



I do truly love parties! Besides catering parties, I love attending them and even hosting them. Big parties with tons of people, medium-sized ones with 50 to 60 folks, and small gatherings of less than 20 guests – they're all fun to me. Who doesn't like to have a good time with lots of friends, food, beverages and music?

The thing is, have you ever noticed that at large events, you spend most of the evening talking to the same group of people or you flit from person to person and never actually indulge in a complete conversation? Even though it's very easy to stay in touch with each other through social media, face to face exchanges are few and far between. In the last year, I've developed a new love for intimate dinner parties. I'm talking a tiny repast, with 4 to 6 people maximum. It's my new favorite thing. When Vince and I invite one or two couples over for dinner, I get to experiment with new recipes, our wedding china gets used, the dirty dishes are minimal and best of all, we talk with our guests. We have an actual dialogue, we discuss, we chat, we laugh – all face to face. And, at the end of the night, we're all saying, “we should do this more often.” Another plus of our mini soirees is that I can happily share the photos and receipts in my column. The Italian recipes this week are all easy and yummy, but the Tomato Tonnato is over-the-top delicious. Don't let the canned tuna intimidate you. It's one of the best appetizers that I've made this summer. I promise. Buon Appetito!

Sun-Dried Tomato Spread

Sun-Dried Tomato Spread will last for up to two weeks in the refrigerator. Serve on crostini,

mixed in scrambled eggs or on top of a grilled chicken breast.

2 (6-ounce) cans tomato paste

4 tablespoons chopped fresh basil

½ cup olive oil

2 cloves garlic, crushed

1 cup chopped sun-dried tomatoes

½ teaspoon salt

1 teaspoon sugar

1 teaspoon garlic salt

Place all ingredients in a food processor. Blend to the consistency of a spreadable paste. Serve with crostini or crackers. Makes about 2½ cups.

Tomato Tonnato



Take the Caprese salad off the table and serve it as a light main course when served with a



For the vinaigrette, combine the oil, vinegar, and salt in a small bowl. Shake well to combine. Add the oil, vinegar, salt, and pepper to the bowl. Shake well to combine. Add the oil, vinegar, salt, and pepper to the bowl. Shake well to combine.



From this recipe, you can make a great beef or pork sauce. (milanese) <http://www.italianrecipes.com/recipe/italian-beef-sauce/>



A portrait of Mary Ann, a woman with short blonde hair, smiling. She is wearing a dark top and a necklace. The background is slightly blurred, showing what appears to be a kitchen or dining area.

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