

Italian Sausage, Mushroom, and Sage Stuffing

Some are just “ho-hum, nothing-special” stuffings, but not this one. The sausage is key here. Where I live, several local butcher shops make their own savory and richly flavored link sausages and those are what I buy. Look in your area for artisan sausage makers.

Once the sausages have cooked, I sauté the mushrooms in some of the flavorful fat. The browned bits of sausage clinging to the sides of the pan mix with the mushrooms, so that all these tasty morsels go into the stuffing. With the addition of sautéed vegetables and fresh herbs, this is bliss to a stuffing lover.

Ingredients:

5 tablespoon unsalted butter, softened
10 cups unseasoned dry bread cubes (see Cook’s Note)
1 tablespoon olive oil
3/4 pound mild Italian sausages
1 pound cremini mushrooms, wiped or brushed clean, stems trimmed, and quartered
1 large yellow onion (about 12 ounces), chopped
2 large carrots, peeled and chopped
2 large ribs celery, chopped
1/2 cup minced fresh parsley
1 tablespoon fresh thyme leaves
1 tablespoon minced fresh sage
1 teaspoon salt Freshly ground pepper
3 large eggs, lightly beaten
4 cups homemade chicken stock or canned low-sodium chicken broth

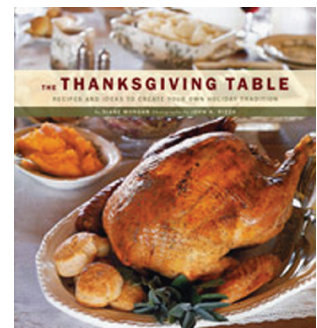
Preheat the oven to 350°F. Coat a deep, 9-by-13-inch baking pan with 1 tablespoon of the butter. Place the bread cubes in a very large mixing bowl. In 10-inch sauté pan, heat the oil over medium-high heat, and swirl to coat the pan. Cook the sausages until nicely browned on all sides. Remove and let cool. Drain all but 3 tablespoons of the fat. Add the mushrooms to the pan and sauté, stirring frequently, until lightly browned, about 4 minutes. Add to the bread in the bowl.

Return the pan to the heat, and add the remaining 4 tablespoons of butter. Swirl to coat the pan, and add the onion, carrots, and celery. Sauté, stirring frequently, until soft and lightly browned, about 5 minutes. Add the parsley, thyme, sage, salt, and a few grinds of pepper, and sauté 1 minute longer. Add this mixture to the bread cubes, and stir to combine.

Cut the reserved sausages into ¼-inch rounds and add to the stuffing. Add the beaten eggs and stock to the bowl, and mix well. Place the stuffing in the prepared pan and bake, uncovered, until the top is lightly browned and crusty, about 1 hour.



Recipe picture



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Recipes and Ideas to Create Your Own
Holiday Tradition
By Diane Morgan

If you have room in your oven, bake the stuffing while the turkey is roasting. Otherwise, bake it beforehand and reheat it once the turkey is out.

Serves 12

Cook's Note

Making your own bread cubes is a small, easy task with delicious results. There is just no comparison between homemade bread cubes and the cello-packaged ones available in supermarkets. I usually prepare mine a day or two before Thanksgiving. Buy a loaf of artisan or peasant-style bread, trim the crusts, cut the bread into ½-inch cubes, and spread them out on baking sheets. Toast the cubes in a 400°F oven until just beginning to brown, about 10 minutes. Cool completely and store in a covered container until ready to use. Artisan bakeries are springing up in every city and town around the country. Check out their breads, and use them for these bread stuffing recipes. However, if you are short on time, the bakeries often sell toasted bread cubes made from their day-old loaves, especially at Thanksgiving time.