

Lemony Goat Cheese Dressing

I love this dressing with baby spinach or romaine lettuce and garlicky croutons. *Yields 3/4 cup.*

- 3 to 4 oz. soft fresh goat cheese
- 1/2 cup half-and-half; more as needed
- 1/4 tsp. salt
- 1/4 tsp. freshly ground black pepper
- 1 tsp. finely grated lemon zest

In a small bowl, crumble the cheese and mash it with a fork until smooth. Add the half-and-half 1 Tbs. at a time, mixing and mashing the cheese with the fork. Stir in the salt, pepper, and lemon zest. Cover and refrigerate for up to 30 min. Stir before serving and thin with more half-and-half if needed.

Savory Mushroom Tart

Serve this tart with a lightly dressed salad and a crisp white wine. *Serves four.*

FOR THE CRUST:

- 6 3/4 oz. (1 1/2 cups) all-purpose flour
- 1/4 tsp. salt
- 1/4 lb. (8 Tbs.) unsalted butter, cut into 1/2-inch pieces and chilled
- 4 to 5 Tbs. ice water

FOR THE FILLING:

- 1/2 lb. soft fresh goat cheese
- 1/4 cup mascarpone cheese (or sour cream)
- 1 small clove garlic, minced
- 1 Tbs. minced chives
- Salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste

FOR THE TOPPING:

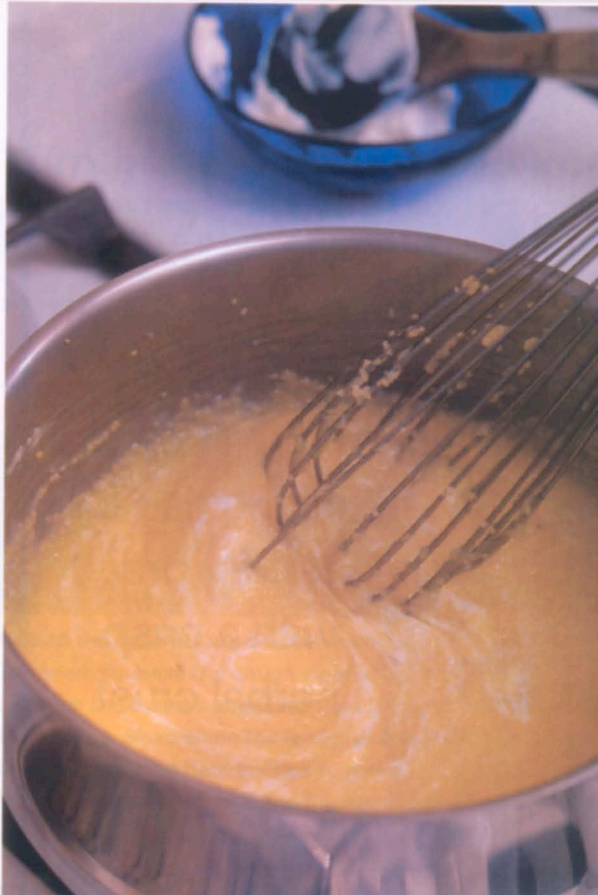
- 2 Tbs. butter
- 2 Tbs. olive oil
- 1 lb. mushrooms (preferably wild), wiped clean, trimmed, and thinly sliced
- 2 Tbs. finely chopped shallots
- 1 Tbs. fresh thyme leaves
- Salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste
- 1/4 cup dry white wine (optional)

Make the crust—Put the flour and salt in a food processor. Pulse a few times to blend. Add the butter and pulse until the mixture resembles cornmeal. Add the ice water 1 Tbs. at a time and process until the dough comes together in a rough ball. Remove the dough, shape it into a disk, wrap it in plastic, and chill for 1 hour while you make the filling and topping.

Make the filling—In a small bowl, combine the goat cheese, mascarpone, garlic, chives, salt, and pepper, mixing with a fork until well blended. Set aside.

Make the topping—In a large skillet, heat the butter and oil over high heat until the butter is foaming. Add the mushrooms and shallots and cook, stirring, until the mushrooms are lightly browned. Add the thyme, salt, and pepper and cook another 1 min. If using wine, add it as well and cook until the liquid has evaporated, about 4 min. Set aside.

Assemble and bake—Heat the oven to 450°F. Line a baking sheet with parchment. On a lightly floured surface, roll out the chilled dough into a 13-inch round. Transfer the dough to the parchment-



A little goat cheese gives polenta a creamier texture and flavor. Stir it in off the heat.

lined sheet. Spread the cheese mixture to within 1 inch of the edge. Top with the mushrooms. Fold the edge of the dough over the filling, pleating it as you go. Bake until golden brown, about 30 min. Serve warm.

Polenta with Goat Cheese & Fresh Sage *Very good*

This makes a great side dish for roast lamb, chicken, or pork. Or serve it as a main course topped with some tomato sauce or roasted vegetables. *Serves six as a side dish.*

- 4 1/2 cups water
- 1 tsp. salt; more to taste
- 1 tsp. unsalted butter
- 1 cup polenta
- 1/4 lb. soft fresh goat cheese
- 1 Tbs. finely chopped fresh sage

In a medium heavy-based pot, bring the water to a rolling boil. Add the salt and butter. Slowly whisk in the polenta. Continue to cook over high heat, whisking constantly, about 5 min. Reduce the heat to medium-low and cook for another 15 min., whisking frequently. The polenta should be thick and creamy. Remove from the heat and stir in the goat cheese and sage. Taste and add more salt, if needed. Pour the polenta into a warm serving bowl and let stand for a few minutes, allowing it to firm up slightly before serving.

Ethel Brennan, an author and food stylist based in San Francisco, wrote Goat Cheese: Delectable Recipes for All Occasions (Chronicle) with her mother, Georgeanne. ♦