

11/20/09 - Stuffing with Cajun Sausage and Fennel

I love stuffing, but I can't make it with butter and I don't want to use margarine. The solution, I use a lot of olive oil to sauté the vegetables and I add the spicy oil left from browning the sausage. The rich pan juices or dark salty gelatin that is left after roasting a turkey is the most delicious flavoring of all. Every time I roast a bird (sometimes I do it just to have fresh roasted turkey for sandwiches on hand), I save the precious pan juices in little containers in my freezer so I don't have to wait for this Thanksgiving turkey to provide me with gelatin for the stuffing. Another thing I believe in, is not placing the stuffing in the bird but baking it in a separate baking or casserole dish. It is just safer that way.



If you don't like spicy, you can use a mild sausage or omit it. If you are allergic to nuts omit them or you could use chestnuts instead. Try any dried fruit you have such as dried cranberries. Have fun, be creative, but be sure to use good quality bread with some texture to it.

1 large loaf of French, sourdough, or rustic bread

4 Cajun chicken sausages (the size of thick hot dogs)

2 tablespoons of olive oil

3 cups of diced onion

4 cloves of garlic, minced

3 celery stalks chopped, washed and diced

1 fennel bulb, diced

12 fresh mushrooms, cleaned and sliced

1 cup parsley, washed and chopped

1 small bunch of sage, chopped

5 tablespoons olive oil

1 teaspoon sea salt

Fresh cracked pepper to taste

1 cup pecans, chopped

1 cup dried apricots, chopped

1 to 1 and ½ cups of turkey giblet stock or chicken stock

½ cup of Turkey pan juices (gelatin)

Day old stale bread works best for this. I take it out of the package and let the slices dry out on the counter for a while. With a serrated knife, slice the bread into ½ inch cubes. Place the bread cubes in a roasting pan and place the pan in a 250° oven for about a 15 minutes. The bread cubes should be slightly crispy but with no color. Transfer the dried bread cubes to a large bowl.

Next, slice the Cajun sausages in ½ inch cubes. Preheat a nonstick skillet, add the two tablespoons of oil, and fry the Cajun sausage until browned and crispy. Set aside.



Add the onions and garlic to a preheated heavy bottomed skillet on medium heat. Stir until the onions are translucent then add the fennel, celery, and mushrooms. Add salt and pepper to taste. Sauté until fragrant and mushrooms are cooked. Turn off the heat. Next, add the herbs, sausage, pecans, and apricots and stir to combine. Pour the sausage and all the oil left in the skillet into the vegetables.

Add the onion sausage mixture to the bread cubes and toss to combine. Add the chicken or turkey stock. Add the pan drippings. Toss all to combine. Cool the stuffing and transfer to a greased baking dish.



Bake for 1 hour covered and 30 minutes more uncovered until golden. Serve with Turkey, Cranberry Sauce and Sweet Potatoes.



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