

Incredible food makes cycling tour worth the ride

By Kathryn Reed

BRIDGEWATER CORNERS, Vt. – *A cycling vacation? Yes.*

Really? Yes.

What else is involved? Food, incredible accommodations, being able to go at your own pace, meeting new people, returning to New England for the first time since college, and seeing Sue's hometown.



Dinner is served family style at the October Country Inn. Photos/Kathryn Reed

OK, I'm in.

As wonderful as the Bike Vermont tour was, I'm just not a big cyclist. Still, I highly recommend this outfit. And although I may one day go on another bike tour, I definitely know I'd like to return to the October Country Inn.

This Vermont bed and breakfast run by Edie and Chuck Janisse is that rare blend of personal service in a relaxed

atmosphere, with food I want the recipes for.

Several of us asked for the Maple Scone recipe. We were all denied. None of us could pinpoint the ingredient, beyond the pure Vermont maple syrup, that made them so outrageously good. We were told seldom is the same thing served on back-to-back days, but I think there could have been a riot if they didn't emerge from the kitchen the second morning.

So much food appeared for the morning and evening meals that it was a good thing cycling was involved. As a vegetarian they prepared a tofu dish each night as my protein. Although I knew I needed it for the next day's ride, there was enough food on the table to eat that I did not need the tofu.

The eggplant Parmesan that was served on night No. 2 was fabulous. I'm not usually a big fan of eggplant, but I had seconds of this dish. And it is a recipe the Janisses would share and didn't mind having published. The recipe is going to fill several 9 x 13 pans.

October Country Inn's Eggplant Parmesan

Tomato sauce ingredients:

9 T olive oil

3 C onions, finely chopped

3 T garlic, finely chopped

1 # 10 can of Italian plumb tomatoes, seeded, and coarsely chopped, but not drained

18 oz. tomato paste

3 T dried oregano, crumbled

3 tsp dried basil, crumbled

3 bay leaves

2 T sugar

4 tsp salt

Black pepper, freshly ground

In a 3-4 quart saucepan, heat the olive oil and cook onions over moderate heat, stirring frequently for 7-8 minutes.

When onions are soft and transparent, but not brown, add the garlic and cook for another 1-2 minutes, stirring constantly.

Stir in the tomatoes, and the strained liquid, tomato paste, oregano, basil, bay leaves, sugar, salt, and few grindings of black pepper.

Bring to a boil, turn the heat low and simmer uncovered, stirring occasionally, for about 1 hour

When finished, the sauce should be thick and fairly smooth.

Remove the bay leaves, taste and season with salt and black pepper.

Eggplant Parmesan ingredients:

3 or 4 medium eggplants (quarter each eggplant with lengthwise cuts just through the skin, cut crosswise into 3/8-inch thick slices)

Mozzarella and cheddar cheese, grated

Parmesan cheese, grated

Preheat oven to 450 degrees.

Lay eggplant slices on parchment lined baking sheets. Lightly brush olive oil, salt and pepper on both sides of slices. Bake without turning until dark brown, 45 minutes to an hour.

In a 9 x 13 Pyrex casserole dish, put a thick layer of tomato sauce on the bottom. Layer the roasted eggplant in overlapping

row. Spread a generous layer of mozzarella cheese and about half that amount of cheddar cheese on top of the eggplant, and over with a liberal coating of tomato sauce.

Repeat for another layer.

Sprinkle grated Parmesan cheese on top. Bake at 375 degrees for 35-60 minutes.

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