby, than we can add that as well.

Favorite cookbook: I have so many favorites, but my all time favorite is any Italian cookbook and for gourmet meals, the French Laundry cookbook.

Favorite magazines: Cuisine at Home, Bon Appetit and Saveur

Most indispensable tool or piece of equipment: My Shun Chef Knife. Sharp, sharp, sharp!

What is your PC-mobile: We own four vehicles and I use whichever one I am in the mood to drive. I choose from a Cadillac Escalade, Mercedes Benz E-55, BMW M6, and Volvo S70. I don't have a specific vehicle for my business.

Hero: My surrogate mother is my heroine. She was a woman that had a very difficult upbringing in Africa and Cuba and she managed to overcome all those complications and struggles with a positive attitude. She became a successful pharmacist and a loving mother who loved being in the kitchen. She was a woman with a positive attitude that made my world revolve.

Who shaped the way you think about food? I would say my father. As a child I had the opportunity to eat in fine dining restaurants all over the world and my father insisted I taste everything. I had a well-rounded palate as a young child and grew up loving quality foods.

If you could hang out for one day with a famous chef, who would you choose? Thomas Keller. I think he is amazing.

How have you amazed yourself recently? My greatest fear when I started my personal chef business was not having much confidence in myself. I amazed myself by just trusting in my skills, my commitment and watching the doors of opportunity open for me once I got out there. It is not as fearful as I thought. I am slowly building that confidence and that really makes me happy.

What was one of the most important lessons you learned while growing up; who did you learn it from? Growing up in West Hollywood, I learned that everyone is born with a talent. No matter how big or small that talent is, everyone is special! My surrogate mother was always a positive woman that only spoke positive things about people and saw the good side of people. I adopted that from her for my life. I see the possibilities that my own children have and I encourage them to reach for that 'North Star' that makes them happy and fulfills them!

Sadie's Client Pleasing Recipes

Beef Steaks Pizzaiolo

Serves 4

Ingredients

6 tablespoons olive oil
1-2 garlic cloves, crushed
1 pound tomatoes, skinned and chopped, or 13 oz can chopped tomatoes
1 teaspoon chopped rosemary
1 teaspoon minced thyme
4 8-oz thinly cut steak, trimmed of all fat
Salt and pepper
Italian Parsley to garnish
Kalamata Olives for garnish

Directions

Heat three-quarters of the oil in a saucepan and cook the garlic gently until golden brown. Add the tomatoes, season lightly with salt and pepper, and add the rosemary and thyme. Bring to a boil and simmer for 10-15 minutes, until the sauce thickens slightly.

Meanwhile heat the remaining oil in a frying pan and quickly brown the meat on both sides. Set aside and cool.

Arrange meat in container pan (I use Pyrex containers) pour the tomato sauce over the meat and garnish with parsley and olives.

Client Heating Instructions

Defrost in refrigerator the night before consumption. Preheat oven at 350-degrees and bake uncovered for 25-30 minutes.

Sides: Risotto and fresh vegetables

Preparation time: 15 minutes

Cooking time: 15 minutes



Sadie says she seriously needs to hire someone to do the paperwork. She admits that keeping up with all the receipts and other paperwork is definitely not her forte.

Sadie can cook all kinds of International cuisine, however her favorite is Italian. She serves all clients except those wanting Kosher because she doesn't know enough about it; clients wanting Kosher are referred to other personal chefs.

Currently, all her clients want different services. Sadie says, "I have some clients that prefer fresh meals, so I've become accustomed to cooking two to three meals a week for them. For clients accepting frozen meals, I cook a lot of 5x4 services." Sadie also offers catering and cooking lessons, and never considers giving up.

Be alert to opportunities

Sadie had some very unusual opportunities come to her. She was asked to be a part of the culinary team at the opening of the Nieman Marcus in Bellevue. The team catered for 3,000 and she says she learned a lot from that opportunity.

