

THE ARIZONA REPUBLIC



Family-secret pasta sauce adds pizzazz to casserole

By Jan D'Atri

June 15, 2013



Angie Mariani Costantino has to be a proud 94-year old grandmother. Although her grandson is a culinary graduate student, it was his Grandma Angie's pasta sauce that put Phoenix resident Chris Costantino on the culinary map in Arizona. That sauce and his line of other Italian products have found their way into Valley stores and farmers markets.

As a boy, he asked Grandma Angie to teach him how to make her sauce. It was liquid gold that she learned to make from her mom, who learned it from her mom. The recipe goes back at least five generations.

Chris picks up the story: "There was no recipe, of course. So we made it together many, many times until the measurements were perfect.

"This is the pasta sauce that brings back every Italian family-meal memory. We ate this fresh, flavorful sauce on pasta, ravioli, gnocchi, polenta--you name it. My Dad's idea of dinner was popcorn and ice cream, so I figured I had to learn to cook and I ended up

loving the process."

From her home in Rock Springs, Wyo., Grandma Angie can watch the success of her grandson's products, the first and most popular of which is the 24-ounce jar of Grandma Angie's Tomato Basil Pasta Sauce from Costantino's Kitchen.

Look for the sauce and other products in stores like AJ's Fine Foods and Whole Foods and on line at www.costantinokitchen.com.

I made a delicious family-night casserole of layered eggplant, pasta, Costantino's tomato sauce, ricotta, fresh mozzarella and Parmesan.

Grazie, Grandma Angie!

Eggplant and Pasta Casserole

Serves 4

Ingredients:

1 large or 2 medium eggplant, peeled and cut in ½ inch thick slices

½ pound spaghetti or linguine

1 (24-ounce) jar Costantino's Kitchen Tomato Basil Pasta Sauce

1 (16-ounce) container whole milk ricotta

8 ounces shredded mozzarella

1 cup fresh grated Parmesan cheese

Salt and water for boiling water

Directions:

- In a large pot, bring 5 quarts of water and 1 tablespoon of salt to boil.
- Drop slices of eggplant into pot and cook for 8 minutes or until softened.
- Remove with slotted spoon and place on paper towel to drain.

- Replace water with fresh water and salt. Bring to boil and cook pasta according to package instructions. Drain pasta and set aside.
- Spoon a thin layer of pasta sauce in the bottom of 8x8 inch casserole dish.
- Layer half of the eggplant slices, ricotta, spaghetti, mozzarella, Parmesan and pasta sauce. Repeat layers, reserving Parmesan cheese. Bake at 350 degrees for 20 minutes.
- Top with Parmesan cheese and bake for another 5 minutes.