

Grandma Pat's Stuffed Shells

(Italy)

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At any Fratangelo family holiday, there is always pasta. Easter, pasta. Thanksgiving, pasta. Christmas Eve, you guessed it, pasta. This was never the main course, but it was always something that was kid friendly that my brother, my cousins and I looked forward to. My Grandma Pat always made the best Italian food (yes, I'm biased) and never used recipes. Here is my version of her stuffed shells.

Ingredients:

1 pound large or medium shells found in the pasta aisle
1 large container of ricotta cheese (whole milk or skim milk will do)
1/2 cup Pecorino Romano Cheese (Parmesan is also ok)
1/2 cup chopped parsley
1 tablespoon garlic powder
Salt and Pepper
Your favorite tomato sauce

Extras (if you want, Grandma always had sausage/meatballs on the side) - Spinach, Meatballs, Italian Sausage

Instructions:

In a large pot of boiling water, cook your shells about halfway so they are still firm, but becoming flexible. Drain and set aside to cool.

In a large mixing bowl, add in your ricotta cheese, Romano cheese, garlic powder, and parsley. Mix until combined. Then add your salt and pepper to taste. Remember that the cheese will be salty so taste your mixture before adding salt. You can add chopped spinach to your mixture if you would like to hide some veggies for the kids.

Take a large glass baking dish. Ladle a thin layer of tomato sauce on the bottom. If you would like to add cooked meatballs or cooked Italian sausage, spread on the bottom of the dish.

Add cheese mixture to fill your cooled shells. Place your stuffed shell in the baking dish until you run out of space or you run out of shells.

Add a thin layer of tomato sauce over your shells. You don't want your shells to be swimming.

Bake your shells covered with foil in an oven preheated to 350°F for 30 minutes. Take the foil off after 30 minutes and cook uncovered for another 15 minutes.

Sprinkle any extra parsley and Romano cheese on top as a garnish. Serve with sauce on the side for people to add more if they'd like.