



FRIED MOZZARELLA SKEWERS

Perfect for the final days of winter, this crowd-pleasing comfort food by Lidia Bastianich is sure to help you ride out the cold and look forward to spring. Pair the warmth of Lidia's storytelling from her new memoir, *My American Dream*, with this mouth-watering recipe for fancy grilled cheese.

No one can resist fried cheese, and these Italian mini-sandwiches are no exception. They are a classic dish in Italian American cooking, and especially beloved by anyone fond of grilled cheese sandwiches. Firm white bread is recommended in the recipe, but multigrain or whole wheat will be just as delicious.

Serves 4

INGREDIENTS:

2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
5 cloves garlic, chopped
4 anchovy fillets
3 tablespoons drained tiny capers in brine
2 tablespoons unsalted butter
½ cup dry white wine
3 tablespoons freshly squeezed lemon juice

8 slices firm white bread, crusts removed
12 ounces fresh mozzarella, thinly sliced
All-purpose flour for dredging
2 large eggs
2 tablespoons milk
Vegetable oil for frying
1 tablespoon chopped fresh Italian parsley

METHOD:

Make the sauce: Pour the olive oil into a large skillet and set over medium-high heat. When the oil is hot, add the chopped garlic and cook until it is sizzling and fragrant, taking care not to burn it. Add the anchovies and capers, and stir until they both dissolve into the oil. Pop in the butter; once it is melted, pour in the white wine and lemon juice. Bring to an energetic simmer, and cook until reduced by half, about 6 to 7 minutes. Remove and keep warm.

Lay four slices of bread on your work surface. Top with the sliced mozzarella, trimming the cheese to fit within the edges of the bread. Top with remaining bread to make four sandwiches, and seal each sandwich at each corner with a toothpick.

Spread the flour on a rimmed plate. Beat the eggs and milk together in a wide, shallow bowl. Heat about ½ inch vegetable oil in a skillet over medium heat; the oil is ready when a crust of bread sizzles on contact.

Dredge the sandwiches well in the flour, making sure to coat all sides and tap off the excess. Soak the sandwiches on all sides in the egg, letting the excess egg drip back into the bowl. Carefully ease the sandwiches into the oil, and fry until they're golden brown on both sides and the cheese is melted, about 1 to 2 minutes per side. Remove the sandwiches, and drain well on paper towels. Remove the toothpicks from sandwiches and use a serrated knife to cut them in half on the diagonal.

Return the sauce to a simmer and stir in the parsley. Spread the sauce on four serving plates, then top each plate with a sandwich and serve hot.

