

LAYERED SWISS CHARD, HAM (or not) AND CHEESE CUSTARD

4-5 packed cups cooked Swiss Chard Leaves (I steamed them. Actually, I only had 2 cups, so I made up for it with raw (tiny) cubed zucchini

1 c chopped onions

1 tb oil

4 tb butter

salt and freshly ground pepper

1 lb thinly sliced ham (I substituted thinly sliced tomato)

1/4 lb Provolone (grated)

1/4 lb mozzarella (grated)

1/4 lb grated parmesan

1/2 c ricotta or cottage cheese

1/2 c cream

6 eggs

1 1/4 c milk

Butter an 8-9 inch round baking dish 4-5" high, and place a buttered round of brown paper on the bottom of the dish. Squeeze moisture out of the chard; chop. In a sauté pan, cook the chopped onions until wilted in the oil and add 2 tb of the butter. Add chard, raise heat to high, and, stirring, constantly, cook

Cut the ham into 1-inch wide strips, and cook until lightly browned in the remaining butter; set aside. Grate the Provolone and mozzarella cheese and combine with the Parmesan. Puree the ricotta or cottage cheese with the cream. Beat the eggs, then mix with cheeses (ricotta and cream) and milk; season to taste.

Place 1/3 of the grated cheeses in the bottom of the baking dish. Drizzle some of the custard mixture on top. Place a 1/3 of the ham (tomato) across the cheese, drizzling a little custard mix in among them. Place a third of the Swiss chard on the ham; coat with custard. Repeat the layering process until you are out of ingredients (my editorial!). Top with waxed paper and foil (THE NEXT PART IS OPTIONAL - I DIDN'T DO IT)

Place in a baking pan, pour boiling water 1/2 up the sides of the dish, and bake for 1 hour in a preheated 350 oven. Turn up heat and bake 30 minutes more. Uncover for the last 10 minutes. Allow more time if you use a higher dish. When the custard sides have come away from the dish, and when the center tests dry, the custard is done. Place on a rack for 15-20 minutes before unmolding onto a serving platter (or not!).

If you omit the water bath, the bottom becomes brown, but the flavor is not affected.