

*Wine & Dine with Jeff*

## **Vegan Stuffed Shells with Almond Ricotta**

Vegan Stuffed Shells Pairing with Remy Pannier Sancerre 2018



## **INGREDIENTS**

 **INGREDIENTS FOR ALMOND RICOTTA**

8 Oz of blanched & slivered almonds no salt 2 cups of almonds

6 Tablespoons of Almond Yogurt plain no flavor

1 Tablespoon of white wine vinegar

5 Tablespoons of water

1/2 Cup of Nutritional Yeast

1 Teaspoon of salt

1 Teaspoon of garlic powder

1 Tablespoon of Italian blend herbs

### INGREDIENTS FOR MARINARA SAUCE

1 28Oz can of San Marzano whole tomatoes

3 Garlic cloves minced

2 tablespoons of olive oil

1 teaspoon of Italian blend herbs

3 Tablespoons of fresh Basil

Half of yellow onion left in 1 or two chunks (will be removing after cooking)

Salt to taste

### INGREDIENTS FOR SHELLS

8 Oz of Jumbo shells Needing 16 shells

10 Oz of chopped frozen spinach

# DIRECTIONS

1. I could eat pasta every single week that is how much I love it.

This recipe has gone through my test kitchen many time before perfecting my homemade vegan ricotta. The one key ingredient that is a must in this recipe is the nutritional yeast. The nutritional yeast gives the vegan ricotta the natural cheese flavor. The first time I tasted nutritional yeast on its own it tasted like a cheese puff. Start by adding the blanched & Slivered almonds in a sauce pan cover with water about 2 inches above the almonds place on the stove and when the water comes to a boil stir and remove from heat and let sit for 8 hours or overnight. I have been asked can it be done with whole almonds, yes it can but it is much easier process with the blanched and slivered almonds. If you are using the whole almonds you have to double the process of boiling letting them sit for 8 hours then remove the skins on each almond and then boil again and let sit for another 8 hours. That is why I like to use the blanched and slivered almonds it makes the process that much easier

2. After the almonds have soaked, rinse and drain the almonds and place them into a food processor. Process the almonds for a few minutes turning them into a fine almond powder. You will need to stop and scape down the side for the food processor a few times. Then add the almond yogurt, vinegar, nutritional yeast, garlic powder, Italian herb blend, water and salt and blend together into this ricotta cheese consistency. Start by only adding half the water and if needed add the rest of the water and taste the almond ricotta for the perfect amount of seasoning.

3. Boil about half the box of 16oz jumbo shells. You will need about 14 to 16 shells depending on how much of the vegan ricotta you stuff in each shell. Add 1 tablespoon of salt to a large pot of water and boil the shells for about 9 minutes or what the directions say on the box. Good tip don't overcook the shells because they will split and fall apart cook them to al dente because the pasta will continue to cook in the oven. Drain the pasta set aside and separate each jumbo pasta shell so they don't stick to each other.

4. Start the easy Marinara sauce by adding olive oil, minced garlic, San Marzano tomatoes to the sauté pan and turn to medium heat. Add the half of yellow onion but Keep your half an onion in large chunks because you will be removing the onion after the sauce simmers. Stir in the Italian herbs and with a wooden spatula break apart the whole tomatoes on the side of the pan. I like using whole tomatoes because I feel you are getting better quality than with chopped tomatoes. When the marinara sauce come to a simmer reduce the heat down to low and with the lid off let the sauce simmer for 25 minutes it will thicken up and intensify all the flavors. I did not start by simmering the garlic in oil because I wanted a milder garlic flavor going through the marinara sauce. When the sauce is finished simmering removed the onion chunks and stir in the fresh basil while the marinara sauce is still hot.

5. Defrost the frozen spinach and drain. You can place the frozen spinach in the microwave or let sit out on the counter to defrost.

Very important tip is to squeeze all the liquid out of the frozen spinach. Mix together the almond ricotta with the dry spinach.

6. In a baking pan with a lid add 1 cup of the marinara sauce on the bottom and spread around. Stuff each jumbo shell with about 2 tablespoons of the vegan spinach ricotta mixture. Top the stuffed shells with the rest of the marinara sauce and place a lid or foil the baking pan to keep the moisture inside. You don't want the stuffed shells to dry out. Place in a preheated 350 Degree Fahrenheit oven for 30 minutes. Remove and garnish with more fresh basil and enjoy. I have served these stuffed shells to Non vegans and no one new they were stuffed with almond ricotta ENJOY.