

Manna from Heaven – Spedini

Ingredients

- 1½ lbs. pound of steak, sliced and pounded into 3”x 8” strips
- 8 oz, fresh whole milk mozzarella cheese, preferably Ciliegine style
- 3 Tablespoons of butter
- 2-3 oz aged Parmigiano-Reggiano cheese
- 2-3 Tablespoons of chopped flat-leaf Italian parsley
- Salt
- Pepper
- Wooden toothpicks – plain, uncolored and usable for baking

The brothers in the monastery were great cooks. They may have been austere in other aspects of their lives, but not with food. The first time they invited me for a meal they cooked a special recipe they called “Spedini.” It is an Italian classic, but theirs was unique and unlike any version I’ve seen in a restaurant or cookbook. It works with many different cuts of beef, and top round is traditional, but for a special treat, I like it best when made from NY strip steak. (That’s culinary heresy, I know, but if that’s my worst crime I don’t feel too bad.) I typically purchase one steak per person, depending on the size of the steaks and the size of the people I’m trying to feed. This will leave you with leftovers galore, which is great.

Take your steaks to the deli counter and have them cut the meat into thin slices – that saves lots of time and effort. Then take the slices home and trim, pound, and then cut them into 6-8 inches and 3-4 inches wide strips, but there is leeway in size. They just need to long enough to roll into a tube shape and wide enough to hold the filling.

Fill one end of the meat with 1-2 pieces of Ciliegine mozzarella cheese (about 1-2 tablespoons), add a heavy sprinkling of aged Parmigiano-Reggiano cheese (about ½ teaspoon), sprinklings of salt and pepper, then roll into a cylinder. Secure with two toothpicks.

Next, melt the butter over medium heat, add the spedini into the pan and cook until a deep golden brown on all sides. Be sure not to overcrowd the pan and flip them regularly. Near the end, you’ll see cheese bubbling out the sides of each roll, which is what makes the sauce extra tasty.

If you accidentally brown them too fast, and the middle is undercooked, you can finish them in the oven at 350 degrees for a few minutes.

Finally, plate the spedini. Remove the toothpicks for an elegant dish or leave them in for finger food. Pour the pan juices over the meat, then sprinkle with chopped parsley.

When the meat juices, cheese, and butter blend and caramelize there is no better gastronomic treat.

Pair with a rustic loaf of French bread to dip in the sauce, a good red wine, and you'll see the beatific vision faster than you can say one round of the rosary.

One serving will also keep you full through all of Lent.