Also she was asked to be a part of the culinary team at a local sustainable farm to cater a lunch for 22 of Seattle's top chefs. It was her first experience having a full lunch meal cooked in the beautiful outdoor wood-burning stove on the farm. She helped prepare and plate food. Sadie said, "It was an amazing lunch and another great opportunity. There are so many opportunities and possibilities for personal chefs; you just need to network and seek out some volunteer opportunities in your area."

Interesting twist to personal chef world in the age of technology

Sadie prefers to meet with clients and prospective clients 'in-person' to discuss their dietary needs. However she lives in the Microsoft/Techie world and a lot of people really do prefer on-line meetings. Since a lot of her clients have come via word-of-mouth and a few from on-line, she has noticed that there are fewer that wish to meet in-person and would rather have her send them something on-line, such as the Dietary Questionnaire, a menu sample, etc.

"Since I started my business in last year, I have done only three house visits to review dietary needs with clients," Sadie said. "I had two clients that did a quick 'Skype' (on-line computer phone program) interview as well because it was more convenient for them."

The rest of her clients have been strictly via phone or on-line. "I love the personal touch and love meeting my clients in person, but in this busy area, I have realized that not too many people have the time to spare and/or available to meet about dietary needs," Sadie said. "Often the first time I meet my clients is when I am there ready to cook for them."

Still preparing for B&B dream

Sadie continues to look to the future. "This has been a positive change in my life. My personal chef service is preparing me for my future Bed and Breakfast Inn. It's been my dream since I was 24 years old and I'm not going to give up now," she says.

Of course, there are occasionally bad days. But Sadie gets a hug from her husband and then, feeling better, she goes to the kitchen to make something new. It's her positive attitude that serves her well. If something does not go so well, her solution is to try to fix it and/or start all over again. It's just another lesson learned.

Helpful info for other personal chefs

For new personal chefs, Sadie's advice is to get connected with other personal chefs. She's connected very well with chefs in the California area, even though she is in Seattle. She says, "I get a lot of great advice from them and I have learned a lot from them. We don't have to do this alone."

Sadie keeps life in balance by putting family first. She takes time to check in with her family and also tries to take time for herself. "My family gets to taste all the things I make and this connects my cooking life with my family life. They get the benefits of eating delicious snacks and meals, while watching me smile all the time."

Another piece of advice is to take time to play. The family travels a lot and often takes weekend outings.

Tooting her own horn

When asked, what makes your business special? Sadie responded, "I don't think of my business as any more special than any other. I do have my own style, but I don't think it makes me any more special than someone else. I just love cooking and if I can make my clients happy, I'm happy!"

"I feel very special to be 44-years-old and having this wonderful opportunity to start a new chapter in my life. Having my own business, finishing culinary school and seeking out my future dreams – I'm really living my dream now and I am very grateful."

Sadie toots the USPCA's horn

"I have truly been appreciative to have the staff at the USPCA available to me when I have needed them. When Gail taught my CBA class last January, she told all the students that she would be available for any questions or help that we may need."

"To this date, she has been absolutely incredible with her timely responses and helpful during my tough times. Gail has been very influential in my growth and I have appreciated learning from her. She has a wealth of knowledge on the marketing and business side."

"I attended my first USPCA conference in New Orleans and got to meet chefs from all over the States and a few from Canada. Everyone was willing to share their experiences and I have adopted much of that information in my business."

"Also, I've promoted USPCA to students at the culinary school and, with client permission; I've taken students with me to see what it is like to work as a personal chef."

Personal chef training includes externship

Sadie added six weeks of real-life chef work to her CBA training. Two weeks of Sadie's externship included studying under New Mexico Personal Chef Janice Laird. That was followed by working at a local Seattle Italian restaurant and then working in San Miguel Allende (Mexico) at an organic sustainable farm with a B&B and culinary training school.

Sadie Laurenti-Whitley

La Cucina Laurenti Personal Chef Service

Redmond, Oregon

E-mail: sadie@lacucinalaurenti.com

Website: www.lacucinalaurenti.com

USPCA Chapter: Seattle

Sadie's Client Pleasing Recipes

Risotto

Serves 4-6

Ingredients

1/2 cup unsalted butter

1/2 shallot, chopped

1 tablespoon thyme, chopped

13 oz Arborio rice

1/2 cup dry white wine

3-1/2 cups chicken stock or vegetable stock, keep warm

1/4 teaspoon saffron threads

4 oz fresh Parmesan shavings

Salt and pepper

Italian parsley to garnish

Directions

Melt half of the butter in a large, heavy pan, add the onion and thyme, season with a little pepper, and fry gently for about 5 minutes until softened.

Add the rice and stir to coat thoroughly in the buttery mixture.

Add the wine, a ladle full of the stock and saffron threads and cook over a low heat, stirring until all the liquid is absorbed.

Continue adding the stock in this way, a ladleful at a time, and stirring until absorbed. The risotto is ready when all the stock has been absorbed and the grains of rice are tender and the risotto creamy and moist without being "gluey." (This will take about 20-25 minutes.)

Remove the pan from the heat, stir in the remaining butter and the Parmesan shavings. Place cooked risotto on sheet pan and cool completely. Place risotto in container and garnish with Italian parsley.

Client Heating Instructions

Thaw in refrigerator the night before consumption. Heat on medium heat in Microwave for 2-4 minutes

Preparation time for Personal Chef: 5-10 minutes

Cooking time: 15-25 minutes

Sadie shares her recipe for Cannelloni with Spinach in the online edition!



Another Client-Pleasing Recipe from Chef Sadie Whitley

Cannelloni with Spinach

Serves 4 to 6

Ingredients

1-1/2 pound fresh spinach, stalks removed and chopped finely
1/2 onion, chopped
1 garlic clove, minced
4 tablespoons butter
1 cup ricotta, sieved
3/4 cup grated Parmesan cheese
Pinch of grated nutmeg
2 large eggs
12 large fresh lasagna pasta sheets (or cannelloni tubes)
1 tsp olive oil
1 tablespoon flour
1 cup milk
4 tablespoons Italian bread crumbs
Salt and pepper to taste

Directions

Wash spinach, place it in a large saucepan with just the water that clings to the leaves, and heat gently for 3-4 minutes until wilted. Drain in a colander, pressing out all the moisture.

Melt half of the butter in a saucepan, add onion until translucent. Add spinach and garlic and stir well. Remove from the heat. Beat the ricotta cheese and half of the Parmesan into the spinach and season with salt, pepper and nutmeg. Beat in the eggs. Set aside to cool.

Cook the cannelloni tubes (if using packaged cannelloni tubes) in plenty of boiling salted water for about 10 minutes, or according to the package instructions, until they are just tender but firm to the bite. Drain, refresh in cold water, and drain again. Add olive oil to prevent from sticking together. Set aside to cool. If you are using fresh pasta, no need to boil before assembly.

Melt remaining butter in a pan, stir in the flour and cook for 1 minute to make a roux. Remove from the heat and gradually stir in the milk, stirring constantly. Bring to the boil, season with salt and pepper, and simmer for 5 minutes. Taste and adjust the seasoning if necessary.

Spoon the spinach filling into the cannelloni tubes with a teaspoon and place them in a greased, shallow baking dish. If you are using fresh pasta sheet, spoon filling into pasta sheet and roll.

I use Pyrex containers for my clients and this fits well in the 9x13 baking dish. Pour the sauce over the top and sprinkle with the remaining Parmesan mixed with the bread crumbs.

Client cooking instructions

Thaw in refrigerator the night before consumption.

Bake in a preheated oven 350-degrees for 35-40 minutes or until topping is lightly brown and crusty.

Prep time is 20 minutes, plus cooling time.

